

Overview of Canada's Renewed CSD Reporting Process

National reporting is a critical component of the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). Without sufficient information on the state of progress in the implementation of *Agenda 21*, the Commission's ability to achieve its core mandate is restricted. For this reason, Canada has always submitted comprehensive reports to the CSD.

Canada invests significant resources into developing its reports, for they require extensive interdepartmental coordination and consultation. In developing our reporting for the current cycle, we sought to streamline our internal processes around reporting, with the aims of reducing the requirements of our colleagues involved in the drafting of the documents, and producing more concise, useful reports.

This document provides a short overview of Canada's reporting process for the current cycle.

Background

The composition and mandate for the CSD is established in *Agenda 21*, and reads as follows:

38.13. The Commission on Sustainable Development should have the following functions [emphasis added]:

- a. To monitor progress in the implementation of *Agenda 21* and activities related to the integration of environmental and developmental goals throughout the United Nations system through analysis and evaluation of reports from all relevant organs, organizations, programmes and institutions of the United Nations system dealing with various issues of environment and development, including those related to finance;
- b. To consider information provided by Governments, including, for example, information in the form of periodic communications or national reports regarding the activities they undertake to implement *Agenda 21*, the problems they face, such as problems related to financial resources and technology transfer, and other environment and development issues they find relevant;
- c. To review the progress in the implementation of the commitments contained in *Agenda 21*, including those related to provision of financial resources and transfer of technology;

It is noteworthy that national reporting is contained in this original language. Its importance to the Commission in fulfilling its mandate is borne out by a number of subsequent documents and the many discussions that led to their development. These include:

- *Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21* (para 133b)
- *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation* (paras 148 c, d)
- CSD-11 Background Paper #3: Note by the Secretariat on National Reporting to the CSD (2003)
- CSD-11 Resolution #1: Future Programme, Organisation and Methods of Work of the CSD (2003)
- CSD-12 Secretary-General Report on Improving National Reporting (2004)

Changes to Canada's Reporting Process for CSD-16/17

1. General

To increase its emphasis on the non-negotiating aspects of the CSD, Canada is changing both how it reports, and how it uses those reports to inform its CSD activities.

As a first step, we will submit for CSD-16 thematic profiles on all themes, describing Canada's progress since either Rio or the last time the theme was examined at the Commission. These profiles will answer the question, "Where are we now?"

Early in the second year of the cycle, Canada will develop an informal, concise document that highlights priorities by theme, to answer the question, “Where are we going?” This document will be informed by civil society input, and will offer a concise guide to future Canadian activities.

Canada will integrate our national reporting into planning for the cycle. For example, we will use the reports as the basis of our various outreach and consultation efforts. By better interlinking reporting to our other CSD activities, we hope to encourage greater participation from all stakeholders, and help ensure that our CSD outputs are more beneficial to all.

2. Thematic profiles

- In past cycles, thematic profiles were based on an open-ended format. This created an onerous process for those involved in drafting the profiles, and often resulted in quite lengthy final reports. To rectify this, we developed a template unique to each profile, based closely on the case study template created by the CSD Secretariat.
- To simplify reporting under the two themes of Drought and Desertification, we have produced one thematic profile focused on Canada’s domestic efforts on both themes, and one profile focused on our international efforts on desertification.
- Given the close co-relation between our thematic profile templates and the case study template, we have linked the thematic profiles as much as possible to our case studies (some of which are still in development).
- We have significantly reduced the length of the profiles by referencing Web pages (via embedded links) rather than reproducing text available elsewhere.

2. Case studies

As part of our efforts to champion the non-negotiating components of the CSD (e.g., Learning Centre events, the matrix, etc.), Canada is placing a greater emphasis on the submission of case studies to the CSD. We are inviting case studies from different levels of government and from other stakeholders, recognizing that their on-the ground experiences can provide important lessons in advancing progress on the themes being discussed at the Commission.

3. Other components of national reporting

The remaining components of national reporting to this cycle are:

- Update to information on indicators for sustainable development
- Update to information on national sustainable development strategies
- Response to Integrated Water Resource Management questionnaire

Given the straight-forward nature of these reports, Canada has made no changes to its approach to them.

Canada’s Future Plans for National Reporting to the CSD

Canada plans to co-host a Learning Centre event at CSD-16 on the subject of national reporting. We hope to partner with the CSD Secretariat, a civil society organization, and several countries with diverse experiences in national reporting to the CSD, to discuss options for further simplifying the process for all concerned and creating documents more beneficial to the Commission in fulfilling its mandate. Canada will describe in more detail the steps it has taken to do so, discuss whether those have been successful, and outline its future activities in this area.

This event may result in a follow-up workshop at CSD-17.