High-level Panel on Global Sustainability
Sherpa meeting
New York, 20-21 October 2010

Meeting Report

*Prepared by the Panel secretariat with guidance from the Co-Chairs*

**Introduction**

1. The Sherpas of the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (GSP) members met in New York on 20-21 October to discuss implementation of the vision articulated at the Panel meeting of 19 September 2010, and to develop a work programme for the Panel. Sixteen Sherpas or Acting Sherpas took part in the two-day meeting, some accompanied by their Advisors. Four Sherpas were represented by their Advisors. Background papers on regional meetings, information management, working groups and organizational arrangements had been circulated before the meeting by the Panel secretariat. This report attempts to capture the main points of the Sherpas’ discussion and was prepared by the secretariat under the guidance of the two Co-Chairs.

**I. Substantive discussion**

**Vision**

2. The substantive discussion focused on capturing and channelling the emerging vision of the Panel (after the first Panel meeting and as reflected in that meeting’s report) towards an eventual output, in the form of possible broad outlines of the Panel’s final report.

3. While aware of and intent on providing input into ongoing intergovernmental negotiations, the Panel should focus on the long term strategy and implementation of the needed paradigm shift.

4. The Sherpas generally agreed that the Panel should be bold and practical.

5. To ensure buy-in from a range of stakeholders, the Panel should consult widely at an early stage.

**Scope of the Panel**

6. It was agreed that the main issue with sustainable development is a lack of implementation and that an earnest assessment of what works and what does not should be the first step.

7. The Panel would attempt to formulate a new action-oriented approach to people-centred sustainable development.

8. The key challenge is to ensure policy coherence at the global and local levels, and to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development. Sherpas generally agreed that interlinkages are the starting point for this Panel and that its focus should be practical and action-oriented.
9. It was agreed that the Panel should think out of the box and rise above national positions. It could provide ideas to various processes (CBD, UNFCCC, Rio 2012, etc.), but should keep its focus on the long-term strategic paradigm shift that is necessary to realize the potentials of sustainable development in full.

Focus areas

10. Special emphasis should be given to the most vulnerable populations. Therefore a key issue for the Panel should be poverty eradication, focussing on dignity and resilience.
11. The Panel could also address the issue of governance and provide recommendations on how to manage public goods (and in particular global public goods) sustainably and in an equitable manner.
12. Some Sherpas felt that the Panel might also contribute to resolving questions of institutions and governance, especially at the international level. It was, however, agreed that the best way to do this would be to use a functional approach.
13. It was felt that the Panel should address improving policy coherence between the three pillars of sustainable development and between the national and international levels.
14. The Panel should think about incentives and market signals that would make governments, individuals, and the private sector act on the challenges and maybe develop road maps and specific toolkits to address those issues.
15. It was agreed that the Panel needs to pay special attention to the transition towards a new paradigm.
16. Sherpas felt that water was another key issue that the Panel could consider including access to water, sanitation, the price of water, subsidies etc.
17. It was felt that the Panel should also address the financing needs for implementation, building on progress in financing for climate change (e.g. through the High-level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing (AGF)).
18. The Panel would build upon existing best practices and would also address the use of indices for the measurement of progress towards sustainable development.

Final Report of the Panel

19. It was agreed that the report should provide a positive narrative, including the possibilities of poverty eradication, job creation, technological achievement, etc.
20. It was further agreed that it would be useful to draw upon experiences and compile best practices. Information from real people could help make the report ‘come alive’.
21. The Panel should try making a case against the dichotomy of ‘development vs. environment’. It needs to address the dilemma of what can be done on poverty eradication, and how to generate green jobs.
22. Sherpas felt that creating a roadmap or toolkit for action would be important to balance vision and ambition.
23. It was agreed that the report should be an accessible document that is well-written and also appealing to the broader public (i.e. not too technical).

Other possible deliverables

24. Sherpas discussed a number of possible deliverables. The work of the Panel, for example could provide an overall guiding framework for the MDGs post 2015, and possibly a number of specific ‘Sustainable Development Goals’ with a 2030 perspective.
25. The possibility of devising a new index for sustainable development was discussed. It was felt that this required a lot of capacity and could be addressed through
commissioning one or more papers. Attention was drawn to relevant work by the OECD (Measuring Progress of Societies Project). Furthermore the issue of a national framework for green accounts was discussed.

II. Work Programme elements

Working groups

26. Sherpas agreed that it would be useful to have a small number of cross-cutting working groups (WGs) led by Panel members to advance a number of issues. As the Panel’s main focus is on interlinkages and ‘connecting the dots’ a key concern was that issue-based WGs could lead to parallel, unconnected discussions. Therefore WGs should all address the overall objectives of the panel, including the interconnectedness of the challenges and approach the common problematique from different perspectives.

27. It was agreed that WGs would have to be serviced by the secretariat and the number of the groups should also be determined by the limitations of secretariat resources.

28. It was eventually agreed that three WGs would be established at this stage, namely:
   - WG 1 would focus on poverty, employment and social inclusion through a redefined approach to economic growth.
   - WG 2 would focus on a paradigm shift that is needed in order to address global challenges such as climate change, energy, biodiversity, etc.
   - WG 3 could focus on the role of markets (and the relevant role of governments, private sector, NGOs, etc.).

More details on each WG are provided in the Annex to this report.

29. All three WGs would contribute to the formulation of the overall new, action-oriented and coherent approach to people-centred sustainable development.

30. Instead of creating a separate WG on interlinkages, the secretariat was asked to commission a paper on this subject. In addition to that, a paper on alternative indicators of progress towards sustainable development beyond GDP would be useful.

31. Expressions of interest to lead WGs will be communicated to the Panel Co-Chairs through the Panel secretariat.

Methodology

32. WGs should only be established for a short period of time and report back to the next Panel meeting in January or February 2011 (date tbc).

33. Sherpas agreed that the interconnectedness of the issues and challenges that are to be addressed is key. The economic, social and environmental aspects should be treated in a holistic and integrated way even if individual issues are treated separately for a period of time by dedicated WGs.

34. Expressions of interest by Panel members for facilitating, individually or in pairs, WGs could be sent to the Panel secretariat. The secretariat would in turn communicate them to the Panel Co-Chairs, who would eventually designate the working group facilitators with the need for balance in mind.

35. Sherpas could become members of WGs according to their interests and expertise.

36. Sherpas asked the secretariat to develop Terms of Reference for the proposed WGs with guidance from the Co-Chairs.

37. Furthermore the secretariat could invite UN system and outside experts to serve in the WGs, following consultations with the WG facilitators. Such experts could be made full members of the WGs, or just be invited for one or more interactions of the group. The
secretariat, following consultations with the WG facilitators could also solicit written inputs from experts internationally.

38. Each WG would produce a brief report to the next Panel meeting and possibly make use of case studies.
39. The work of the WGs could be allowed to continue a bit beyond the next Panel meeting, if that was deemed necessary by the Panel Co-Chairs.

**Outreach, including regional consultations**

40. For the Panel to achieve its goal of inclusiveness it should engage a wide range of stakeholders across the world’s regions for their views and established good practices.
41. Particular importance should be given to communication and outreach after publication of the Panel’s report, especially before the Rio 2012 conference.

**III. Working methods**

*Rules of engagement and guidelines for public appearances on behalf of the Panel; common messaging*

42. While there was understanding of the need to avoid a cacophony of views being expressed by Panel members, it was noted that Panel members should not be constrained from speaking publicly on the Panel or issues related to the Panel’s mandate.
43. The secretariat was asked to prepare a couple of key messages and talking points for the use of Panel members.

*Presentation of “GSP Network”*

44. Jim Balsillie, Panel member, founder and chair of the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), has offered to deploy a modern social networking and content management tool for the use of the Panel via CIGI.
45. The social collaboration tool called GSP-Network (based on the OpenText software) provides various features to simplify collaborative work for the Panel members and Sherpas, including discussion and activity feeds, wiki-tools, bookmarks and content management tools. The tool allows the creation of communities at different levels that enable shared workspaces. These workspaces ensure that everyone on the team has a shared and consistent view of the current issues, discussions, documents, comments and other aspects of project collaboration.
46. Sherpas discussed the use of this tool and agreed that it would facilitate the internal discussions among Panel members, Sherpas and the secretariat. CIGI would work on an outreach strategy that could make use of online means to approach the broader public.

**IV. Preparations for GSP2 and further Panel meetings**

45. The second Panel meeting (GSP2) would be held as a retreat, with only the principals participating. It could be held back to back with a meeting of the Sherpas.
46. One possibility would be for GSP2 to take place in January or February 2011 in South Africa. Alternatively, GSP2 could take place on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos in late January, which would be attended by many Panel members in any event.
47. President Halonen (through her Sherpa) offered to host GSP3 in Finland in May 2011.
48. GSP4 could be held in late September 2011 in New York, on the sidelines of the high-level UN General Assembly meetings.
49. The final Panel meeting, GSP5, which would approve the Panel’s report, would take place in October/November 2011.
50. It was suggested that meetings of the Panel, Sherpas or WGs could take place in Australia or India.
ANNEX

**Overall Terms of Reference for the Working Groups**

The WGs should contribute, from their respective vantage points, to the elaboration of a new approach to poverty eradication, growth and prosperity, based on the concept of sustainable development and its three pillars (economic, social, environmental), and focusing on means for its implementation in practice. They should particularly address the linkages and ensure coherence between the three pillars of sustainable development in all areas of activity.

Each WG will be facilitated by one or two Panel members, following a decision to that effect by the Panel Co-Chairs, who will take into account the expression of interest by members and considerations like expertise and geographic balance. Panel members or Sherpas can participate in one or more WGs. Outside experts can be invited to participate in part or all discussions of a WG, following a decision by the WG facilitator(s).

The Panel secretariat will support each WG in its work and will keep the Panel Co-Chairs informed of progress. In consultation with the Panel Co-Chairs and WG facilitators, the secretariat will prepare or commission background papers and consult with a number of experts, institutions and individuals, in support of the work of the WGs. The discussion within each WG will be framed according to the background and addressing the basic questions provided below, and should include the examination of case studies and best practices.

Each WG will produce a brief report with its findings for consideration by the Panel at its second meeting in early 2011. The work of the groups may be allowed to continue for a short period beyond the next Panel meeting, if that is deemed necessary by the Panel Co-Chairs.

**Background and basic questions to be addressed by the working groups**

**WG 1: Poverty eradication, social inclusion and decent jobs**

**Background**

Poverty has been a perennial problem that humanity faces, especially large parts of the population in developing countries. At the current levels of global wealth creation and technological advance, the persistence of poverty is unacceptable. It is a matter of focusing energies and mobilizing political will and resources to drastically reduce and eventually eliminate the most extreme cases of poverty. Decent job creation is a key means of achieving that and restoring the dignity of people, while making best use of their creative potential and ensuring the equitable inclusion of all groups. Equity is not only a moral imperative but also a prerequisite for the long-term viability of the economic system.

**Basic questions to be addressed by the working group**

- What steps need to be taken by the international community to ensure that a new development paradigm, based on the principles of sustainable development (including its three pillars) is able to eradicate poverty, ensure social inclusion and provide decent jobs?
- What role could a new approach to growth play in achieving these objectives?
- Who are the key actors, and what specifically do they need to do and in which timeframe?
- How are the objectives of this WG affected by the objectives and the potential outcomes of the two other WGs?
WG 2: Paradigm shift

Background
Intergovernmental processes on issues like climate change and biodiversity are in deadlock. Solutions to other sustainable development and resource related issues remain challenging, internationally and domestically. The present economic development paradigm is unable to provide a framework for resolving these. Natural resources, and the ecological systems they are intertwined with, remain undervalued, or are not valued at all. We need a paradigm shift that can address these issues in their interrelationships, and reorient the economic system towards their resolution.

Basic questions to be addressed by the working group
- What would be the nature of a development (growth, prosperity) paradigm that will be able to value natural resources, global common goods, and address global challenges like climate change, biodiversity, food, water and energy security, with their interlinkages?
- What steps need to be taken by the international community (at global, regional and national levels) to formulate and implement such a new paradigm?
- Who are the key actors, and what specifically they need to do and in which timeframe?
- How are the objectives of this WG affected by the objectives and the potential outcomes in the other two WGs?

WG 3: The use of market tools and investments to support sustainable development

Background
In today’s globalized world, funds, goods and services flow largely freely across borders, with positive and negative effects. The objective is to further channel the creative power and ingenuity of markets, market mechanisms and trade, and the potential of private and state-owned enterprises, towards supporting sustainable development in all its aspects, including for the eradication of poverty, decent job creation and addressing today’s interconnected global challenges.

Basic questions to be addressed by the working group
- What steps need to be taken by the international community (at global, regional and national levels) to use market forces and investments to support sustainable development?
- Who are the key actors, and what specifically they need to do and in which timeframe?
- How are the objectives of this WG affected by the objectives and the potential outcomes of the other two WGs?