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GUIDANCE IN PREPARING A NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: MANAGING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW MILLENIUM

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**GUIDANCE IN PREPARING A
NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:
MANAGING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN THE NEW MILLENIUM**

**OUTCOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON
NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In September 2000, 147 Heads of States and Governments signed the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed their support for the principles of sustainable development and Agenda 21. They also agreed on the Millennium Development Goals, which included to: "integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources."
2. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions: economic growth, social equity and protection of the environment. At the heart of operationalizing sustainable development is the challenge of evaluating and managing the complex interrelationships between economic, social and environmental objectives. Agenda 21 promotes National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs) as mechanisms for translating a country's goals and aspiration of sustainable development into concrete policies and actions.
3. A national sustainable development strategy is a coordinated, participatory and iterative process of thoughts and actions to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner. The process encompasses situation analysis, formulation of policies and action plans, implementation, monitoring and regular review. It is a cyclical and interactive process of planning, participation and action in which the emphasis is on managing progress towards sustainability goals rather than producing a "plan" as an end product.
4. Every country needs to determine, for itself, how best to approach the preparation and implementation of its national sustainable development strategy depending upon the prevailing political, historical cultural, ecological circumstances. A "blueprint" approach for national sustainable development strategies is neither possible nor desirable. The particular label applied to a national sustainable development strategy is not important, as long as the underlying principles characterizing a national sustainable development strategy are adhered to and that economic, social and environmental objectives are balanced and integrated.
5. A national sustainable development strategy is a tool for informed decision-making that provides a framework for systematic thought across sectors and territory. It also helps to institutionalize processes for consultation, negotiation, mediation and consensus building on priority societal issues where interests differ. Development of the strategy would empower countries to address inter-related social and economic problems by helping them to build capacities, develop procedures and legislative frameworks; allocate limited resources rationally and present timetables for actions. Countries can benefit a lot from formulating strategies both directly (as a result of making development more sustainable) and indirectly (from the process itself).
6. Over the past decade, several national level comprehensive and/or sectoral economic growth, improvement of social welfare and environmental conservation oriented strategies were formulated. Some were prepared on the basis of national needs. Many were, however, either sponsored by multilateral financial institutions or were advocated by global conventions with financial support for their formulation provided. Overall, the strategy development experience had mixed results. There were notable achievements in some areas, but serious shortcomings existed too.

7. The experience of the past decade and current practices suggest that sound and effective national sustainable development strategies have certain elements in common or defining features. These underlying elements are:
 - Country ownership and strong political commitment;
 - Integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generations;
 - Broad participation and effective partnerships;
 - Development of capacity and enabling environment;
 - Focus on outcomes and means of implementation.
8. The elements mentioned above can be made operational through putting in place, on a continuous basis, four critical processes: political, participatory, technical and resource mobilization processes.
9. The **political process** involves ensuring the existence of a strong political commitment from the top leadership as well as from local authorities of a country. There must be effective engagement and close involvement of the Ministry of Finance and Planning as well as the Council of Ministers in the strategy development process right from the beginning. National Councils for Sustainable Development have also proved to be useful in bringing various stakeholders together for the formulation and implementation of the strategy.
10. The **technical process** of a national sustainable development strategy formulation involves various activities: undertaking assessment of the economic, social and environmental situation, identifying problems, setting clear priorities, establishing goals and objectives, developing the investment programme, monitoring and evaluation. These would include developing the knowledge base and building on existing strategies; designing a system for harmonizing key economic, social and environment related policies and carrying out the building of capacity for the strategy on a continuous basis.
11. The **participatory process** entails the full involvement of relevant groups (both government and non-governmental) in appropriate tasks including strategy design, exchanging information, decision-making, implementation etc. It is necessary to decide how much participation is possible and necessary and design participatory processes that are multi-layered and inclusive. The media needs to be effectively used both to create a forum for debate as well as for awareness raising.
12. The **resource mobilization process** involves ensuring the availability of adequate finance for the implementation of the strategy. Resources for the strategy development process may need to be mobilized from both domestic and international sources, as appropriate. It is important to ensure the availability of adequate domestic resource for all projects; full engagement of the private sector in the strategy development process. Given the strong global interdependence, mechanisms need to be developed for involving the international community in the strategy process, while the country remains in full ownership of the process.
13. Effective implementation of the national sustainable development strategy requires the follow up and monitoring of what is happening, an understanding of what works and what does not. Putting in place an effective M& E mechanism is vital for the strategy process. This would involve monitoring and evaluation of processes, outcomes and impacts. **Process** (systems based) evaluation measures the implementation of activities and how effectively this is done. M&E of **outcomes** involves measuring the effect of the activities that have been undertaken, mainly the more immediate, tangible or observable changes.

Impact assessment aims to ascertain the more long term and widespread consequences of the intervention.

14. Effective M&E for sustainable development requires that it be: **participatory, practical and reflective**. Institutional learning is an important aspect of the M&E process in which an organization analyses its own objectives and its capacity for achieving them, through reflection on experiences and development impacts. The other element of the M&E process is the development of indicators, benchmarks or thresholds. These indicators could be both qualitative and quantitative. Based on these indicators annual reports should be prepared to enable stakeholders see progress made.
15. The national sustainable development strategy process is an adaptive process that would require putting in place mechanisms, policies, legal and institutional frameworks for coordinating and integrating economic, social and environmental aspects. Key measures that need to be taken in this context are: developing a sustainable development strategy culture; institutionalization of the strategy process; putting in place appropriate legal and enforcement mechanisms; and mobilizing, engaging and strengthening national capacity for continuous strategy development process.

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ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-based organization
CSD	Commission for Sustainable Development
CDF	Comprehensive development framework
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of OECD)
DEAP	District Environmental Action Plan
DFID	Department for International Development, United Kingdom
IIED	International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED)
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (The World Conservation Union)
LSDS	Local Sustainable Development Strategies
NAP	National Action Plan to Combat Desertification
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCS	National Conservation strategy
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSDS	National sustainable development strategy
PRS(P)	Poverty reduction strategy (paper)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDS	Sustainable Development Strategies
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992)
UNDESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

GUIDANCE IN PREPARING A NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: MANAGING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

I. BACKGROUND

1. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), declared that, "Governments, in cooperation where appropriate with international organizations, should adopt a national strategy for sustainable development... This strategy should build upon and harmonize the various sectoral, economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country."¹
2. Five years later in 1997, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the review of Agenda 21, reaffirmed that national sustainable development strategies are important mechanisms for enhancing and linking priorities in social, economic and environmental policies.² It called upon all countries to complete, by the year 2002, the formulation and elaboration of national sustainable development strategies that reflect the contributions and responsibilities of all interested parties.
3. More recently in September 2000, 147 Heads of States and Governments signed the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed their "...support for the principles of sustainable development, including those set out in Agenda 21 and agreed upon at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development."⁴ The associated Millennium Development Goals include one relating to environmental sustainability, to: "integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources".⁴
4. Given these global commitments, the United Nations recognized the need for operational guidance on what national sustainable development strategies constitute, and also on how to prepare such strategies.
5. In the context of the upcoming World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in September 2002, the International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies, Accra, Ghana 7-9 November 2001 was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in collaboration with the Government of Ghana, Department for International Development of UK, the Danish Government and UNDP Capacity 21. The Forum reviewed experience to date in national sustainable development strategy development and implementation, shared lessons learned and best practices, and recommended approaches to integrate the principles of sustainable development into the policies and programmes of both developed and developing countries. Reflecting the views

¹ Agenda 21, Chapter 8, paragraph 8.7

² Programme of Action for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, paragraph 24

³ A/Res/55/2 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 55/2. United Nations Millennium Declaration para.22

⁴ A/56/326, Report of the Secretary General: Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, Goal 7, target 9.

of the participants, this Guidance in Preparing A National Sustainable Development Strategy: Managing Sustainability in the New Millennium has been prepared with the view to reinforcing the dialogue on sustainable development strategies and renewing commitment to their formulation and implementation.

II. WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

6. The Brundtland Commission Report, *Our Common Future*, defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Further, Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration states that: "human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature."
7. Sustainable development has three principal components: economic growth, social equity and protection of the environment. Underlying the economic component is the principle that society's well being would have to be maximized and poverty eradicated through the optimal and efficient use of natural resources. The concept of "needs" emphasized in the Commission's definition refers, in particular to the basic needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given. The social component refers to the relationship between nature and human beings, uplifting the welfare of people, improving access to basic health and education services, fulfilling minimum standards of security and respect for human rights. It also refers to the development of various cultures, diversity, pluralism and effective grass roots participation in decision-making. The issue of equity, i.e., the distribution of benefits and access to resources remains an essential component of both the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development. The environmental component, on the other hand, is concerned with the conservation and enhancement of the physical and biological resource base and eco-systems.
8. At the heart of operationalizing sustainable development is the challenge of evaluating and managing the complex interrelationships between economic, social and environmental objectives. Economic growth, for example, is made possible through the creative powers of human beings that enable the transformation of nature into meeting basic needs and material conveniences of everyday life. This transformation process often entails the depletion of the natural environment that could result in air pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss. Policy makers are thus confronted with the hard decisions of establishing the right balance between economic and environmental goals. Because benefits accrue to different groups at different times, determining the level and rates of investment in each area at a particular time involves making difficult choices. The positive and negative economic, social and environmental consequences of policy changes need to be assessed. Areas of tradeoffs, where benefits in one or more spheres result in losses in another sphere, need to be identified and appropriate mitigation measures taken to minimize negative impacts.

9. Today many countries, both developed and developing, have embraced the concept of sustainable development. Understanding of this concept has evolved over time from the early focus on environmental dimension to the current emphasis on sustainable development as a process that integrates economic, social and environmental objectives. There is also recognition that achieving sustainable development requires far reaching policy and institutional reforms and the involvement of all sectors at all levels. Sustainable development is not the responsibility of only government or one or two sectors of society.
10. Sustainable development is incremental and builds on what already exists, and its achievement is as much a process as a fixed goal. Sustainable development is not an activity that has to be left to the long term. Rather, it constitutes a set of short, medium and long term actions, activities and practices that aim to deal with immediate concerns while at the same time address long-term issues.
11. Agenda 21 promotes national sustainable development strategies as mechanisms for translating a country's goals and aspiration of sustainable development into concrete policies and actions. A national sustainable development strategy is a way in which countries address the challenge of progressing towards the goals of sustainable development at the national, local and even at the regional levels.

III. WHAT ARE NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

12. Since the Rio Summit, the understanding of a sustainable development strategy has moved from a national environmental strategy to a strategy that integrates economic, social and environmental aspects, as the original Rio emphasis. A sustainable development strategy is defined as a coordinated, participatory and iterative process of thoughts and actions to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner at the national and local levels. The process encompasses situation analysis, formulation of policies and action plans, implementation, monitoring and regular review. It is a cyclical and interactive process of planning, participation and action in which the emphasis is on managing progress towards sustainability goals rather than producing a "plan" as an end product. OECD/DAC defines NSDS as "a coordinated set of participatory and continuously improving processes of analysis, debate, capacity-strengthening, planning and investment, which integrates the economic, social and environmental objectives of society, seeking trade offs where this is not possible."⁵
13. There is no one type of approach and no single formula by which national sustainable development strategies can or should be undertaken. Every country needs to determine, for itself, how best to approach its sustainable development strategy preparation and implementation depending upon the prevailing political, historical cultural, ecological circumstances. Therefore, a "blueprint" approach for national sustainable development strategies is neither possible nor desirable. What

⁵ OECD/DAC Strategies for Sustainable Development: Practical Guide for Development Cooperation. March 2001

is important is the consistent application of the underlying principles and ensuring that economic, social and environment objectives are balanced and integrated.

14. A national sustainable development strategy should not also be seen as a new plan, or as a separate planning process alongside existing ones. It rather constitutes the adaptation of existing processes to comply with sustainable development principles. It is also an ongoing process and not a one-off 'project' for producing a document.
15. A sustainable development strategy is a tool for informed decision-making that provides a framework for systematic thought across sectors and territory. It also helps to institutionalize processes for consultation, negotiation, mediation and consensus building on priority societal issues where interests differ. A sustainable development strategy could empower a country to address inter-related social and economic problems by helping them to build capacities, develop procedures and legislative frameworks; allocate limited resources rationally and present timetables for actions.
16. Countries would benefit from formulating strategies both directly (as a result of making development more sustainable) and indirectly (from the process itself). An effective national sustainable development strategy will help to address priority problems with complex causes and complex implications ranging from issues of poverty reduction and environmental degradation to globalization. Sustainable development strategies present several advantages:
 - 16.1 Facilitating decision-making and improving the effectiveness of public policy:
 - Help to define choices, goals, targets and policies for sustainable development, and the underlying values;
 - Analyze economic, ecological and social issues in a comprehensive and integrated way;
 - Promote the development of government policies on sustainable development and building consensus around them;
 - Identify and evaluate options (legal reforms, institutional development, etc.) for addressing priority issues;
 - Harmonize policies and strategies across sectors and geographic areas;
 - Better prepare and position a country to benefit from such processes like globalization and growth in science and technology;
 - Encourage and facilitate institutional and behavioral change for sustainable development.
 - 16.2. Enhancing the mobilization of resources:
 - Facilitate the mobilization of a nation's human (including people's energies and creativity), financial and material resources, both internally (national) and externally (international), in support of sustainable development;

- Help countries to coordinate donor support - e.g., through donor round tables to consider support for a coherent set of projects and policy initiatives prioritized through a strategy;
- Help to meet reporting requirements under international conventions.

16.3 More efficient allocation of resources:

- Facilitate the efficient allocation of rather limited national resources on the basis of priorities set through participatory processes;
- Help identify development projects and programmes and guides their implementation;
- Improve the sharing of benefits that accrue to development on a more equitable basis through bringing up concerns of underprivileged groups to the forefront of the development agenda;
- Facilitate dealing with policy issues such as access to resources, land and property rights that impact on intergenerational benefits.

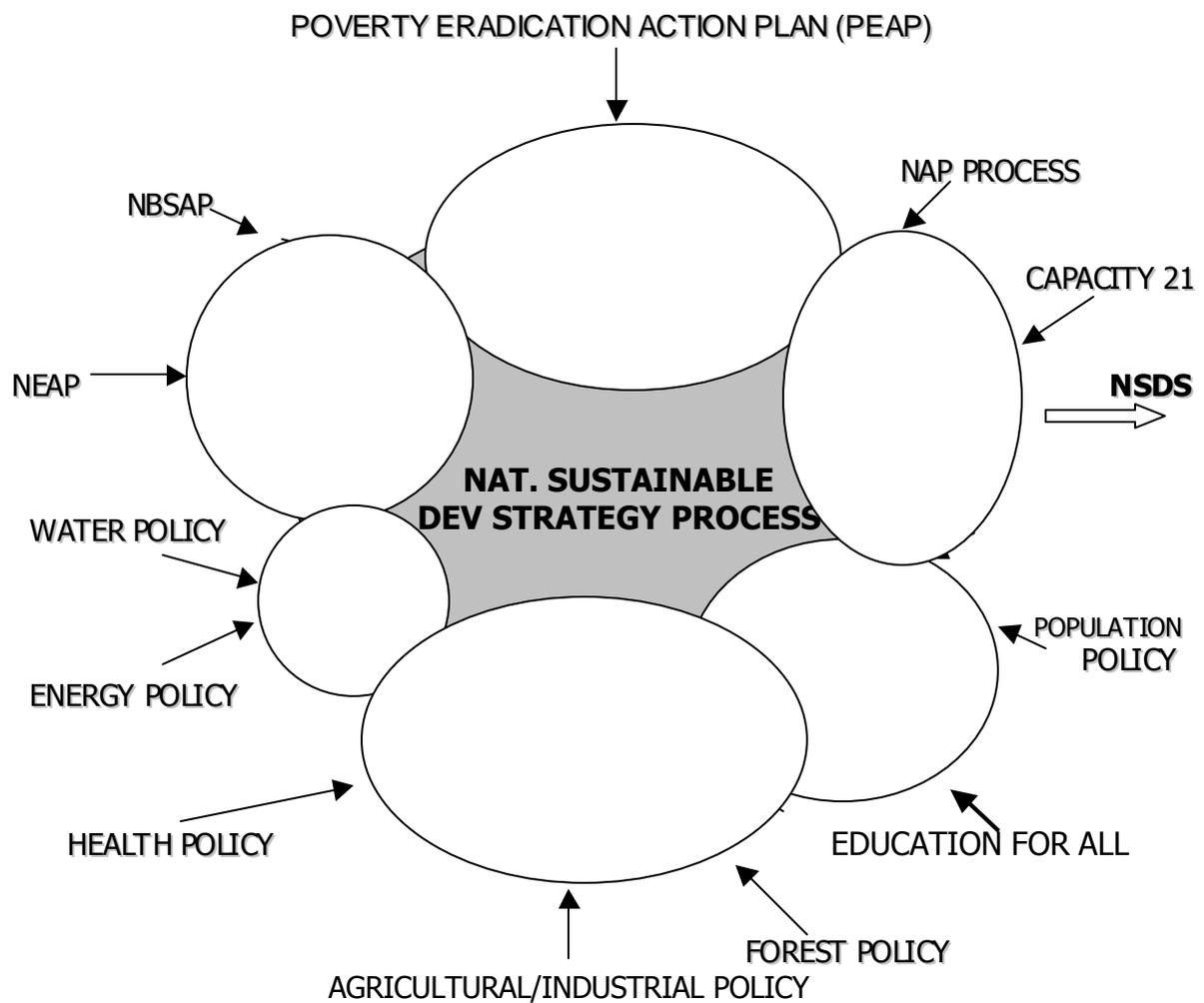
16.4 Resolving conflicts:

- Help to reconcile differences among groups of society and government departments through exposing differences and encouraging open dialogue;
- Facilitate the understanding of differing, at times contradictory policy objectives by quantifying benefits/losses and clarifying tradeoffs.

16.5 Building human and institutional capacity:

- Through clearly articulating goals and means to achieve them, a national sustainable development strategy helps to mobilize capacity, maintain and retain capacity and build it where necessary;
- Help build multidisciplinary capacities that can immediately be harnessed to solve complex and multidisciplinary problems;
- Help also build institutions and policy environment for sustained economic growth and social transformation.

17. Today, many countries may find integration, coordination and mainstreaming of policy goals as the most challenging task. The diagram below, based on the experience of a typical developing country illustrates the nature of these challenges. With the financial support received from multilateral and bilateral sources, many developing countries today have formulated several economic growth, social development and environment-oriented strategies. The diagram below shows how a national strategy development process can serve as an integrating point for various sectoral or convention oriented strategies.



18. Almost all the strategies and policies mentioned above are mutually supportive and possess some elements of sustainability. The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), for example, has been introduced as an overarching and holistic strategic plan. In many countries, however, these poverty reduction strategies or poverty eradication action plans are not organically linked to the other strategies like the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), National Action Plan to Combat Desertification (NAP), etc. and may not have strong environment components. Sectoral policies, for example, for agricultural, industrial or education development need to place greater emphasis on biodiversity conservation and sound natural resource management. The national sustainable development strategy process offers an opportunity to strengthen the sustainability elements of existing macro and sectoral strategies and develop synergy among them. Indeed, an NSDS need not be initiated as a new process or to replace other strategies, if these are already working well. In fact, any one of the more comprehensive strategies, for example, the PEAP could be a good entry point and basis for a national sustainable development strategy.

19. Putting in place a strategy development process involves additional costs. Reforming laws and institutions, engaging the civil society and private sector in the strategy process, developing new skills, etc., constitute financial burden to a country. However, the absence of coordination; contradicting policies and strategies; neglect of the environment or social sectors; etc., entail greater costs that can span over several generations. The benefits of the national sustainable development strategy process, thus, could far outweigh its costs.

IV. BASIS FOR BUILDING NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: ASSEMBLING THE PIECES

a. Types and evolution of national strategies and plans

20. Tools for managing economic and social development have evolved over the years both in concept and practice. For several decades, strategic planning was conceived of in terms of fixed five year development plans which set targets for macroeconomic variables and sectoral production over a fixed period. The setting of targets and priorities as well as implementation responsibility rested with governments. With the adoption of sustainable development as a paradigm, this traditional approach to planning has been largely replaced by strategies that focus on processes, participation and flexible approaches.
21. Since the Rio Summit, several national level comprehensive and/or sectoral economic growth, improvement of social welfare and environmental conservation oriented strategies were elaborated. Countries have pursued a diverse range of approaches in their design, formulation, and implementation. The strategies ranged from those led by technical consultants to those produced solely by governments and to those, which sought the wider participation of civil society. Some were prepared on the basis of national needs. Many in developing countries were, however, either sponsored by multilateral financial institutions or were advocated by global conventions with financial support for their formulation provided. These included:
 - 21.1. Over-arching politically inspired strategies. This refers to those strategies presented by governments as their platform during the electoral process. Examples include the Gref Plan in Russia of President Putin's administration, the Growth, Equity and Redistribution (GEAR) plan of South Africa's ANC, and the political manifestos of many OECD and other country governments;
 - 21.2. Sustainable development strategies of developed countries. Several developed countries have been engaged in formulating and implementing comprehensive sustainable development strategies. For example, Canada formulated the Green Plan in 1990 that evolved to A Guide to Green

Government in 1995 and later in 1997 to a sustainable development strategy presented to Parliament;⁶

21.3. Long-term national vision. Many countries today are working on 2020 or 2025 national development vision, which is a strategic planning framework for a twenty to twenty five year period. For example, the Ghana vision 2020 (1996-2020) provides a strategic direction for transforming the country from a poor low income country to a prosperous middle income country. Thailand's national vision was developed over 18 months period as part of a participatory process, involving 50,000 people, to prepare the Ninth Economic and Social Development Plan;⁷

21.4. Strategies dealing with economic recovery and growth:

- Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Introduced in the early 1980s, SAPs were sponsored by the Bretton Woods Institutions and aimed at strengthening productive capacity, restoring fiscal and monetary equilibrium, introduce budgetary discipline and promoted liberalization and privatization. SAPs were heavily criticized for failing to recognize social and environmental aspects of development. Although efforts were made to improve the design of SAPs in the 1990s to reflect social and environmental concerns, SAPs were discontinued in favor of more holistic and comprehensive programmes;
- Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF). Launched by the World Bank in early 1999, the CDF is based on four inter-related principles⁸ – long term holistic vision; country ownership; partnership: and a focus on development results. The Bank has made assessment of the experience of 46 countries and has identified shortcomings, for example, integrating sector strategies into the macroeconomic framework and poverty reduction strategies into the long term vision; limited involvement of the private sector, parliamentarians and elected representatives and media in national decision making; and the lack of strong country ownership and political commitment.

21.5 Social/poverty reduction oriented strategies:

- Poverty Reduction Strategies. Aimed at low-income countries and promoted by the World Bank and the IMF, PRSs were launched in September 1999. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are country-written documents detailing plans for achieving sustained decreases in poverty. Initially required as a basis for access to debt relief in Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), PRSPs will be required by all IDA countries as of 1 July 2002. The stated

⁶ Office of the Auditor General of Canada and Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Evolution of Canada's Federal Sustainable Development Agenda, paper presented to the International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies, Accra 7-9 November 2001.

⁷ OECD/DAC, Policy Guidance for Strategies for Sustainable Development, March 2001.

⁸ CDF Secretariat, The World Bank, Comprehensive Development Framework: Meeting the Promise? Early Experience and Emerging Issues. September 2001.

goals of poverty reduction strategies are that they "...should be country-driven, be developed transparently with broad participation of elected institutions, stakeholders including civil society, key development co-operation agencies and regional development banks, and have a clear link with the agreed international development goals";

21.6 Strategies dealing with integrating environment/conservation into development:

- National Conservation Strategies (NCSs): Introduced in the 1980s and promoted by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), NCSs were intended to provide a comprehensive cross-sectoral analysis of conservation and resource management issues to help integrate environmental conservation concerns into the development process. Today, the international conservation organizations that once promoted NCS have shifted their focus to developing the narrower national biodiversity action plans, while many of the NCS countries have moved towards national sustainable development strategies;
- National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs): Promoted by the World Bank and other donors, NEAPs describe a country's major environmental concerns, identify the principal causes of environmental problems and formulate policies and actions to deal with them. NEAPs came into being as part of the conditionality for IDA loans and had shorter time frames for formulation than the NCSs. Today, NEAPs appear to be fading away even in Africa where they were widely initiated, due to poor implementation records - failure to fully integrate environmental concerns into national development policies, lack of national ownership and the World Bank's shift to other strategies;
- National Agenda 21: Called for by Agenda 21, UNDP Capacity 21 has provided support, since 1993, to 75 developing countries for the preparation of national and local Agenda 21 strategies. The process encompasses the definition of policies and action plans, their implementation, monitoring, and regular review;
- Sub-national and local strategies: With the growing recognition that local strategies provide a means of connecting national policy frameworks with action on the ground, many countries have embarked upon local level strategies. China, for example, has introduced Local Agenda 21 with the purpose to mobilize and focus local government efforts to achieve sustainable development.

21.7 Convention driven strategies. With the adoption of global conventions to implement Agenda 21, various strategies and action plans called for by these Conventions were formulated and are being implemented. These included:

- National Biodiversity Action Plans (NBAPs). These are action plans designed to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and are funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under its enabling activities programme.

Many developing-country parties to the Convention have prepared national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBAPs);

- National Action Programmes against Desertification (NAPs). Introduced by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (CCD) and sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), these plans seek to address issues of dry land development through participatory approaches in the identification of priorities, programme development and implementation. Many Sahelian and eastern Africa countries have either completed the preparation or are in the process of formulating a NAP;
- The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Convention stipulates that countries parties to it adopt national policies or take corresponding measures to mitigate climate change. A national communication is expected from all parties to the Convention. Developed countries are due to submit their third National Communication by the end of November 2001, while developing country communications are still being produced for the first time.

b. Key lessons learned

22. Comprehensive analysis of the performance of the national strategies mentioned above is inadequate. Only a few strategies have been adequately assessed and evaluated, especially in terms of their outcomes. There is, however, fairly reliable broad knowledge residing in different institutions – The United Nations, UNDP Capacity 21, World Bank and OECD/DAC that clearly shows the kind of challenges faced and lessons learned from the strategy formulation and implementation experience. The comprehensive review of national environment-oriented strategies sponsored by IUCN-The World Conservation Union some five years ago is another vital source of information.
23. Overall, the development strategy experience had mixed results. There were notable achievements in the area of economic recovery; building awareness about sustainable development, in particular the environment; capacity building particularly in the development of institutions; and the adoption of environmental laws and legislation. Serious shortcomings existed too, which were common in many countries and included:
 - The lack of clear and pragmatic vision of development. While these developments are encouraging, there were problems in mainstreaming them in the national development decision-making processes, particularly in linking them to short and even medium term policies. Some of them were also made so comprehensive that they addressed both macro and sectoral issues. As a result, they have become a wish list of what technocrats desire. To be useful, such long-term strategies need to be home grown exercises, participatory and address specific and concrete issues;

- Absence or limited national ownership. Many strategies of the past decade have been responses to external pressure and development agency requirements. As a result, they have often been one-off undertakings with poor implementation record;
 - Too much focus on “document” production. In many countries, the formulation of a strategy gave more importance to producing a strategy document rather than to putting in place a continuous process of strategy formulation, participation and implementation. As a result, the strategies tended to be forgotten immediately after they were printed;
 - Inadequate or lack of public consultation in the identification of problems and setting of priorities and in general the whole strategy process, as a result of which many groups were alienated;
 - Lack of integration of the strategies and the overall development policy. Once formulated, many strategies were kept outside mainstream decision-making process. Many previous strategies laid out numerous projects/ plans and/or comprehensive aspirations, while largely neglecting key processes and the principal need for institutional changes. This has resulted in loss of interest in the strategy development process;
 - Putting little emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. Most of the strategy processes of the 1990s have put little emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. This is because some countries accorded low priority importance to M&E while others lack the institutional mechanism, capacity, and culture to use M & E as a tool for improving the implementation of the strategy.
24. The lessons learned over the past years, realization of the benefits that accrue to the strategy process; the growing international consensus on the vital importance of the strategy, etc., offer new opportunities to streamline approaches, remove bottlenecks and move towards sustainable development.

V. ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

25. The experiences of both developed and developing countries suggest that sound and effective national sustainable development strategies would have certain fundamental elements in common. These are elements, constituting the underlying principles for strategy development, and include:

i. Country ownership and commitment:

- Country-driven, multi-stakeholder ‘ownership’ and strong political commitment are crucial to the development and implementation of effective and continuous national sustainable development strategies. Countries should take the initiative to develop their own strategies. The design of

component processes, objectives and targets should be based on a country's own needs for a national sustainable development strategy. The strategy development process should also be backed by strong political commitment at both the national and local levels. Such commitment should be there on a continuous and long-term basis. This is key to guaranteeing that the policy and institutional changes that the strategy entails are effected, the necessary financial resources committed and institutions assume full responsibility for implementation of the strategy in their respective areas;

- Sound leadership and good governance is necessary for effective strategy development. This is key to guaranteeing that the policy and institutional changes that the strategy entails are effected, the necessary financial resources committed and institutions assume full responsibility for implementation of the strategy in their respective areas;
- The national sustainable development strategy should be based on a shared strategic and pragmatic vision. A long-term strategic vision of a country outlines what needs to be done in the future and defines targets and courses of action. Such a vision should reflect the country's history, core values and aspirations of the people. It is important to ensure that the stated goals and objectives can reasonably be achieved and that they are backed with the full commitment of those sectors (private, government, academic and research, etc), which are supposed to implement them;
- Strong institutional leadership is required to launch, drive, build on and sustain the national sustainable development strategy processes. Whether a single government institution such as the ministry of planning should lead the process, or whether numerous institutions collectively or individually should promote it, depends upon each country's situation. The institution responsible for coordinating the national sustainable development strategy process should be an authority, which is influential at various administrative levels with a cross-sectoral mandate such as a planning or finance ministry. It should also have strong technical capacity for coordination and technical leadership;
- Institutions at the local level are strong driving forces for national sustainable development strategies. For a strategy to succeed, it should reflect the needs and aspirations of the local people and at the same time be fully backed by adequate commitment from the local level for its implementation. Indeed, it is the people at the local level who are the direct beneficiaries of the strategy process and real driving forces for forging integration;
- Ensure continuity of the strategy development process. A national strategy for sustainable development requires long-term and uninterrupted effort. Mechanisms, thus, need to be put in place that would enable the strategy development to be carried out as a continuous and cyclical process with broad national support, regardless of the political party in power.

ii. Integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generations:

- A national strategy for sustainable development should be comprehensive, balanced as well as vertically and horizontally well integrated. Vertical integration refers to incorporating community (local) level concerns and actions into national decision making processes. Special efforts should be made to ensure that strategies have long-term beneficial impacts on disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as the poor. Horizontal integration on the other hand refers to the coordinated involvement of various sectors in strategy development. Ensuring balance between economic growth, social development and protection of the environment is a fundamental principle of sustainable development strategies;
- Link the short to the medium and long term. Medium and long term plans and actions are implemented through a series of short-term action plans. It is only when planned outputs of the strategy are specified in a work plan (daily activities) for stakeholders that the strategy becomes a reality. Indeed, one of the key lessons learned from conventional five year development plans was the importance of shortening the time horizon through a series of five, three and yearly plans. This process enables countries to ensure consistency and to establish strong linkages between immediate and medium term undertakings. Sustainable development strategies should not necessarily have a rigidly defined time frame. However, it is important to ensure that what is being done in the immediate term does not thwart expected outputs in the medium and long term;
- Link national and local priorities and actions. Strategies development should be two-way iterative within and between national and local bodies. The main policies and procedures (economic, fiscal, trade, external relations as well as legislative improvements, etc.) should be set at the central level. Detailed planning, implementation, would be undertaken at the local level. It is, however, important to ensure that such local institutions have the necessary capacity as well as the authority to mobilize and allocate resources, along with an appropriate system of accountability;
- In the pursuit of integration, trade-offs cannot be ignored. Consensus building should be a key factor in the national sustainable development strategy process; however, trade-offs must be faced – particularly in the short term – for a national sustainable development strategy to be credible and effective. Where potential conflicts are identified, efforts should first be made to find creative solutions – including reviewing goals and re-evaluating options. Trade-offs should be made transparent and accessible and be accompanied by mitigation, compensation, training etc. Where trade-off cannot be dealt with immediately, it is also important to make the difficulties transparent.

iii. Broad participation and effective partnerships:

- One of the fundamental prerequisites of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making. The involvement of the civil society and the private sector in strategy development strengthens the planning process by building broad legitimacy for the process, by engaging partners whose support will be needed for effective implementation. It also widens the range of skills, information and knowledge available for formulating and implementing the strategy. Public participation is also an objective in its own right and a fundamental equity principle of sustainable development;
- Broad public participation helps to open up the strategy development process to new ideas and sources of information; expose issues that need to be addressed; enable problems, needs and preferences to be expressed; and develop a consensus on the need for action that leads to better implementation. Most strategy processes have faced the issue of who represents each stakeholder group. In one successful case, each group had its own selection mechanism and has over time developed the capacity needed for effective participation;
- Communication and wide information dissemination is key for effective participation. Good public communication is a tool for ensuring broad ownership and participation. It is also a tool for conflict prevention as it helps to expose differences among organizations on issues and approaches prior to them becoming serious. National and local media play vital roles in the strategy process in keeping stakeholders informed of progress made, expressing consensus reached, generating wider understanding of sustainable development, and encouraging participation. The media also can play an important role in raising governments' awareness on the effective involvement of citizens in sustainable development. Government agencies, on their part, play a significant role in raising greater awareness among the population about sustainable development and its links to a nation's vision and strategic planning processes;
- Promote and build partnerships with the civil society, private sector and external organizations. Opportunities and responsibilities need to be shared through strategic partnerships among all concerned – civil society, business, community and interest groups, as well as governments. These partnerships should be built around concrete initiatives that make the best use of stakeholder capabilities, offer incentives and ensure their commitment. The business sector, for example, could bring in its pragmatic, solution-seeking abilities into public-private partnerships. Civil society could contribute its community-based experiences and networks. Counter-parting of resources – whether technological, financial, human or physical – provides for stronger ownership by the partners involved. Effective partnerships require

transparency, mutual trust and respect among concerned parties based on a system of accountability;

- Governments have a key role to play in creating an enabling environment for participation. The central government can promote public participation as it should provide leadership, incentive structures and allocates financial resources. It can also develop legal and policy frameworks that promote and facilitate participation. A decentralized governance structure can facilitate broad-based participation in the various stages of the national sustainable development strategy process. But the central government has to be part of a multi-stakeholder participatory process that involves local authorities, the private sector and civil society, as well as indigenous groups. It is also important to ensure that the conduct of consultations is free from any kind of pressure by government or other groups and that they are fair and all-inclusive;
- Local governments need to play a stronger role in the formulation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies. Development information should be made accessible to all local governments. Capacity strengthening measures and resources that are made available at the national level need also to be accessible at the local level. In particular, the effective participation and involvement of the less privileged groups of society should be ensured. The role that each stakeholder can play should be recognized and mutually respected in order to achieve equitable participation.

iv. Develop capacity and enabling environment:

- Sustainable development strategies require strong human and institutional capacity, and in turn are important vehicles for building a multifaceted capacity for solving complex problems. The human capacity required includes technical skills and abilities for negotiation, conflict resolution and consensus building, capability to internalize diverse experiences and perspectives to enable effective learning. The institutional capacity, on the other hand, includes capacity for project and programme development; evolving a common vision and a sense of purpose that binds stakeholders; catalyzing internal change processes; encouraging innovative behavior.; and developing incentive mechanism. In addition to the human and institutional capacity, measures should be taken to improve the legal and policy environment within which the strategy is developed and implemented;
- A sustainable development strategy should be built on existing knowledge and expertise. It should optimize local skills and capacity both within and outside government. Mechanisms need to be developed to effectively mobilize a country's capacity, maintain and retain it. Where needed, provision should be made to develop the necessary capacity as part of the strategy process. Accordingly, an assessment of the political, institutional, scientific and financial capacity of the state, market and civil society participants may be among the activities undertaken at the beginning of the strategy formulation process;

- Traditional knowledge and institutions need to be given due recognition and be considered in the strategy development process. Indigenous wisdom and systems represent a vast pool of locally relevant experience and means for survival and adaptation, can make substantive contributions to a national sustainable development strategy. Policy and institutional processes need to value and encourage their use.

v. Focus on outcomes and means of implementation:

- A sustainable development strategy should aim to achieve concrete results on the ground. Public participation and the other processes of the strategy are vitally important and could be viewed as results in their own right. However, continuity of political support and community interest will be ensured only if there are visible results that making a positive difference for the society. Anchor the strategy process in sound technical analysis. Priorities need to be based on a sound analysis of the present situation and of projected trends and risks, examining links between local, national and global challenges. The external pressures on a country - those resulting from globalization, for example, or the impacts of climate change - need to be included in this analysis. Such analysis depends on credible and reliable information on changing environmental, social and economic conditions, pressures and responses, and their correlations with strategy objectives and indicators;
- A strategy for sustainable development should build on existing strategies, policies and processes. It should work towards convergence, complementarity and coherence among different planning frameworks and policies to achieve concrete outcomes. This requires good management to ensure co-ordination of mechanisms and processes, and to identify and resolve potential conflicts. The roles, responsibilities and relationships between the different key participants in strategy processes must also be made clear;
- Set realistic but flexible targets. Target setting helps individuals and organizations to define the quantity and quality of expected outputs and services "Targets" accompanied by incentives can, indeed, motivate both management and workers to work hard and apply their utmost creativity and energies. Although targets need to be challenging, they ought to be achievable and realistic in relation to actual and perceived constraints and be set at the organizational or firm level;
- Build coherence between budget and strategy priorities. The annual budget process plays a central role in linking the short to the medium and long term,. The strategy needs to be fully integrated into the budget process to ensure that its components have the financial resources to achieve the set objectives;
- Develop mechanisms for monitoring; follow up, evaluation and feedback. Evaluation and learning from experience need to be an integral part of the strategy process. Monitoring and evaluation needs to be based on clear

indicators and built into strategies to steer processes, track progress, distil and capture lessons, and signal when a change of direction is necessary. It is important to develop an evaluative culture (doing, improving, learning and relearning). The strategy process should enhance institutional arrangements, sharpen concepts and tools, foster professional skills and competence, and improve public awareness. As policy responses and technological capability change over time, the M&E process would permit regular update and continuous renewal of the strategy. It would also enable public institutions to produce regular national reports (including indicators) so that stakeholders can see progress (and the Government) be held accountable.

VI. BUILDING THE ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY: MANAGING CRITICAL PROCESSES

26. Moving towards sustainable development is arguably the most difficult challenge decision-makers face at all levels and in all countries. A national sustainable development strategy offers a powerful and effective mechanism to harness the skills, values and energies of a nation and makes possible the attainment of sustainable development. It requires, however, making the principles mentioned above operational through putting in place, on a continuous basis, four critical processes: political, participatory, technical and resource mobilization processes.
27. **Political process:** A key element of successful national sustainable development strategies is the existence of a strong political commitment from the top leadership as well as from local authorities of a country. The challenge is to develop capabilities to think and operate strategically about sustainable development. Those responsible for spearheading the strategy should fully embrace sustainable development and be devoted to promoting it on a continuous basis. They will also need to promote the development of strategies at sub-national levels (e.g. provincial, district, city, local community) and provide for effective working linkages among strategies at different levels. The important measures that need to be taken to effectively manage the political process are to:
 - 27.1 Identify the key stakeholders (individuals and institutions) as well as shakers and movers in the strategy development process both at the national and local levels;
 - 27.2 Organize seminars or workshops to build awareness regarding sustainable development and ensure the involvement of key actors, most notably the media, in the formulation of the strategy right from the beginning;
 - 27.3 Ascertain the best entry point and mobilize support for the strategy. As explained above, some of the national comprehensive strategies like the Poverty Eradication Strategy, National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs) or the NAP process need to be integrated into the mainstream planning process in order to develop a national development strategy;
 - 27.4 Establish an engine to drive the process. Often, a Secretariat is formed, comprising committed staff with good management skills, both from inside and

outside the government. The Secretariat may be answerable to a national steering committee or a national council for sustainable development with broad representation, but this entity has to be influential at the highest political level;

27.5 Create a national council for sustainable development. National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSD) have members drawn from government, civil society, private sector and academia. Over the past decade with support from the Earth Council, NCSDs were established in many countries, although their success is rather mixed. They are often effective if chaired at a high political level. The duties, responsibilities and authority of such Councils vary from country to country. The common roles⁹ of NCSDs are:

- Facilitating participation and co-operation of civil and economic society and governments for sustainable development;
- Assisting governments in decision-making and policy formulation;
- Integrating economic, social and environmental action and perspectives;
- Looking at the local implications of global agreements such as Agenda 21 and other international conventions related to sustainable development;
- Providing the systematic and informed participation of civil society in UN deliberations.

27.6 Ensure the effective engagement and close involvement of the Ministry of Finance and Planning as well as the Council of Ministers in the strategy development process right from the beginning. In many countries, these organizations are responsible for the allocation of budgetary resources; and their commitment to the strategy process are essential to avoiding the marginalization of the national sustainable development strategies, as has happened in some countries;

27.7 Engage local level institutions in the strategy conceptualization process right from the beginning. Institutions at the local level could be stronger driving forces for the national sustainable development strategy process than has been hitherto. A priority activity will be a review relevant legislation and policy with the view to removing bottlenecks and empowering local stakeholders in the development of the strategy;

27.8 Develop legislation and policy measures that encourage and promote innovation and dialogue as a vital component of the strategy development process. The testing of new approaches at the local level can often assist learning processes through validation, and thus facilitate integration at the policy level.

28. **Technical process.** The technical aspects of the NSDS formulation involve various activities: undertaking assessment of the economic, social and environmental situation, identifying problems, setting clear priorities, developing the investment programme, monitoring and evaluation. Among the key measures to be taken include:

⁹ See, OECD/DAC, (2001) p.11.

- 28.1 Developing the knowledge base and building on existing strategies. Knowing what is going on and has gone before is vital for the formulation of a meaningful strategy. A new strategy should take into account problems and constraints encountered as well as achievements and gaps left by past strategies. Because the national sustainable development strategy is a cyclical process, certain components of the strategy continue throughout the cycle and follow one from the other; for example, information analysis, problem identification, monitoring and evaluation, etc.;
- 28.2 Identify critical capacities needed for development of the strategy at the level of the national secretariat, sector ministries and public agencies as well as at the local level. At the national level, such capacities include multidisciplinary technical knowledge, skills for negotiation, conflict resolution, building consensus and effective communication. It also includes the capability to internalize diverse experiences and perspectives to enable effective learning. The timing and priorities of capacity building initiatives would be influenced not only by availability of resources but also by attitudes, perceptions and cultural orientation;
- 28.3 Develop a framework for building human and institutional capacity. Institutional capacities include capacities to catalyze internal change processes; encourage innovative behaviour; develop and implement incentive mechanisms; evolve effective monitoring and evaluation systems, and capacity to adapt to new contexts and challenges. The building of these institutional capacities needs to go hand in hand with the development of human capacity as well as with the creation of a conducive legal and policy environment to ensure effective capacity utilization and capacity retention;
- 28.4 Strengthen the technical capacity of the coordinating Secretariat as a matter of priority. The task of coordinating and guiding the formulation of the national strategy is indeed heavy. In many countries, the technical capacity of the Secretariat may be too limited to address the wide-ranging issues that the national sustainable development strategy entails. Some countries have solved this problem through a transfer of senior staff on a temporary basis from sector ministries to the Secretariat, for example to chair sectoral teams and provide technical leadership in the formulation of the strategy, until such activities are institutionalized;
- 28.5 Setting up sectoral national sustainable development strategies at the national level. All efforts should be made to involve sector ministries and the key stakeholders outside government during the strategy formulation process. One way of achieving this is through the establishment of multi-sectoral expert teams drawn from several ministries and organizations. The sectoral expert teams will be responsible for all the technical work including:
- Assessment of development performance of a particular sector;
 - Identification of key problems/issues resulting from the assessment;

- Setting priorities (on a preliminary basis) and formulation of objectives;
 - Develop strategies, investment programme and action plans.
- 28.6 Develop a methodological framework for developing the strategy. Although there could be manuals or frameworks like this one or OECD/DAC guidance on developing strategies, it would be important for each country to customize these frameworks to the particular situation of that country. Therefore, preparing a methodological guidance framework explaining what should be done, how it should be done, etc. is among the initial tasks. The methodological framework could include:
- Guidelines for sectoral assessment;
 - Criteria for identifying priority problems/issues;
 - Approaches to setting of objectives and targets;
 - How to ensure consistency and coherence among sectors and regions;
 - Formulation of an investment plan, etc.
- 28.7 Prepare process and quantitative guidelines for achieving integration. Integration has proven to be the most challenging task faced by countries to date, and is bound to be a formidable undertaking in the future. There are no quick fixes for achieving integration, nor it is possible to achieve full integration. Different manuals, procedures and guidelines need to be developed to various aspects of components, viz., linking the budget to the strategy, linking local and national strategies, integrating economic, social and environment objectives and integrating sector and macroeconomic policies. Among the guidelines to be prepared are:
- Develop integrated scenarios for the future, and use these to test the resilience of policy options;
 - Develop and apply rigorous protocols on achieving consensus;
 - Develop new ways of working by piloting appropriately funded and integrated activities to cross institutional divisions; and
 - Work on shared tasks, e.g., shared reporting, planning and assessment in relation to sustainable development priorities (rather than this being done by sectoral agencies, followed by rationalization by a central body, as often happens at present).
- 28.9 Develop a set of sustainable development indicators. In this context, the Commission on Sustainable Development has now published its revised set of indicators of sustainable development that can be used as a convenient starting point for developing a set of national indicators. Other indicator sets are also available that can be used as additional resource information;
- 28.10 Establish goals and objectives of the strategy, and set broad targets for achieving objectives through appropriate forums, e.g., policy dialogues and round tables;

- 28.11 Design a system for harmonizing key economic, social and environment related policies. This system could be a set of matrices that show commonalities and differences of these policies. Such a process would enable a country to avoid contradictions among policies and ensure that policies are mutually supportive;
- 28.12 Focus on the major issues of sustainable development. Policy and programmatic dialogues should first focus on potential win-win situations, and later move to the more difficult issues. This would help to keep people interested in the strategy process. However, care should be taken not to oversimplify the tasks or raise undue expectation;
- 28.13 Place emphasis on action planning and budgeting. A national sustainable development strategy is a "macro" approach that needs on-the-ground "micro" actions. These can include: introducing policy, legislative, institutional and organizational changes; building capacity of government, NGOs and local communities; and promoting a range of programmes and projects;
- 28.14 Capacity building for a national sustainable development should be carried out on a continuous basis. The formulation of the strategy, undertaking sectoral situation analysis, identifying problems and setting priorities, and ensuring vertical and horizontal coordination requires a different set of skills and experience. Equally important is strengthening the capacity at the local level. Coordination at the level of the national secretariat would become manageable if reasonably good technical work is done at the sectoral and local levels. Provincial, district or community level institutions play a vital role in the initiation, formulation, design, and implementation of the national strategy, hence effectively mobilizing the capacities that exist and building on them where necessary is critical.
29. **Participatory process.** Participation implies full involvement of relevant groups (both government and non-governmental) in appropriate tasks including strategy design, exchanging information, decision-making, implementation, etc. It is necessary to decide how much participation is possible and necessary, and to develop mechanisms for participation, e.g., core groups, round tables, workshops, community-based techniques, etc. Among the key steps to be taken are:
- 29.1. Design participatory processes that are multi-layered and inclusive. The national Secretariat and the National Councils of Sustainable Development (NCSA) where they exist could determine the main "stakeholders" to be involved, the issues to be discussed, the approach, and how to manage their inputs. Mechanisms need to be created for the involvement of all sectors (government departments, public institutions, research and higher institutions of learning, private organizations and NGOs) in the formulation process;

- 29.2 Determine the key stakeholders. The depth and breadth of participation would depend on the financial resources available and time needed to carry out the consultation. Because resources are limited, it is vital to determine the number of participants and possible venues a priori ;
 - 29.3 Ensure that participatory approaches are transparent and responsibilities of various institutions clear;
 - 29.4 Use the media effectively both to create a forum for debate as well as for awareness raising. If managed well, the media can play a useful role in enhancing participation of the public in the sustainable development process;
 - 29.5 Develop innovative approaches for promoting sustainable development. Although conventional tools such as manuals, guidelines, and formal training and research are of key importance, different approaches and entry points can be utilized to improve the quality, coverage and impact of sustainable development education and awareness raising. This will include the promotion of "built-in" performance-based incentive mechanisms that encourage continuous improvement. Traditional organizational models based on hierarchy and compartmentalization should be complemented by more inclusive approaches in order to stimulate greater interaction and shared learning.
30. **Resource mobilization process.** The implementation of the strategy depends on the availability of financial resources. Indeed, finance is a major constraint to the achievement of sustainable development, although it is a constraint that can easily be removed if the strategy and the investment programme are sound. Conventional wisdom suggests that "excellence" attracts resources. Therefore, in the development of the strategy the emphasis should be placed on making sure that the objectives and priorities of the strategy and its investment programme feasible. The policy and institutional environment should be conducive for resource mobilization. Effective management of the resource mobilization process remains a cornerstone of a successful strategy. Among the measures to be taken in this regard are:
- 30.1 Adequate, predictable and regular financial resources are required to implement the national sustainable development strategy in order for it to be part of an effective, iterative and inclusive process. Such financial resources are required to initiate a national sustainable development strategy process, to operate the systems necessary for continuous improvement, and to implement resulting policies and programmes. This in turn could potentially make a national sustainable development strategy expensive, however, by improving integration, priority settings and institutional roles, the strategy could effectively enhance efficiency, effectiveness and equity;
 - 30.2 Resources for the strategy development process may need to be mobilized from both domestic and international sources, as appropriate. Ensuring the

availability of adequate domestic resource for all projects is essential. This may be hard decision for many developing countries given resource constraints. But it is a key test for the commitment of the government to the strategy process. Domestic funding of the strategy process is also necessary for full national ownership as well as for continuity of the strategy process. Strategies developed with large external support tend to be either one-time undertakings or be disowned by one or more stakeholders groups;

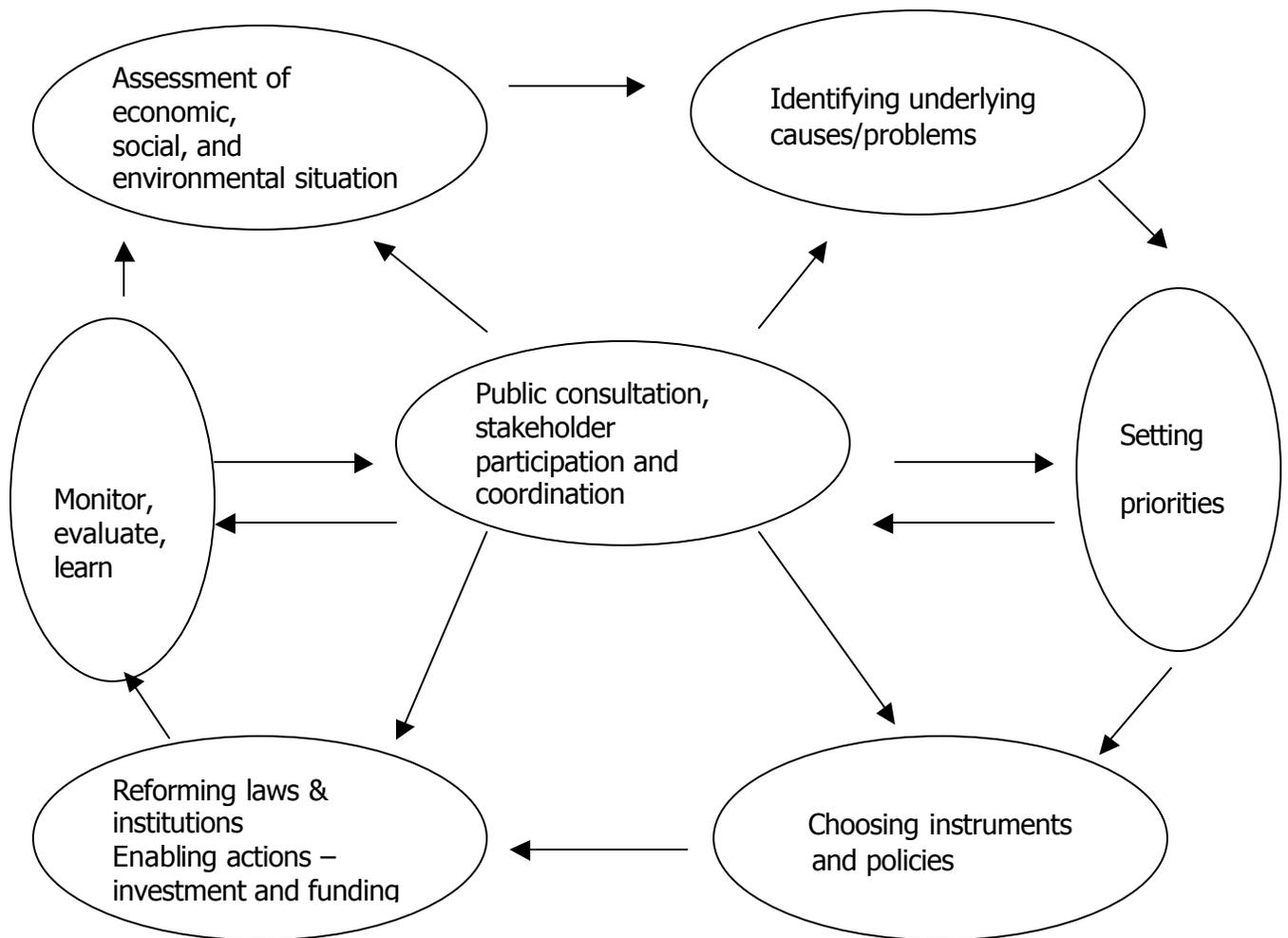
- 30.3 The capacity to internally reallocate available resources improves ownership of the national sustainable development strategy. Such flexibility contributes to the better integration of the strategy with budget/investment processes in addition to fundamentally improving the financial flows towards the national sustainable development strategy. It is important, therefore, to assess current finance flows within the country in relation to the national sustainable development goals, and to identify entry points whereby the national sustainable development strategy can influence finances to flow into sustainable development investments. This should be pursued as a continuous rather than a one time effort. Well articulated goals, programmes and clear priorities set within the context of a sustainable development strategy is likely to elicit more funding than the unprioritized 'wish-list' strategies of the past;
- 30.4 Fully engage the private sector in the strategy development process. In many countries, the private sector is not well recognized and its role not fully defined in the strategy development process partly because of the mutual distrust between government and business. While it is true that the private sector in some countries is small and weak player in economic development, the key constraint is the difference of opinion on the role of the private sector in the national agenda and how it should play that role. In some countries the creation of business forums that encouraged open dialogue between government and the private sector have enhanced mutual understanding, facilitated the participation of the private sector in defining and implementing the national strategy. Such involvement has increased the role of the private sector in trade and industry and in some countries in the development of infrastructure as well as in research;
- 30.5 Design mechanisms for involving the international donor community right from the beginning, while the country remains in full ownership of the process. The international donor community has played and will continue to play an important role in the development process. But relations with donor countries need to be well and effectively managed for countries to benefit from those relations;
- 30.6 Prepare investment plans or a series of project proposals to implement the strategy. A strategy is translated into actions through a series of investment programmes and projects. Project/programme development is the gist of the strategy process. But project development may require more capacity than some countries possess. A country should mobilize its trained personnel

within and outside the country as well as from the donor community to prepare a sound, feasible and convincing programme;

- 30.7 Donors should adhere to the elements of national sustainable development strategies mentioned above and should adopt flexible approaches that would enable them to technically and financially support different components of the strategy process. Multilateral financial and development institutions as well as bilateral agencies should not require developing countries to prepare new plans or country programmes.

VII. FORMULATING THE STRATEGY

31. Initiative to bring together existing strategies and processes towards a national sustainable development strategy formulation process. As emphasized above, a national sustainable development strategy process should be built on existing strategies and processes. The idea for initiating this process may come from any appropriate source: the Head of State, Minister of Finance or Planning or Foreign Affairs, a national workshop, or from the agencies responsible for the implementation of national economic, social or environment oriented strategies. As emphasized under the section on "elements", the institution responsible for the national sustainable development strategy (national coordinating Secretariat) should be strategically well placed within government to capture those ideas and translate them into something doable. Often, the strategy development process starts with the preparation of an initiation note. The initiation note contains an explanation of what the strategy process is all about, how it builds on existing strategies and processes, its benefits and what it involves. The note needs to be prepared by the coordinating secretariat in collaboration with the President's Office or Prime Minister's or Planning/ Finance Secretariat. The other strategy processes follow from the approval of the note or the understanding reached from the discussion of the note. Therefore, the initiation note plays a fundamental role in the strategy process. It is also this note that defines the mandate of the coordinating secretariat and launches the national sustainable development strategy process.
32. Once the initiation note is approved and the mandate for the formulation of the national sustainable development strategy obtained, subsequent processes are illustrated in the diagram below. The diagram, among other things, illustrates the critical role that public consultation and participation play at almost all stages of the formulation and implementation processes.



33. Assessment of current economic, social, and environment situation. This can be undertaken through background studies and workshops, and by government agencies, universities, research and policy institutions and independent professionals. As explained above, the first task of sectoral NSDS teams would be taking stock of the existing situation. An important component of this task is to analyze existing strategies, in particular the issues covered, objectives and outcomes to date with the view to developing synergy among them and anchoring the NSDS in these strategies.
34. Identifying key problems/ constraints and underlying causes. A crucial step in the formulation of sound and realizable strategy is identifying the priority problems to be tackled by the strategy/action plan. Because resources are scarce and implementation capacities limited, the range of issues to be addressed needs to be limited. In fact, conventional planning wisdom suggests that almost half the strategy development job is done at the problem identification stage, because correct diagnosis of problems leads to correct solutions. While much of the problem identification work may appear technical, the opinion of the public in particular of those directly affected by the identified problem is always important.

Consensus needs to be reached on the main problems/issues that need to be addressed by the strategy.

35. Setting priorities. The setting of priorities automatically follows from the problem identification exercise. However, priorities are never armchair exercises nor should a few selected groups set them. Extensive consultation among stakeholders is needed. One of the reasons to kick-off with a national workshop would be to get groups working to articulate their concerns] In that case, the sectoral expert teams prior to public consultation can identify priorities.

VIII. IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

36. The formulation of sound, realistic, feasible, and politically supported strategy is not a guarantee for its effective implementation. Ensuring the effective integration of elements of the strategy with broader development policies and existence of well-functioning institutions are vital aspects of implementation. The implementation component of strategy development, therefore, needs to be clearly articulated, activities and institutional responsibilities clearly defined, and mechanisms for involving civil society must be worked out.

37. The implementation strategy usually consists of:

- 37.1 Clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of implementing institutions and fully engaging them. Institutions operate on the basis of legally defined mandates, which may not permit the implementation of cross cutting issues. It is thus important to clearly define the individual, group and collective responsibilities of organizations in the strategy process;
- 37.2 Preparing action plans, specifying time frame for implementation. The action plan is often one year duration and should detail activities to be performed, expected outputs and delivery dates. The action plans have to be prepared by those responsible for implementation and should be viewed as a self-disciplining process;
- 37.3 Developing policies, legislation and regulatory framework. Implementing the strategy may require developing new policies –economic, investment, population, use of natural resources, trade, education,- or strengthening new ones. Some of these policies may require new laws and regulations or revision of existing ones. Government departments should thus be mandated to look into the policy and legal implications of implementing the strategy, and workplan and priorities of legislative bodies should be reflective of the national sustainable development strategy objectives;
- 37.4 Preparing projects and programmes and mobilizing resources for their implementation. Programmes and projects are the primary tools for translating stated objectives into concrete set of activities. Sound and effective programme planning, design and preparation is indeed a fundamental principle of strategy development. Regardless of sources of

financing, envisaged activities of the national sustainable development strategy should be programmed and specific projects prepared. There are internationally accepted project preparation guidelines (for various sectors) that a country could use. Admittedly, project preparation and appraisal require skills and experience, which may have to be built over the years;

- 37.5 Public communications - Good public communication is an important tool for implementing a strategy. It is a tool for ensuring broad ownership and participation. It is also a tool for conflict prevention as it helps to expose differences among organizations on issues and approaches prior to them becoming serious. National and local media play vital roles in the strategy process in keeping stakeholders informed of progress made, expressing consensus reached, generating wider understanding of sustainable development, and encouraging participation. The media also plays an important role in promoting governments' awareness of the importance of information, communication and education to enable the effective involvement of citizens in sustainable development. Government agencies, for their part, play a significant role in raising greater awareness among the population about sustainable development and its links to a nation's vision and strategic planning processes.

IX. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

38. Monitoring, assessment, evaluation and learning play a central role in a national sustainable development strategy as part of the cyclical process of continuous improvement towards sustainable development. The review of the strategy development experience of the past decade suggests that most strategies have put little emphasis on monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Some countries tend to take M&E for granted while others lack the institutional mechanism, capacity and the experience to use it as a tool. Few national sustainable development strategies have been assessed to date and a number of difficulties are commonly faced with strategy assessment, such as:
- Lack of a culture of assessment, and often a negative attitude toward assessment;
 - Assessments driven by external sources – these can be politically difficult to internalize as well as involve assessment skills not conducive to participatory assessment by local stakeholders (for example stressing third party assessments because of the need to ensure accountability for funds);
 - Fear that assessment may lead to inappropriate comparisons internationally
 - Lack of agreement on definitions and indicators, which would result in inconsistency of data;
 - Obtaining access to data and (especially for process assessment) access to concerned stakeholders;
 - Integrating different assessments carried out by different organizations, e.g., civil society and government assessments, or those of different ministries and ensuring complementarities between them;

- Framing the assessment in ways that reduce the risk of it being 'buried' because of political opposition.
- 39. Effective implementation of sustainable development strategies requires the follow up and monitoring of what is happening, an understanding of what works and what does not. Documenting changes and accordingly adjusting policies and priorities is an important aspect of monitoring, evaluation and learning process. Establishing practical and relevant monitoring and evaluation strategies can help to track progress toward goals and objectives. Through monitoring and evaluation, an organization can learn, capture and share lessons that improve programme development, demonstrate accomplishments and benefit others working to improve the strategy development and implementation process.
- 40. Over the past decade, monitoring and evaluation has seen important changes in concept, approach and methodology. It is now widely accepted that a sound M&E programme should involve monitoring and evaluation of processes, outcomes and impacts. **Process** (systems based) evaluation measures the implementation of activities and how effectively this is done. M&E of **outcomes** involves measuring the effect of the activities that have been undertaken, mainly the more immediate, tangible or observable changes. **Impact** assessment aims to ascertain the more long term and widespread consequences of the intervention.
- 41. The relative mix of process assessment and outcome/impact assessment will change according to the maturity of a national sustainable development strategy. Process assessment has been very useful in the formative years of a national strategy development when issues of participation, in particular, affect credibility, ownership and practical chances of success. There are, however, diminishing returns to process assessment. Stakeholders soon need to know what the impacts are on the ground, which is important for maintaining political support. In addition, an emphasis on process assessment may not be vital in many developing countries, where the overwhelming priority is to rapidly make a demonstrable difference to livelihoods. Outcome/impact assessment may provide the biggest feedback effect – and one that can less easily be ignored.
- 42. The assessment criteria are best established at the time of designing the national sustainable development process – making them entirely consistent with the national sustainable development objectives. Indeed, a consideration of process assessment criteria can help tighten the goals of the national sustainable development strategy process. In the same way, a consideration of outcome/impact assessment criteria can help to tighten the policy decisions being made through the strategy process. Local development or interpretation of such criteria is, therefore, key.
- 43. An important element of the M&E process is the development of indicators - benchmarks or thresholds. These indicators could be both qualitative and quantitative, and should reflect the status and trends of a particular process element or product. Based on these indicators annual reports should be prepared to enable stakeholders see progress made.

44. M&E could be internal, external and collaborative. Internally many organizations are recognizing the importance of improved **management techniques, institutional reflection and learning**. M&E can also be done using external evaluator, which is a requirement of many funding organizations and is done to obtain unbiased assessment of work done. The term “collaborative” refers to involving strategy staff/participants and external evaluators.
45. Effective M&E for sustainable development requires that it be:
- **Participatory:** A participatory approach needs to be adopted where appropriate to involve various program stakeholders (staff, funders, clients, partners, etc.) in designing and conducting the evaluation to ensure that the needs, ideas and concerns all players are included in the process. This often involves developing mechanisms organizing discussion forums, participant interviews and focus group discussions;
 - **Practical:** A monitoring and evaluation system needs to be practical, relevant and provide useful information to program managers. This may include simple strategies from visual checklists to participant questionnaires to annual evaluation workshops;
 - **Reflective:** Institutional learning is an important aspect of the M&E process in which an organization analyses its own objectives and its capacity for achieving them, through reflection on experiences and development impacts. Institutions should focus on learning from failures as well as from successes. An institution should view M&E not as a faultfinding process but as a beneficial tool that empowers the organization, mobilizes the commitment of staff and fosters improvement.

X. SUSTAINING THE NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PROCESS

46. As explained above, the national sustainable development strategy process is a cyclical and continuous process of planning, actions, learning, planning and actions. It is an adaptive process that requires putting in place mechanisms, policies, legal and institutional frameworks for coordinating and integrating economic, social and environmental aspects. The proper application of the national sustainable development strategy elements stated above is surely the best guarantee for success and sustaining the process. Among the key measures that need to be taken are:
- 46.1 Creating a sustainable development culture. The sustainable development strategy process should be developed as a way of life. Although easier said than done, the integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of development need to be pursued as a routine undertaking. Encourage a culture of experimentation and innovation;

- 46.2 Institutionalization of the national sustainable development strategy process. The national sustainable development strategy process needs to be fully institutionalized, and not be seen as ad hoc or one time undertaking. Activities for the formulation and implementation of the strategy should also be fully mainstreamed in development policy and day-to-day functioning of government and other stakeholders. Clearly defining respective roles and responsibilities of different sectors and institutions, coordination and putting in place a system of accountability are essential for sustaining the strategy process;
- 46.3 Putting in place appropriate legal and enforcement mechanisms. The relationship among institutions as well as the relationship between people and their environment and among themselves is governed by laws and regulations. As the national sustainable development strategy process is fundamentally managing relationships and often tradeoffs, putting in place appropriate legislation and mechanisms for their enforcement is indispensable for sustaining the strategy process;
- 46.4 Effective coordination. Because the national sustainable development strategy is a multisectoral and multilevel undertaking, there must be effective coordination to ensure its success. Coordination would involve ensuring the incorporation of the strategy process in the government decision-making process and annual budget, which is so vital for its continuity;
- 46.5 Public communication and effective participation. Forums need to be set up for regular public consultation at the national, provincial and local levels. These forums as well as the media should be used to reach consensus on broad vision of the development objectives for the nation and also for the implementation of specific projects and programmes. Institutional and information mechanisms through which policies, plans and supporting legislation, procedures and actions could be developed, reviewed and harmonized should be identified and fully utilized;
- 46.6 Mobilizing, engaging and strengthening national capacity for continuous national sustainable development strategy process. It is important to identify on regular basis what skills/capacities exist and what will be needed for the various mechanisms, and what can be achieved using them. Efforts should be made to bring together the best of what currently exists. Additional capacity should be built through formal and non-formal training options needs to be identified and support sought. Traditional knowledge and institutions need to be appropriately used and local capacity strengthened. Such capacity includes technical and human as well as organizational and financial resources. Usually adequate national/local resources will be available to keep a strategy process alive if there is enough understanding about its importance and if the commitment to make it happen on a continued basis exists.

XI. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL DONOR COMMUNITY

47. The role of the United Nations and the international donor community is shaped by three important developments:

- The Rio Commitment and the CSD forum. The Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and hence the development and implementation of strategies for sustainable development is an agreement reached by all countries at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. Both developed and developing countries are committed to taking the necessary measures to implement the Rio Declaration and “acting on this commitment is a national responsibility.”¹⁰ Designed to monitor the implementation of the Rio Declaration, the CSD, annually, brings together diverse stakeholders to review achievements, discuss constraints with the view to removing them. The CSD has grown as an important policy forum, sounding board of national initiatives and programmes, and thus promotes sustainable development;
- Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals set by the Millennium Summit, included, inter alia, to: “integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources;”
- Reform of development cooperation. International development cooperation has gone through substantive changes in the 1990s. OECD’s seminal publication, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation* epitomizes these changes. The policy document heralded a shared commitment amongst development agencies to harmonize development aid policies and priorities. Accordingly, the eradication of poverty and the principles of strategies for sustainable development have been agreed upon as areas of focus. The Comprehensive Development Framework issued by the World Bank and subsequent declaration of support, with the IMF, to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) were important developments that reinforced the OECD Strategy Paper.

48. Within the context of the above developments, the international donor community can play various roles:

- Support national sustainable development strategies as principal means for articulating and acting on national aspirations and fulfilling obligations internationally. This has been inadequately acknowledged in national sustainable development strategies to date. Foreign relations, trade, aid, debt and ecological footprints need to be considered;

¹⁰ OECD/DAC NSSD Guidance, p. 56

- Source of funding. The international donor community has been an important source of development finance and technical support. Bilateral and multilateral funding has also been used in the preparation of various strategies, NEAPs, NCS, NAPs, sustainable development strategies. In accepting the NSDS principles mentioned above, the international donor community is committed to financially and technically support nationally owned and driven NSDS processes as well as development of long term visions. This would, of course, entail introducing substantive changes in the packaging and delivery of development assistance;
- Supporting convergence, complementarity and coherence between different frameworks. In country-level strategic planning processes there needs to be greater coherence between objectives for poverty reduction, economic growth and investment, and environmental management in pursuit of sustainable development. There are a number of internationally agreed commitments for sustainable development, in areas such as trade, the environment, and the rights of indigenous peoples to their natural resources which need to be taken into account. This guidance suggests how this integration can be achieved and builds on the DAC Guidelines on Poverty Reduction that deal extensively with improving policy coherence and the steps which are required to work towards it;
- Bilateral development agencies can also contribute to developing coherence within their own countries. This is particularly important where more than one line ministry is engaged in development co-operation activities with developing country partners. Development agencies can take a lead in encouraging agreement between line ministries in their own countries on a common approach; commitment to convergence and the principles of strategic planning for sustainable development; and agreement to common objectives and plans;
- Promote networking among those involved in a national sustainable development strategy between developed and developing countries and also among developed and among developing countries. A strategy presents complex and new challenges and at the same time offers opportunities for harnessing different potentials. The international community could facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and experience between developed and developing countries as well as among developing countries thus enhancing the acquisition of technology. There could also be utility in 'twinning' arrangements between institutions of different countries for mutual support and learning;
- Remove trade and investment barriers and practices that undermine sustainable development. Many developing countries are subject to several trade and investment barriers in the form of taxes, trade and investment restrictions that may frustrate efforts to promote sustainable development.

49. The United Nations should continue to develop common nomenclature and standardization of indicators and data and dissemination of information. This could be done so as to ensure approximately comparable reporting, on an annual basis, on a smaller number of processes and approaches agreed by the international community as key to effective strategies.

Annex A:

KEY LESSONS FROM EXISTING EXPERIENCE

1. Since the Brundtland Commission Report made the sustainable development central to the future of mankind, environment oriented strategies were promoted and formulated as the primary entry points to sustainable development. For example, the World Bank sponsored its first National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) in Madagascar in 1988, which was quickly followed by Mauritius and Lesotho.¹¹
2. As the Rio Summit brought national sustainable development strategies to the forefront of the global agenda, many of the early environment oriented strategies have evolved into national sustainable development strategies. Efforts were made to incorporate economic and social concerns in environment-oriented strategies, while economic growth oriented strategies sought to incorporate environment objectives.
3. Both developed and developing countries that embarked upon the formulation of sustainable development strategies have pursued a diverse range of approaches in their design, formulation, and implementation. Today, there is a wealth of knowledge that resides in countries and also in international agencies that provides a general picture of the strategy development experience and lessons learned, some of which is presented below.
4. **Developed countries.** Several developed countries have been engaged in articulating their respective sustainable development strategies in response to the call made by the Rio Summit and UNGASS. Among those countries are:
 - 4.1. **Canada.**¹² Canada is one of the developed countries that initiated a sustainable development strategy. In 1990, the Federal Government of Canada produced Canada's Green Plan for a healthy environment. In 1995, the Government changed its approach to the overall management of commitment to sustainable development and prepared A Guide to Green Government. All cabinet ministers, at the time, signed the Guide. Later in the year, the Commissioner for Environment and Sustainable Development was appointed within the Office of the Auditor General. In 1997, Canada prepared sustainable development strategies, at the provincial and federal levels and presented them to Parliament. In 2001, an update to the 1997 strategies was presented to Parliament. Three core concepts guided the

¹¹ Jan Bojo and Lisa Segnestam, Environment Group, World Bank in Sustainable Development: African Perspective, Report of the Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development in Africa, 7-9 September 1999.

¹² Office of the Auditor General of Canada and Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Evolution of Canada's Federal Sustainable Development Agenda, paper presented to the International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies, Accra 7-9 November 2001.

preparation of the strategies: a commitment to a higher quality of life; an integrated approach to planning and decision making; and a commitment to equity. In this context, six key elements of managing the strategy were identified:

- Using an integrated approach;
- Using sound science and analysis;
- Working together;
- Using a mix of policy tools;
- Leading by example;
- Greening of government operations; and
- Establishing the necessary management context.

4.2. **Belgium.**¹³ Belgium is another developed country that embarked upon the formulation of a national sustainable development strategy. Belgium defined sustainable development as having five dimensions:

- Global responsibility;
- Inter-generational equity;
- The integration of economic, social and environment objectives;
- The precautionary principle (acknowledging and facing scientific uncertainty); and
- Principle of participation.

In this context, Belgium focused on addressing four issues: eradicating poverty and social exclusion; protecting the atmosphere ((climate change and ozone depletion); marine ecosystems (dangerous substances and over-fishing; and changes in consumption patterns. Belgium has identified the following problems in the strategy formulation and implementation process:

- Failure to place federal policy options within the challenge of sustainable development for the entire planet;
- Lack of long-term view, resulting in too few intermediary goals and or lack of means to achieve them;
- Difficulties with integration of the economic environment and social components due to the lack of adequate structures and staff in existing bodies;
- Failure to take uncertainties regarding the long-term repercussions of the present development tasks sufficiently into account;
- Insufficient efforts to clarify development options on a participatory basis.

¹³ Nadine Gouzee, Belgian Sustainable Development Strategy involving Public Participation in the Planning Process-first cycle (1997-2001)

5. **Developing country experience**

5.1. **Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF).** The World Bank launched the CDF proposal in 1997. According to the Bank, the CDF is based on four principles: long term holistic vision, country ownership; partnership, and a focus on development results. In September 2001, it produced an assessment of the experience of 46 countries. The assessment identifies several challenges:¹⁴

- The difficulty of articulating a long-term vision from which a medium sustainable development strategy is derived;
- Country ownership of a development strategy is dependent on a country's capacity. The capacity to formulate and implement strategies and programs drawn from internal consultations and debates is weak. The products or outcomes are, thus, left without a clearly defined institutional response. Expectations raised through a participatory process need to be addressed in a forthright manner;
- The willingness in principle of donors to align their support is now part of the policy pronouncements of most key development agencies, yet little action has materialized at the country level;
- Governments will not be able to effectively manage for results if the underlying infrastructure and willingness to do so is largely missing.

5.2. **National and Local Agenda 21 - UNDP Capacity 21**

UNDP Capacity 21 has undertaken review of the experience of over 70 countries and documented lessons learned. Suffice it here to mention what they called problems to be avoided in the strategy development process¹⁵:

- Too little engagement, too late;
- Seeking endorsement rather than consultation;
- Too much idealism, leading to paralysis;
- SD-a new level for environment;
- SD must be a solution, not an added burden.

5.3 **Environment/conservation oriented national strategies**

The most important lessons learned from environment-oriented strategies that have relevance to the sustainable development strategies of today are:

¹⁴ Drawn from "Comprehensive Development Framework: Meeting the Promise? Early Experience and Emerging Issues, CDF Secretariat, The World Bank, September 2001.

¹⁵ Extracted from the presentation made by UNDP Capacity 21 at the International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies, Accra 7-9 November 2001.

- Identification of main problems and setting priorities. In assessing the African experience, Wood (1997) pointed out “failure to take a strategic view and identify key priority problems” has been a key pitfall of the strategy development process. In many countries, the public has been seldom consulted in the identification of problems and in the setting of priorities, as the exercise hitherto has been generally top down (OECD/DAC 2001);
- Institutional arrangements. The institutional arrangement sought by some NCS and NEAP processes has been successful in providing access to power, thereby leading to faster political approval and more effective implementation. Carew-Reid, et al, pointed out that “through strategically nurtured support from high-ranking government and political officials, the Pakistan NCS survived three changes of government, while the Nepal NCS survived four changes.” In Latin America, Costa Rica, with its Council for Sustainable Development headed by the President of the country, offers one of the success stories;
- Consultation processes and involvement of the public. There is a positive correlation between effectiveness of a strategy and its continuity and the degree of public participation. In so far as the strategy development work is externally supported, the participation and active involvement of the donor community in turn becomes important. In donor participation, the experience has been varied among countries. Philippines offer an interesting example of donor involvement, which failed to take the strategy process to its logical end. “Although the Philippine SSD was prepared quickly and efficiently, donors and lenders have used it simply as evidence that a framework document has been adopted and a condition has been met. They have not used it as a framework for shaping and coordinating their support.” Carew-Reid, et al. [1997];
- Achieving national ownership and mainstreaming of the strategy. Wood, et al (1997) argues that many strategies in Africa have been imposed upon countries with very limited local control over the resulting processes and products. Similarly, Carew-Reid, et al, in their evaluation of the Asian experience point out that “while the Pakistan strategy document is thought to be one of the most comprehensive to date, internalization of the strategy is not far advanced [because] the Pakistan NCS has been driven and inspired for eight years from outside of government by IUCN-Pakistan.” Indeed, many strategy processes have been also one-off events prepared as a response to external pressure or a call made by a global convention, an indication of the lack of commitment to and internalization of strategies;
- Coordination and policy integration. In many countries strategy became marginalized within government, largely as a result of placing the strategy in an institution that was specialized and well outside the main economic and development machinery of government. Only very few

countries had the seriousness to have the strategies discussed and officially sanctioned by the Cabinet or Parliament. The limited technical capacity of institutions responsible for the strategy has also been a major factor in the coordination shortcomings;

- Identifying investments and sources of funding. Governments are often required to contribute and take the lead role in the formulation, implementation, and funding of national environmental strategies and policies. In Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Poland, Russia, and Thailand, for example, governments have established national environmental and pollution abatement funds to channel revenues from pollution charges, taxes, and other sources to priority environmental investments. (World Bank, 1995). For many other countries, however, the international donor community is the primary source of funds. Here again, the experience varies from those national strategies, which have broad base financial support to those, which depend entirely on a single donor. The latter not only leaves key components of the strategy at risk when donor support is withdrawn but also limits participation of various institutions in the strategy process. "Bangladesh relied solely on the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) for support during strategy preparation. In retrospect, bringing in more donors would have increased understanding of the strategy and improved the chances of implementation." Carew-Reid, et al. (1997). In Africa, Wood, et al. observed a stop/start impact and loss of momentum and skills arising from inadequate and erratic donor funding of various phases of strategy development;
- Implementation strategy. Poor implementation remains the Achilles' heel of the strategy development of the past decade. The performance record of even those countries with government-sanctioned strategies has been disappointing because the lack of institutional momentum after the adoption of the strategy. In some countries, communications has been a vital tool for implementation. "a unique aspect of implementing the Pakistan NCS is its Communications programme - creating a Journalist Resource Center for the Environment." [Carew-Reid, et al 1997];
- Monitoring and evaluation. Most of the strategy processes of the 1990s have made little emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. This is because some countries took it for granted while others lacked the institutional mechanism, capacity, and experience to use M & E as a tool. Here again, the experience of countries varies. For example, the Zimbabwe District Environmental Action Plan (DEAP) is widely acknowledged to have an internal M&E methodology at the heart of its strategy and action planning.

Annex B

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