

United Nations Division for Sustainable Development

**Expert Group Meeting on
Reviewing National Sustainable Development Strategies
New York, 10 – 11 October 2005**

UNSD/EGM/NSDS/2005/CRP. 12

**Collaboration Workshop For National Councils Of Sustainable Development
In French-Speaking Countries
Paris, May 11-13, 2005**

Summary and Recommendations

Introduction and context

On May 11 – 13, 2005, 48 participants from international organisations (AUF, APF, UPF, NEPAD, CISL) and 18 countries (government and civil society representatives) gathered in Paris to attend the first-even «*Atelier de concertation des conseils nationaux du développement durable de l'espace Francophone*», a joint initiative of the «Institut de l'Énergie et de l'Environnement de la Francophonie» (IEPF) (subsidiary body of the «Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie»), and the French «Conseil National du Développement Durable» (CNDD).

A direct derivative of the historical World Summit for Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg (WSSD) less than three years ago, this workshop also reflects the spirit and operational continuity of the Ouagadougou Summit.

During the summit, Heads of State and government leaders reiterated their determination, manifested at the IXth summit in Beirut, to ensure the Xth Conference marks a decisive step towards implementing the Johannesburg Action Plan, notably in terms of developing and applying national sustainable development strategies. As part of this endeavour, they pledged to enhance institutional and regulatory frameworks conducive to sustainable development, particularly with respect to national policies of country parties related to food security, drinking water access and renewable energy.

Commitments were also made to bolster the role played by local communities and civil society (NGO and business); increasingly present and attentive, in both the development and follow-up of national policies.

This is very explicitly spelled out in articles 164 and 165 of the WSSD implementation plan:

(164) all countries should also promote public participation including measures that provide access to information regarding legislation, regulations, activities, policies and programmes. They should also foster full public participation in sustainable development policy formulation and implementation. Women should be able to participate fully and equally in policy formulation and decision-making.

(165) Further promote the establishment or enhancement of sustainable development councils and/or coordination structures at the national level, including at the local level, in order to provide a high-level focus on sustainable development policies. In this context, multi-stakeholder participation should be promoted.

Workshop objectives

- Trace a diagnostic profile of existing institutional collaborative arrangements for sustainable development in French-speaking countries;
- Document national consultation experiences of civil society;
- Provide a discussion forum for CNDD; promote meetings among and concrete actions by members of Francophone civil societies;
- Develop a platform for Francophone-based collaboration (vehicles for information sharing, dissemination of good practices, twinning operations, etc.).

Proceedings

The workshop was opened by Roger Dehaybe, Administrateur général (Senior Administrator) of the Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie. Christian Brodhag (Délégation Interministérielle au développement durable) then spoke on behalf of Serge Lepeltier, French Minister of Ecologie et du Développement Durable, after which Laurent Sedogo, Minister of Environnement et du Cadre de Vie, Burkina Faso, took the floor.

The workshop objectives were presented by El Habib Benessahraoui (IEPF Executive Director) and Anne-Marie Ducroux (President of the French CNDD), organisers of the workshop. A round-table session provided participants with an opportunity to become acquainted.

The results of a questionnaire poll of participating countries, conducted by the IEPF and by the French CNDD among CNDD participants, were unveiled by Jean-Pierre Reveret (UQAM), which provided a synthetical profile of existing realities and the starting point of the workshop. The first topic of discussion was related to the Stratégies Nationales de Développement Durable (SNDD), presence or absence, main characteristics, followed by a profile of the Conseils Nationaux de Développement Durable (CNDD).

A general debate on the strengths and weaknesses of the ongoing consultation process ensued, followed by an introduction to specific challenges of implementing a CNDD in some countries. The session gave rise to weighty debates sparked by the official presentations of Traore Alain Edouard (CNEDD) and Ky Kilea Jean-Marie (Fondation Nature et Vie), Bukina Faso, Pedia Patrick Leon (CNDD) from the Ivory Coast, Ms Doris Angst (Office fédéral du développement territorial), Switzerland and wrapped up with Geuiain Kombo (Ministère de l'Économie Forestière et de l'Environnement), Congo Brazzaville.

Serge Antoine, member of CNDD France and French representative to the Mediterranean Commission of Sustainable Development introduced the challenges of Mediterranean sustainable development with insights to the national and regional aspects of strategies and councils or commissions.

Nadine Gouzée (UN CSD Belgian representative) then discussed national concerns and the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) based on the Belgian case.

Day 2 of the workshop included an analysis of the issues and identified solutions for involving civil society and other actors in sustainable development upstream from the SNDD. Once again, this session got underway with a series of official talks drawing on national examples to illustrate the issue with presentations by Edmé Landry Gbetegan (CNDD) and Pr. Honorat Aguessy (Assemblée générale de la Société Civile), Bénin, Anne-Marie Ducroux (CNDD), France, and lastly, Pathé Baldé (Directeur environnement et établissements classés) and Woré Gana Seck (UN Development Support Council), Senegal.

The subsequent session focused on identifying challenges and solutions for involving civil society and other sustainable development actors in follow-up and assessment. Official presentations that preceded and fueled the debate were delivered by Catherine Mertens (CFDD), Belgium, Christian Brodhag (Délégation Interministérielle au développement durable), France, Abdallah Rattal (Ministère de l'Aménagement du territoire de l'eau et de l'environnement), Morocco and Harouna Oumarou (National Action Programme to Combat Desertification and Manage Natural Resources), Nigeria.

Florent Breuil (CIRIDD) then introduced, “Mediaterre - Systeme d'information mondial Francophone pour le développement durable”, a type II follow-up initiative of the World Summit On Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August-September 2002) within the perspective of the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005). In this perspective, use of the French language is both a condition of access to information that will narrow the gap identified in Agenda 21(40.1), and an opportunity for the French-speaking community to forge its unique vision of sustainable development and contribute to the international debate. It also highlights cultural diversity as an essential element of sustainable development (5 in the Johannesburg Action Plan)

Day 2 closed with an dinner hosted by the Délégation Interministérielle au développement durable (France) and a presentation by Christian Brodhag on “Les Enjeux de la normalisation relative au développement durable.” (Challenges Inherent to Standardizing Sustainable Development)

The final segment of the workshop provided an opportunity to recap, set the course of action and produce a series of proposed actions both for countries and the Francophone context. The main findings and proposals are presented below.

What emerges from both the profile and the discussions is that over-use of the environmental dimension of sustainable development persists, despite the fact the concept is very well understood in its richest and multi-dimensional complex sense.

Indeed, a plurality was observed in the structure of institutional designs and in the choices made for implementing collaborative arrangements. Also noted was the numerous countries devoid of national sustainable development strategies.

In the wake of the perceived lack of awareness of others’ actions, sharing lessons learned surfaced as an objective interest for all countries.

Another finding was the positive impact of the workshop preparatory process, namely completing the questionnaire designed to establish an initial profile, on the internal dynamics of several councils by prompting pre-meeting dialogue.

The various issues raised at this stage nourished the quality of debates and discussion during the workshop, creating a true group dynamic and thus enhancing network dynamics.

Recommendations for follow-up

Fortified with the workshop results, the participants pledged to stay in contact via different networking vehicles (Mediaterre discussion lists, the possibility of creating a Mediaterre portal dedicated to CNDD, etc.), and subsequent meetings to explore other aspects of the conception and implementation of national strategies, to ensure a more accurate reflection of Francophone reality.

Participants expressed a particular hope that the next session would examine development methods and content of sustainable development strategies.

The participants are committed to relaying, at the national level, information on the series of tools and approaches that sparked interest during the workshop.

The following recommendations were addressed at different levels:

Countries

- Connect CNDD or collaborative arrangements to the most appropriate level to ensure the transversal dimension of sustainable development can be fully assumed;
- Create or strengthen, per the principle of subsidiarity, local committees, comprised of appropriate members;
- Enhance inter-departmental coordination arrangements;
- Enhance civil society capacity;
- Promote broad-based dialogue that extends beyond the CNDD; promote collaboration between public and civil society officials and among the various components of civil society within the framework of the Conseils et des Stratégies Nationales de Développement Durable;
- Enhance the organisational, technical, financial and information frameworks of civil society related to sustainable development;
- Increase awareness and involvement among Parliamentarians and elected officials at other levels of government regarding sustainable development issues and more specifically SNDD and CNDD;
- Call upon long-term stabilisation means (human and material resources) reflecting diversity and the importance of CNDD issues;
- Promote a broad-based vision of participation based on multiple opportunities for impartial dialogue between the State and major social groups (within the meaning of Agenda 21) striving towards more participative democracy as well as ever-improved consensus-building and access to public decisions by civil society.

Francophone context

- Create a Mediaterrée discussion list linking workshop participants;
- Organize, at the earliest possible date, a meeting to explore the development, implementation, assessment and content of SNDD;
- Promote SNDD peer-review arrangements and support adhering countries;
- Inform, raise awareness and mobilize various actors regarding the different concepts and challenges related to sustainable development and implementation arrangements;
- Establish collaborations at both the regional and subregional levels;
- Raise awareness among French-speaking parliamentarians and mayors, notably via the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) and the Association Internationale des Maires francophones (AIMF);
- Facilitate access to existing information and discussion networks;
- Identify and recommend country-specific indicators that reflect Francophone reality and priorities;
- Support countries in their efforts to implement Councils and National Sustainable Development Strategies using various capacity-building initiatives;

- Mobilize the Francophone academic/scientific community regarding the notion of sustainable development and more specifically produce a document summarizing United Nations definitions of civil society and its inherent jobs. This particularly involves mobilizing the AUF Environment and Sustainable Development Network.
- Develop joint initiatives with NEPAD within the SNDD framework;
- Develop joint initiatives with the Mediterranean Commission of Sustainable Development; In particular, assess the pertinence and feasibility of extending the Medcities network to other French-speaking cities.

Multilateral and network organisation

- Facilitate the flow of existing information (PNUD, UNDESA, PNUE, World Bank, etc.) and its accessibility in the French language;
- Promote support for National and Regional Sustainable Development Strategies
- Encourage wide-spread participation in the 3rd Forum de Planet'ERE in Ouagadougou July 18 – 26, 2005 and at the second World Summit on the Information

The NGO Burkina Faso representative to the workshop urged everyone to participate in the 3rd forum de Planet'ERE in Ouagadougou July 18 – 26, 2005. The forum de Planet'ERE3 is a continuation of the work begun in Quebec City (Planet'ERE 1) and pursued in France (Planet'ERE 2). It represents an important step forward for environment education actors from French-speaking Africa and around the globe. Planet'ERE3 will be organised in a spirit of constructive partnership between civil society and public officials at all territorial levels.

The Tunisian representative announced his country as host nation for phase 2 of the World Summit on the Information Society, November 16 – 18, 2005 in Tunis. The meeting agenda will focus on assessing phase one of the Geneva Summit 2 years later, measuring progress made in implementing the SMSI Action Plan and establishing a programme for the future.

For more details, please contact:

Institut de l'énergie et de l'environnement de la Francophonie
 56, rue Saint-Pierre, 3^{ème} étage, Québec (Québec) G1K 4A1, Canada
 Téléphone : 1 418 692 5727 - Télécopie : 1 418 692 5644
 Courriel : iepf@iepf.org - Internet : www.iepf.org

