

2003/61

**Future programme, organization and methods of work of the
Commission on Sustainable Development**

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,¹⁹⁶ Agenda 21¹⁹⁷ and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,¹⁹⁸

Also recalling the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development¹⁹⁹ and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development,²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, annex II.

¹⁹⁸ General Assembly resolution S-19/2, annex.

¹⁹⁹ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, resolution 2, annex.

Reaffirming in that regard the commitment to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration²⁰¹ and in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences held and international agreements made since 1992,

Recalling that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation will build further on the achievements made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and that the Plan expedites the realization of the remaining goals; to that end, committing ourselves to undertaking concrete actions and measures at all levels and to enhancing international cooperation, taking into account the Rio principles, including, inter alia, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities as set out in principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, efforts that will also promote the integration of the three components of sustainable development — economic development, social development and environmental protection — as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars; and recalling that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development,

Reaffirming that the Commission for Sustainable Development should continue to be the high-level commission responsible for sustainable development within the United Nations system,

Reaffirming further the mandate of the Commission on Sustainable Development as stipulated in Agenda 21, General Assembly resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 57/253 of 20 December 2002,

Having considered the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its eleventh session,²⁰²

Future organization of work of the Commission

1. *Decides* that the organization of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development should contribute to advancing the implementation of Agenda 21,¹⁹⁷ the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21¹⁹⁸ and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation²⁰⁰ at all levels;

2. *Also decides* that in order to fulfil its mandate the work of the Commission will be organized in a series of two-year action-oriented implementation cycles, which will include a review session and a policy session. The cycles will function as follows:

(a) The Commission's review sessions, to be held in April/May for a period of two to three weeks in the first year of the cycle, will undertake an evaluation of progress in implementing Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further

²⁰¹ General Assembly resolution 55/2.

²⁰² *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Supplement No. 9 (E/2003/29).*

Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, while focusing on identifying constraints and obstacles in the process of implementation with regard to the selected thematic cluster of issues for the cycle;

(b) The review sessions will include a high-level segment, an exchange of regional experiences, dialogues with experts, including scientific experts, and sharing of best practices and lessons learned, with a view to facilitating implementation, as well as capacity-building activities, such as learning centres and partnership fairs;

(c) The review sessions will undertake the above-mentioned evaluation on the basis of:

(i) The Secretary-General's state of implementation reports, which should reflect overall progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, based on information provided in particular in countries' reports and in reports by United Nations organizations and bodies as described in paragraph 2 (a) (ii) below, and on information from regions and subregions, as appropriate, as well as major groups. In addition, the Secretary-General's state of implementation reports should contain a detailed review of progress of implementation in the selected thematic cluster of issues for the cycle at all levels, and should also reflect new challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of Agenda 21;

(ii) The contributions of United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, the Global Environment Facility and international financial and trade institutions;

(iii) The outcomes of regional and subregional meetings and activities, as appropriate;

(iv) The contributions of major groups, including scientific experts, as well as educators, taking into account paragraphs 139 (g) and 149 (c) and (d) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, on their results-oriented activities concerning the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(d) The review session evaluation should enable an improved understanding of priority concerns in the implementation of the selected thematic cluster of issues and facilitate an effective policy discussion in the course of the policy year with a view to strengthening implementation in those areas;

(e) The outcome of the review session will be a report, including a chairperson's summary, identifying constraints and obstacles and possible approaches and best practices for the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(f) In the policy year, the Commission will convene an intergovernmental preparatory meeting for one week in New York in February/March to discuss policy options and possible actions to address the constraints and obstacles in the process of implementation identified during the review year;

(g) The discussions of the intergovernmental preparatory meeting will be based on the outcome of the review session, reports by the Secretary-General as well as other relevant inputs. Based on those discussions, the Chair will prepare a draft negotiating document for consideration at the policy session;

(h) The Commission's policy sessions, to be held in April/May of the second year of the cycle, will take policy decisions on practical measures and options to expedite implementation in the selected thematic cluster of issues, taking account of the discussions of the intergovernmental preparatory meeting, the Secretary-General's reports and other relevant inputs;

(i) The review sessions and the policy sessions should mobilize further action by all implementation actors to overcome obstacles and constraints in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and should address new challenges and opportunities and share lessons learned and best practices;

(j) Specific organizational modalities for Commission meetings will be recommended by the Bureau of the Commission through open-ended and transparent consultations conducted in a timely manner, following the established United Nations rules of procedure. Activities during Commission meetings should provide for balanced involvement of participants from all regions, as well as for gender balance;

3. *Decides*, in order to allow effective consideration of regional and subregional inputs throughout the implementation cycle and to ensure maximum flexibility:

(a) To invite the regional commissions, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to consider organizing regional implementation meetings in order to contribute to the work of the Commission, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations and bodies, as appropriate, as well as the regional offices of funds, programmes and international finance and trade institutions and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. Such meetings should preferably take place before the review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and should:

(i) Contribute to advancing the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(ii) Focus on the thematic cluster of issues to be addressed in the ongoing implementation cycle;

(iii) Provide input to the Secretary-General's reports and the sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Those inputs may include identification of obstacles and constraints, new challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and sharing of lessons learned and best practices;

(iv) Provide for contributions from major groups, taking into account paragraphs 139 (g) and 149 (c) and (d) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(b) To invite the General Assembly to consider using the resources previously devoted to the former ad hoc intersessional working groups of the Commission on Sustainable Development to support the participation of representatives of member States of the Commission in one of their respective regional meetings in each implementation cycle;

(c) To invite the regional commissions to provide other inputs to the Commission's review and policy sessions and the intergovernmental preparatory meeting;

(d) To invite other regional and subregional bodies and institutions within and outside the United Nations system to contribute to the preparations for the Commission's review and policy sessions and the intergovernmental preparatory meeting;

4. *Recommends* to the General Assembly that resources released by the termination of the work of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, whose work has been transferred to the Commission on Sustainable Development, could be used to support the work of the Commission;

5. *Invites* Governments, as well as organizations at all levels and major groups, to undertake results-oriented initiatives and activities that support the Commission's programme of work and promote and facilitate the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The results of such initiatives and activities should be an input to the Commission, as appropriate;

6. *Decides* that the results of the Commission's work could also include the sharing of best practices and lessons learned, capacity-building activities, exchange of experiences concerning the implementation of sustainable development strategies, as appropriate, and partnerships that support the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

7. *Also decides* that Commission sessions should include high-level segments, involving ministers or their representatives with responsibilities relevant to the thematic cluster of issues under discussion. The segments should be organized so that ministerial leadership, oversight and guidance in decision-making concerning the outcomes of the sessions would be enhanced. High-level segments should include focused dialogue, with the active participation of agencies, funds, programmes and other organizations of the United Nations system, international finance and trade institutions, and representatives of major groups at the appropriate level, taking into account paragraphs 139 (g) and 149 (c) and (d) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

8. *Further decides* to organize the periodic consideration of sustainable development themes in regard to the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, including the means of implementation, and invites the Commission to submit recommendations to the Council with regard to such themes, which may include recommendations to assist the Economic and Social Council with its work in the pursuance of paragraph 144 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, including its role in promoting system-wide coordination;

Multi-year programme of work of the Commission for the period after 2003

9. *Decides* to adopt the multi-year programme of work of the Commission for the period after 2003 as outlined in the annex to the present resolution;

10. *Also decides* that the implementation of that programme of work will be guided by the following considerations:

(a) The review and evaluation of the implementation of actions, commitments and targets will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant provisions of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the decisions of the Commission. The thematic clusters should be addressed in an integrated manner, taking into account the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Recognizing that all the issues identified in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation are important, the implementation process should cover all those issues equally, and the selection of some issues during a given cycle does not therefore diminish the importance of the commitments undertaken with respect to the issues to be considered during future cycles;

(b) Means of implementation, as identified in Agenda 21 and chapter X of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, should be addressed in every cycle and for every relevant issue, action and commitment;

(c) Other cross-cutting issues, as referred to in the annex to the present resolution, should also be addressed in every cycle;

(d) African and other regional initiatives, as well as initiatives on small island developing States and least developed countries, will be considered in every cycle with respect to all relevant issues, actions and targets;

(e) The Commission should focus on those issues where it can add value to intergovernmental deliberations on cross-sectoral and sectoral issues, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/191, in particular its paragraphs 3 (h), 21 and 23, as well as 139 (f) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(f) The Commission should take into account the outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the Integrated and Coordinated Implementation of and Follow-up to the Outcomes of Major United Nations Conferences and Summits in the Economic and Social Fields;

(g) The Commission may decide to incorporate new challenges and opportunities related to implementation into its multi-year programme of work;

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11. *Emphasizes* that in order to enable the Commission to perform the relevant requirements provided for in chapter 11 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, in particular its paragraphs 145, 147 and 148, an effective system of reporting is essential for reviewing, evaluating and monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, sharing of lessons learned and best practices, as well as identifying actions taken, opportunities for and obstacles and constraints to implementation;

12. *Encourages* countries to present, on a voluntary basis, national reports, in particular to the Commission's review sessions, focusing on concrete progress in implementation, including achievements, constraints, challenges and opportunities;

13. *Also encourages*, with the purpose of implementing paragraphs 130 and 131 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and paragraph 3 of Commission decision 9/4, further work on indicators for sustainable development by countries at the national level, including integration of gender aspects, on a voluntary basis, in line with national conditions and priorities, and requests the Secretary-General to consider progress made in that regard, including further work on the above-mentioned indicators, in reporting to the Commission, as appropriate;

14. *Underscores* that reporting to the Commission should be guided by the following considerations:

(a) Reporting should reflect the overall progress made on the three dimensions of sustainable development, focusing on the thematic cluster of issues for the cycle, and should include inputs from all levels, as appropriate, including the national, subregional, regional and global levels, and drawing on those sources listed in paragraph 2 (c) (ii-iv) above;

(b) The existing reporting systems should be used to the fullest extent possible and will be expected to provide the bulk of information required;

(c) Reporting should focus on concrete progress in implementation, taking into account the three dimensions of sustainable development and their integration, and should include information-sharing, lessons learned, progress made and best practices, identifying actions taken, constraints, challenges and opportunities;

(d) The effective use of indicators, as described in paragraph 13 above;

(e) Country reporting should provide information on the status of national strategies for sustainable development;

15. *Requests* the secretariat of the Commission, working in close cooperation with other organizations of the United Nations system, to:

(a) Take measures to streamline reporting in order to avoid duplication and unnecessary burden on States, including in accordance with the Secretary-General's report on United Nations reform;

(b) Provide focused information that highlights relevant trends, constraints, challenges and emerging issues;

(c) Provide technical assistance to countries, upon their request, in national reporting through regular and extrabudgetary sources;

16. *Invites* the secretariat of the Commission to improve national reporting guidelines and questionnaires with the intention of making reporting more efficient and less burdensome on countries and more focused on implementation, bearing in mind the provisions of the present resolution, in consultation with Governments, United Nations organizations and secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, and to report to the Commission for its consideration;

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17. *Invites*, further to paragraph 140 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, relevant United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, the Global Environment Facility, and international and regional financial and trade institutions, within their mandates, to participate actively in the work of the Commission in order to inform it of their activities designed to further the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. To that end, it is essential to undertake further measures to:

- (a) Promote stronger linkages between global, regional and country-level implementation measures;
- (b) Strengthen coherence and collaboration within and between organizations;
- (c) Identify areas where further implementation measures may be required in order to improve progress;
- (d) Mobilize and increase the effective use of resources from all sources for implementation;
- (e) Enhance collaboration and coordination in all areas, including information exchange and knowledge-sharing on all aspects of the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General, taking into account the ongoing process of United Nations reform and utilizing the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, including through informal collaborative efforts, to further promote system-wide inter-agency cooperation and coordination to enhance the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and to report on its activities to the Economic and Social Council and the Commission;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/253, to include in his report proposals outlining an integrated and comprehensive response of the United Nations system to sustainable development, taking into account the work of the Open-Ended Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the Integrated and Coordinated Implementation of and Follow-up to the Outcomes of Major United Nations Conferences and Summits in the Economic and Social Fields;

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20. *Decides* that contributions to the Commission from major groups, including the scientific community and educators, taking into account paragraphs 139 (g) and 149 (c) and (d) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, while following the established rules of procedure and practices of the Commission, should be further enhanced, taking into account chapter XI of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, through such measures as:

- (a) Strengthening major group involvement in the activities of the Commission, including through the participation of representatives from major groups at the appropriate level in an interactive dialogue during high-level

segments, taking into account paragraphs 139 (g) and 149 (c) and (d) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(b) Making multi-stakeholder dialogues more action and implementation-oriented;

(c) Enhancing the participation and effective involvement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as well as promoting transparency and broad public participation;

(d) Striving for a better balance and better representation of major groups from all regions at the Commission;

(e) Active involvement in partnership-related and capacity-building activities at all levels, including the partnerships fairs and learning centres organized as part of the meetings of the Commission;

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21. *Recalls* that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation designated the Commission to serve as the focal point for discussion on partnerships that promote sustainable development, and reiterates that partnerships, as voluntary multi-stakeholder initiatives, contribute to the implementation of intergovernmental commitments in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. They are a complement to, but not intended to substitute for, those commitments;

22. Stresses that partnerships in the context of the World Summit on Sustainable Development process and its follow-up should be developed and implemented in accordance with the following criteria and guidelines, taking note in that regard of the preliminary work undertaken on partnerships during the preparatory process for the Summit, including the Bali guiding principles, and General Assembly resolution 56/76 of 11 December 2001:

(a) Partnerships are voluntary initiatives undertaken by Governments and relevant stakeholders, such as major groups and institutional stakeholders;

(b) Partnerships should contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and should not divert resources from the commitments contained in those agreements;

(c) Partnerships are not intended to substitute commitments made by Governments but to supplement the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(d) Partnerships should add concrete value to the implementation process and should be new, that is, they should not merely reflect existing arrangements;

(e) Partnerships should bear in mind the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their design and implementation;

(f) Partnerships should be based on predictable and sustained resources for their implementation, should include the mobilization of new resources and, where

relevant, should result in the transfer of technology to, and capacity-building in, developing countries;

(g) It is desirable that partnerships have a sectoral and geographical balance;

(h) Partnerships should be designed and implemented in a transparent and accountable manner. In that regard, they should exchange relevant information with Governments and other relevant stakeholders;

(i) Partnerships should be publicly announced with the intention of sharing the specific contribution that they make to the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(j) Partnerships should be consistent with national laws and national strategies for the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as well as the priorities of countries where their implementation takes place;

(k) The leading partner of a partnership initiative should inform the national focal point for sustainable development of the involved country/countries about the initiation and progress of the partnership, and all partners should bear in mind the guidance provided by Governments;

(l) The involvement of international institutions and United Nations funds, programmes and agencies in partnerships should conform to intergovernmentally agreed mandates and should not lead to the diversion to partnerships of resources otherwise allocated for their mandated programmes;

23. *Decides* that providing information and reporting by partnerships registered with the Commission should be transparent, participatory and credible, taking into account the following elements:

(a) The registration of partnerships should be voluntary and should be based on written reporting to the Commission, taking into account the provisions specified above. Reporting by partnerships should focus on their contribution to the implementation of the goals, objectives and targets of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

(b) Partnerships should submit a regular report, preferably at least on a biennial basis;

(c) The Secretariat is requested to make information available on partnerships, including their reports, through a database accessible to all interested parties, including through the Commission web site and other means;

(d) The Secretariat is requested to produce a summary report containing synthesized information on partnerships for consideration by the Commission, in accordance with its programme and organization of work, noting the particular relevance of such reports in review years;

(e) The Commission, during review years, should discuss the contribution of partnerships towards supporting the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation with a view to sharing lessons learned and best practices,

identifying and addressing problems, gaps and constraints, and providing further guidance, including on reporting, during policy years, as necessary;

24. *Calls* for activities aimed at strengthening partnerships in the context of the Summit process and its follow-up and facilitating new ones, including through such initiatives as partnerships fairs and learning centres, mindful of the importance of sharing information on existing activities, particularly across the United Nations system.

*49th plenary meeting
25 July 2003*

Annex

Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development

<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Thematic cluster</i>	<i>Cross-cutting issues</i>
2004/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Sanitation • Human settlements 	Poverty eradication; changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development; sustainable development in a globalizing world; health and sustainable development; sustainable development of small island developing States; sustainable development for Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; institutional framework for sustainable development; gender equality; and education
2006/2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy for sustainable development • Industrial development • Air pollution/atmosphere • Climate change 	Poverty eradication; changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development; sustainable development in a globalizing world; health and sustainable development; sustainable development of small island developing States; sustainable development for Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; institutional framework for sustainable development; gender equality; and education
2008/2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Rural development • Land • Drought • Desertification • Africa 	Poverty eradication; changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development; sustainable development in a globalizing world; health and sustainable development; sustainable development of small island developing States; sustainable development for Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; institutional framework for sustainable development; gender equality; and education

<i>Cycle</i>	<i>Thematic cluster</i>	<i>Cross-cutting issues</i>
2010/2011 ^a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport • Chemicals • Waste management • Mining • Ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns 	Poverty eradication; changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development; sustainable development in a globalizing world; health and sustainable development; sustainable development of small island developing States; sustainable development for Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; institutional framework for sustainable development; gender equality; and education
2012/2013 ^a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forests • Biodiversity • Biotechnology • Tourism • Mountains 	Poverty eradication; changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development; sustainable development in a globalizing world; health and sustainable development; sustainable development of small island developing States; sustainable development for Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; institutional framework for sustainable development; gender equality; and education
2014/2015 ^a		Poverty eradication; changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development; sustainable development in a globalizing world; health and sustainable development; sustainable development of small island developing States; sustainable development for Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; institutional framework for sustainable development; gender equality; and education
2016/2017	Overall appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation	

^a This thematic cluster will remain as part of the multi-year programme of work as scheduled, unless otherwise agreed by the Commission (applies to clusters for 2010/2011, 2012/2013 and 2014/2015).