

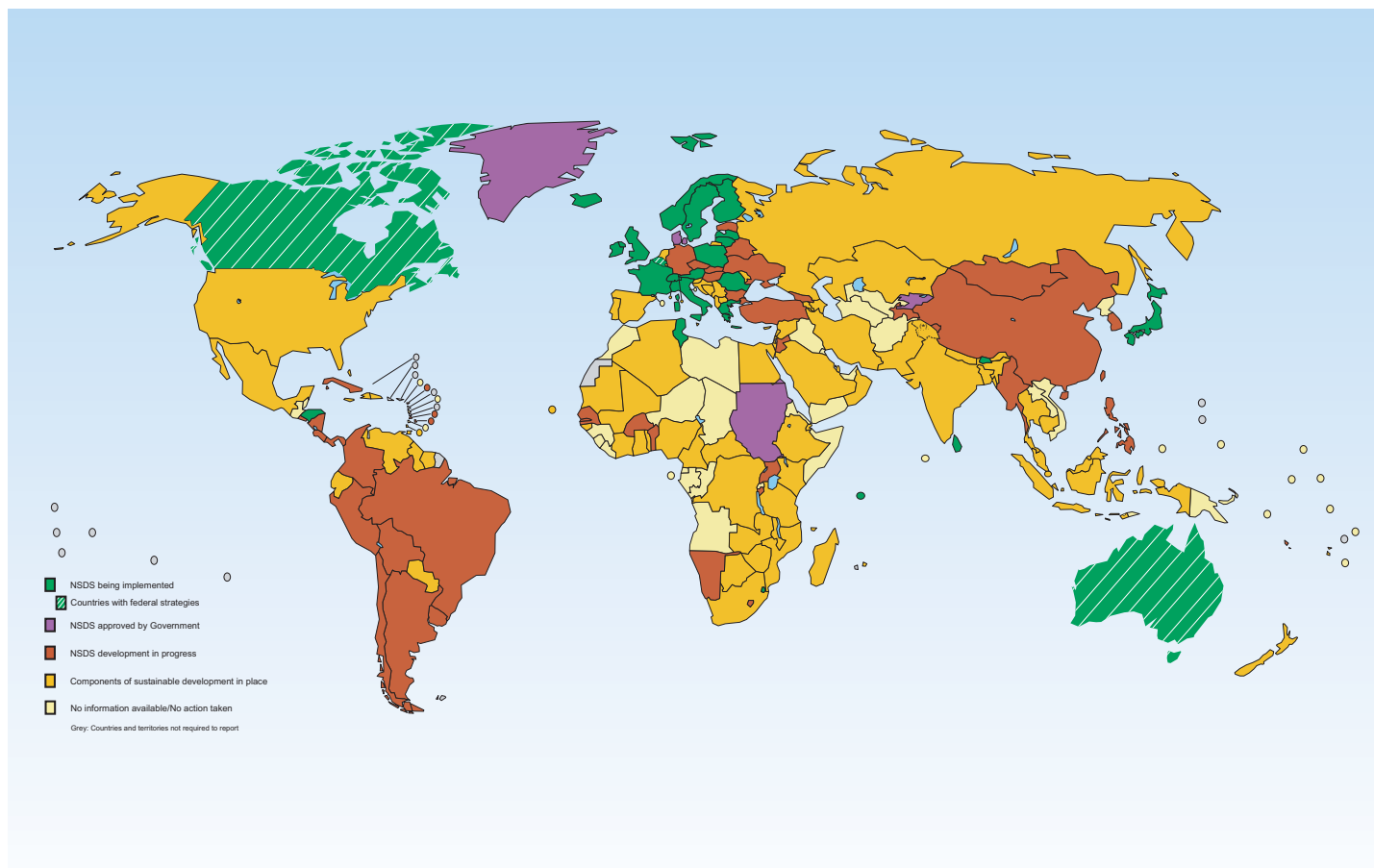
Assessment Report

on

National Sustainable Development Strategies: The Global Picture 2003

April, 2004

Division for Sustainable Development
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs



Introduction

The UN Guidance document¹ describes a national sustainable development strategy (NSDS) as a comprehensive, adaptable, continuous and long-term undertaking that helps a country to achieve economic prosperity and higher levels of social welfare while at the same time preserving the environment. The NSDS, thus, is not something that can be put together in a document and be promulgated; rather the UN Guidance Paper has outlined a set of characteristics common to a NSDS. These are being used by the UN/DSD, acting as the CSD Secretariat, in assessing the global status of development and implementation of NSDSs. The key characteristics are as follows:

- Integration of economic, social and environmental objectives;
- Multi-stakeholder participation, effective partnerships, transparency and accountability;
- Country ownership, shared vision with a clear time-frame on which stakeholders agree, commitment and continuous improvement;
- Capacity development and an enabling environment, building on existing knowledge and processes;
- Focus on priorities, outcomes and coherent means of implementation;

¹Background Paper Number 13: "Guidance in Preparing National Sustainable Development Strategies: Managing Sustainable Development in the New Millennium", issued at the second preparatory session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, acting as the preparatory committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

- Linkage with budget and investment processes;
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation.

CSD-11 requested the CSD Secretariat to provide information on the status of NSDSs in country reporting and to monitor progress towards meeting the 2005 target in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), (CSD-11:14(e) and JPOI Paragraph 162(b)²). Guidelines for reporting on NSDS were included in the set of streamlined Guidelines for National Reporting sent to countries in October 2003. The information for preparing the accompanying global map “National sustainable development strategies: The Global Picture 2003” has been based on country responses to these Guidelines, where available, and otherwise on information from the 2002 Country Profiles and the National Assessments Reports prepared for the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002. It should be noted that up to 2003, the guidelines for national reporting did not specifically ask countries to provide information on their efforts related to NSDS.

The map categorizes progress in a series of four stages in an acknowledgement that the NSDS process is a continuing one consisting of multiple steps. The following provides an attempt to assess the current status of NSDS development and implementation, as well as progress made in this area between 2002 and 2003, both from a global and a regional perspective³.

The 2003 Guidelines for National Reporting contained seven specific questions related to the development and implementation of NSDS. These questions were based on the four color categories used in The Global Picture 2003 to assess the status of development of national sustainable development strategies:

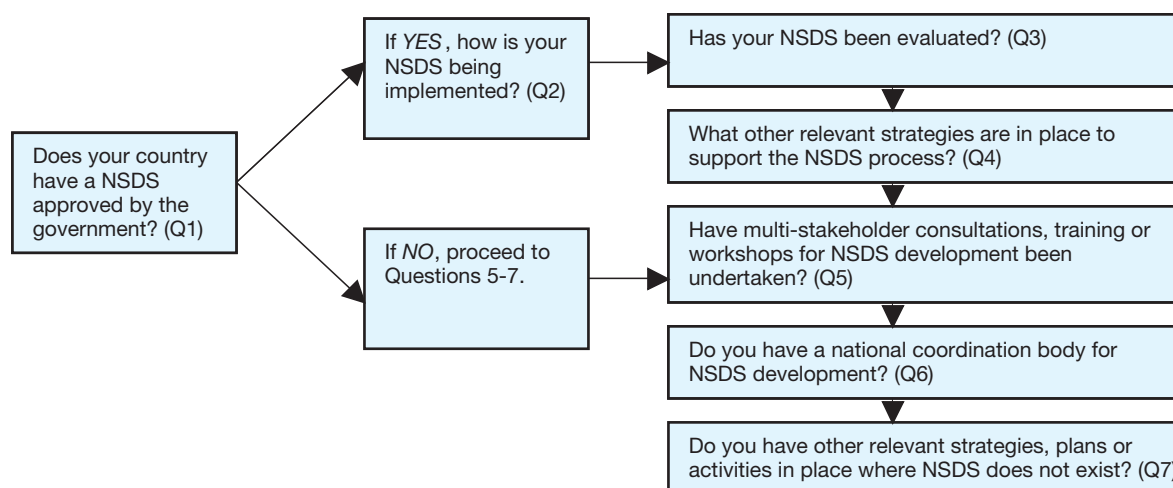
- *The color green*: reflects countries in the process of implementing their NSDS;
- *The color purple*: reflects countries where the country has approved a NSDS but no information was provided as to whether the NSDS was being implemented;
- *The color red*: reflects NSDS development in progress, based on information that the country has initiated multi-stakeholder consultations, training or workshops for NSDS development and/or they are in the process of or have established a national coordination body for NSDS;
- The color yellow: indicates that the country has components of sustainable development in place such as environmental strategies, National Action Plans, National Environmental Action Plans, Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes etc.

Chart I. below shows how UN/DSD proceeded to analyze the answers received, in order to assign an appropriate development status of the national sustainable development strategies.

Analysis, methodology and responses

Chart I.

Organization of the questions for evaluation of 2003 NSDS status



²JPOI paragraph 162 (b): “States should: (b) Take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and begin their implementation by 2005...”; CSD-11:14(e): “Country reporting should provide information on the status of national strategies for sustainable development “.

³Countries with federal forms of governments, that have developed federal strategies for sustainable development as opposed to national strategies for sustainable development, have been recognized separately in the 2003 map but grouped with NSDS in the statistical analysis as having reached the status of a national strategy.

As of 19 March 2004, 40 country responses had been received. After careful review of these, it was determined that 20 countries had changed their NSDS development status from that reflected in the Global Picture 2002. As noted earlier, responses to the 2003 Guidelines were the only source used to make changes in the NSDS develop-

ment status for 2003. For those countries who did not submit a response to the 2003 Guidelines, their status remains the same as that depicted for 2002.

The following table provides a regional summary of the 2003 responses received:

Table 1.

Regional statistics on submission of responses to the 2003 Guidelines

Region⁴ (number of countries in the region)	Countries that submitted responses to the 2003 Guidelines (% of region)	Countries whose NSDS development status changed in 2003 (% of region)
Africa (53)	7 (13%)	2 (4%)
Asia and the Pacific (45)	10 (22%)	7 (16%)
Western Asia (12)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)
The Americas and the Caribbean (35)	5 (14%)	0 (0%)
Europe (40)	16 (35%)	9 (20%)
Total (191)	40 (21%)	20 (11%)

Table 1 shows that for Europe and Asia and the Pacific, more than half of the submitted responses reported a change in their NSDS development status. Both responses from Western Asia reported a changed status. For Africa, less than a quarter of countries that submitted responses reported a changed status, while there was no change in the countries in the Americas and the Caribbean. In total, there was a change of status for 50% of the countries that submitted responses to the 2003 Guidelines.

The obvious very low response rate to the 2003 Guidelines (21%) could be explained by the fact that countries were informed that their status would remain unchanged from the 2002 Global status unless UN/DSD was otherwise informed through the 2003 Guidelines and they had no changes to report. It could, therefore, be concluded, that since only eleven percent of countries globally reported a changed status, progress has been slow in developing and implementing NSDS at the global level.

Global and regional progress⁵

Figure 1 shows that 12 per cent of 191 United Nations Member States were implementing their national strategies by 2003. Two per cent approved their NSDS, bringing the total to 14 per cent of member states having their NSDS approved and/or implemented in 2003, compared to only seven in 2002.

Forty one percent of countries reported having some components of sustainable development in place. In terms of progress, twenty two percent of countries have been assigned the status 'NSDS development in progress' as they had initiated multi-stakeholder consultations, training or workshops for NSDS development and/or they were in the process of or had established a national coordination body for NSDS. It should be noted, that some countries with federal forms of governments that have developed federal strategies for sustainable development, as opposed to

⁴Regional breakdowns correspond to regional divisions used in the CD-ROM containing the 2002 Country Profiles prepared for the Johannesburg Summit 2002 (United Nations, Version 0.1, August 2002).

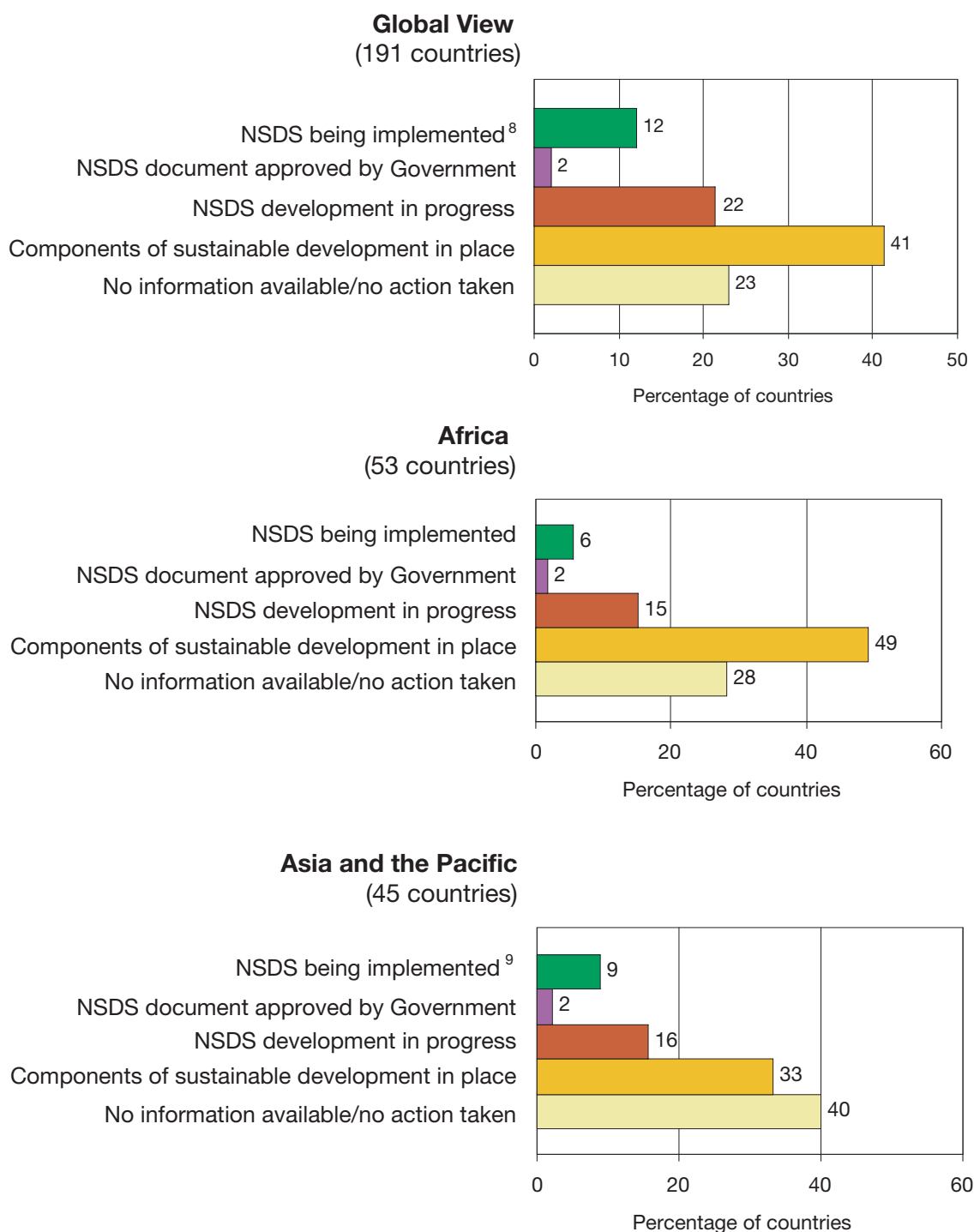
⁵Information in this section is based on country responses to the 2003 Guidelines and information from the 2002 Country Profiles and the National Assessment Reports, prepared for the WSSD in 2002.

national strategies for sustainable development, have been reflected in this analysis as having reached the status of a national strategy. In 2003, this status has been recognized separately on the map but grouped with national sustainable development strategies in the statistical analysis. The remaining 86 percent of countries either do not have their

NSDS approved by their governments or have not reported on their status. Among them, about a quarter of all countries either did not take action toward developing a NSDS or information on NSDS development is not available either from the 2002 country profiles or the 2003 responses.

Figure 1.

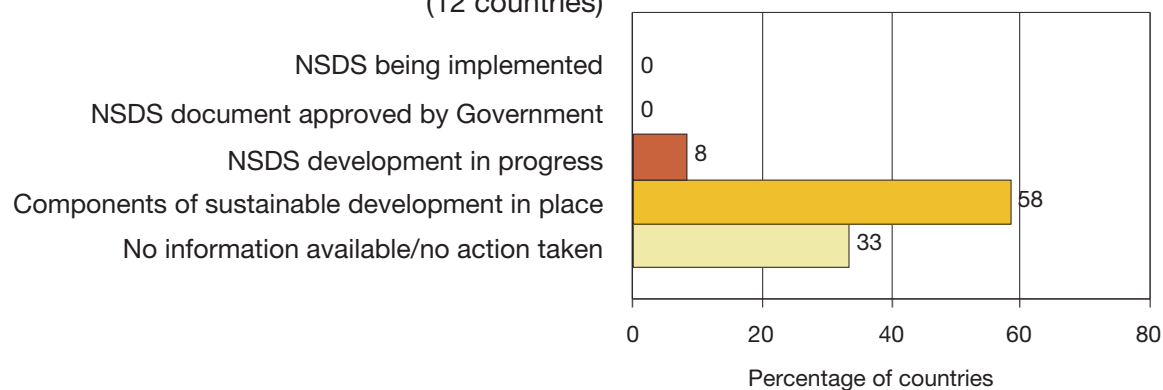
2003 NSDS development/implementation status^{6 7}



See footnotes on the following page

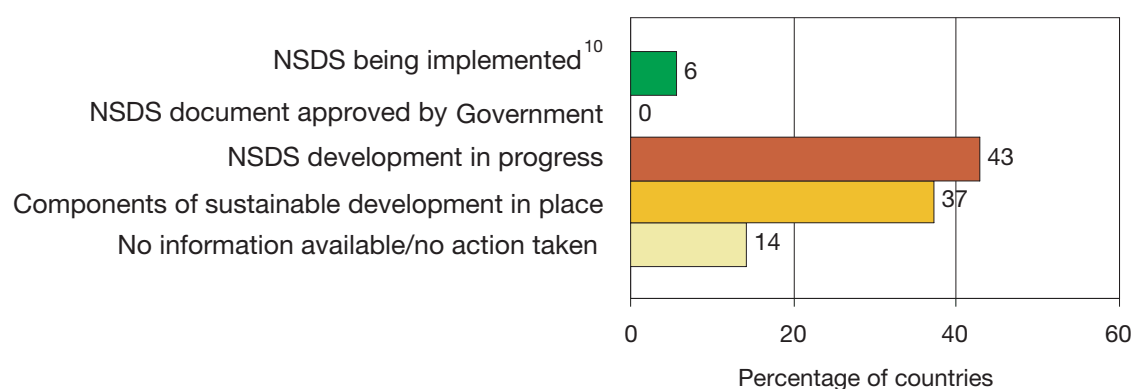
Western Asia

(12 countries)



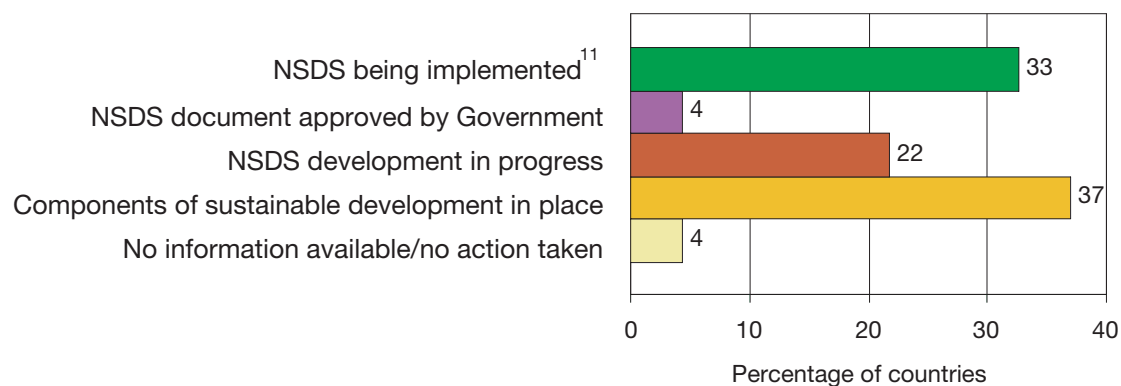
The Americas and the Caribbean

(35 countries)



Europe

(46 countries)



⁶Information in Figure 1 is based on country responses to the 2003 Guidelines and information from the 2003 Guidelines, 2002 Country Profiles and the National Assessment Reports, prepared for the WSSD in 2002.

⁷The totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding

⁸Includes three countries with federal strategies for sustainable development

⁹Includes one country with a federal strategy for sustainable development

¹⁰Includes one country with a federal strategy for sustainable development

¹¹Includes one country with a federal strategy for sustainable development

At the regional level, the European region has the largest portion of countries with NSDSs being implemented, followed by the Asia and the Pacific region, Africa and the Americas and the Caribbean and lastly by the Western Asian regions. Where NSDSs were not yet approved, 22 percent of European countries reported that their NSDS development is currently in progress and 37 percent reported having components of Sustainable Development Strategies in place. Only four European countries either did not report or did not take any action toward sustainable development.

DSD's evaluation of 2003 shows that 33 per cent of Asia and the Pacific countries reported that they have some sec-

toral strategies in place while 16 percent reported having taken actions toward development of their NSDSs. However, Asia and the Pacific countries have the largest number of their countries with either no action taken or no information available, followed by Western Asia; thirdly by the African region; then by the Americas and Caribbean region; and lastly by the European region.

Comparing the status of NSDSs in 2002 to that in 2003, it is noticeable that there has been a decrease in the number of countries with either only sectoral strategies or no action/information availability. Please refer to Table 2 below for the changes in number of countries in each stage.

Table 2:

**Comparison of NSDS development/implementation status from 2002-2003
(in number of countries)**

Number of countries	No information available/no action taken		Components of sustainable development in place		NSDS development in progress		NSDS document approved by Government		NSDS being implemented	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
Africa (53)	17	15	27	26	6	8	0	1	3	3
Asia and the Pacific (45)	21	18	20	15	4	7	0	1	0	4
Western Asia (12)	5	4	5	7	2	1	0	0	0	0
The Americas and the Caribbean (35)	5	5	15	13	13	15	0	0	2	2
Europe (46)	2	2	25	18	11	10	1	2	7	14
TOTAL (191)	50	44	92	79	36	41	1	4	12	23

Conclusions and way forward

In assessing the information in this report, the overall response rate to the 2003 guidelines should be kept in mind. Only 40 responses were received and the basis for assessing the information from the rest of the countries was the 2002 Country Profiles and National Assessment Reports that may not have included information on national sustainable development strategy development or implementation. A greater response rate would result in a considerably more accurate picture of the global status of NSDS implementation. Nevertheless, it is fair to conclude from the information available that much work still remains to be done to reach the WSSD target that all countries should be in the process of implementing their NSDS by 2005.

The assessment, however, also shows that many countries do have components of sustainable development in place, which is a good starting point for a NSDS: In general, almost all countries (developed and developing) formulate and put in place concurrently a number of sectoral and macro level policies and strategies. These strategies and policies are often mutually supportive and possess elements of sustainability, but are, in many cases, pursued in

a disjointed manner. The national sustainable development strategy process offers an opportunity to coordinate and harmonize the various macro and sectoral strategies through identifying and building on complementarities. The national sustainable development strategy should be seen as a process that improves their implementability and their effectiveness. Experience shows that there is no single method, no specific entry or starting point for a national sustainable development strategy. Any national level strategy can be a good entry point and a basis for a national sustainable development strategy. What is important is to ensure the NSDS reflects the essential features of a sound, realistic, participatory, feasible and iterative strategy that will guide sustainable development into the foreseeable future.

It is clear that an extensive regional and global effort will have to be undertaken in order to meet the goal of 2005. Training and capacity building are basic requirements to assist countries in this process. The active support of national, regional and international organizations is needed to address issues of immediate concern to countries in this respect, which would significantly contribute to making the goal of 2005 more realistic and achievable.

For further information, please contact the Division for Sustainable Development,
Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations

E-mail: dsd@un.org

Web site: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev>

