

PHILIPPINE INPUTS¹

**EXCHANGE OF COUNTRY EXPERIENCES
IN PREPARING NATIONAL
REPORTS**

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On the role of the national focal point in the Philippines

The Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is a multi-sector body that was created by Presidential directive to review and ensure Philippine compliance to its UNCED commitments. More specifically, it has the following roles:

1. To establish guidelines and mechanisms that will expand, concretize and operationalize the sustainable development principle, as embodied in the Rio Declaration, the UNCED, Agenda 21, the National Conservation Strategy and the Philippines Agenda 21, and incorporate them in the preparation of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, both at the national and local levels with active participation from [business/labor and civil society](#);
2. To [coordinate](#) with the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), through the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and actively solicit assistance and cooperation [in the fulfillment of the Philippines'](#) commitment made [at the UNCED and its follow-up processes](#);
3. To formulate [policies and multi-sector programs](#) and recommend new [actions, including](#) legislation, that respond to continuing and emerging issues and charting future action related to environment and sustainable development;
4. To provide policy advice to appropriate bodies on sustainable development issues of national interest;
5. To ensure [consistency and coordination among](#) the [Legislative and Executive Departments](#), local government units, non-governmental organization, business and other concerned entities/sector, in [policy](#) formulation and decision-making on sustainable development concerns;
6. To review and monitor plans, policies, program and legislations on sustainable development and recommend mechanism / strategies for promoting efficiency and timeliness of their execution;
7. To catalyze the [mainstreaming of sustainable development in local decision making in](#) close coordination with local authorities; and
8. To establish a networking mechanism to link with local and international organizations involved in sustainable development.

On inter-ministerial coordination in preparing national reports

The PCSD reviews and approves the national reports to the CSD which are supposed to be prepared by its inter-agency and multi-sector committees. These committees are organized along the various Agenda 21 themes, i.e. Committee on Socio-economic Dimensions (CSED), Committee on the Conservation and Management of Resources for Development (CCMRD), Committee on Strengthening the Role of Major Groups (CSRMG), and the Committee on the Means of Implementation (CMI). Two of these committees have subcommittees, i.e. the Subcommittees on Biodiversity, Atmosphere, Land Resources and Water Resources for the CCMRD and the Subcommittees on Financing Arrangements, Science and Technology, Information and Education, and on Legal and Institutional Arrangements for the CMI.

A major challenge regarding the coordination of such activities is to how to ensure the quality and stability of sector and agency representation. The Philippine bureaucracy suffers from rapid staff turn-over such that institutional memory and policy stability are affected. Moreover, now that Council meetings with the President are not held as often as before, many of the principal representatives either don't send representatives or send their alternate (which, at times, are not the same ones) to attend Council work. Many times, these alternates have to check back to their principals before definitive positions on Council matters are taken. These result in late or, at times, non-submission of inputs for the report. This situation underscores the need to strengthen the Council and Committee secretariats in order to maintain and provide institutional memory as well as to fill whatever slack inadequate agency representations may lead to.

There also does not appear to be a coordinating and information exchange mechanism between the Council and other multi-sector bodies in charge of other international conventions. Thus, a system for consistency checking the country's position on overlapping issues among these different conventions has to be established.

On reconciling reporting requirements from different UN system bodies including mandatory reporting for conventions

There are several inter-agency and multi-sector bodies for specific conventions which, among others, formulate Philippine positions and comply with the reporting requirements of these conventions. These are the Inter-agency Committee on Climate Change (for the UNFCCC) and the PCSD Subcommittee on Biodiversity (for the CBD and Cartagena Protocol). Other inter-agency bodies include those pertaining to the UNCCD, Rotterdam Convention, Stockholm Convention, Montreal Protocol, Basel Convention, Habitat, and IMO Conventions relating to the environment; but most of these are loosely-formed or not formally established under an Executive Order. It is either the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) or the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) which chairs as well as consolidates the inputs from members for submission to the concerned convention secretariat.

Many times, it is the same set of people who are involved in formulating the country's position on the above concerns. This can be a heavy burden particularly since other tasks have to be accomplished as well. Thus, views have been expressed that perhaps reporting requirements under the Multi-lateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and related conventions could be further streamlined or simplified to facilitate submission of reports on time, avoid duplication as well as to maximize the time and effort placed in the preparation of these reports.

On capacity and resource issues in preparing national reports

The preparation of national reports has challenging capacity and resource constraints to surmount. These challenges are probably rooted in the fact that the reporting process, system and format have yet to be standardized and mainstreamed into the regular functions of the bureaucracy. Thus, there are no regular funds allocated for the activity; these have to be sourced from the surplus budget of the PCSD members and/or from external assistance from foreign donors. The capacity of the PCSD secretariat to generate these reports is also constrained by the unavailability of full-time staff for the purpose. Thus, at times, consultants are hired to assist in the preparation of the report, if funds are available. The requisite information/data/indicators, likewise, require time, resources and personnel to generate. The lack or insufficient capacity of agency focal persons to adequately and properly provide information required also constrains the quality of reports being prepared by the national focal point.