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## **Sustainable development strategies tools for policy coherence**

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### **Abstract**

Many different approaches on National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) have been proposed since 1992, and some constant components emerge. NSDS should help, and be conceived, for mainstreaming environmental concerns in development related strategies and, more widely, for coordinating local to global strategies, sectoral policies and implement scientific knowledge in policy making.

A NSDS peer review mechanism, as experimented in France, involving equally north and south countries and stakeholders, can help countries to share information and experiences and to find their own paths to SD.

Business can also contribute to SD and local and global public goods. The ISO Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility (ISO 26000) could operate as a coordination mechanism between voluntary initiatives on the one hand and conventions, and mandatory obligations, on the other hand, at global, national and local levels, and therefore should have some coherence with NSDSs and local Agenda 21 frameworks.

### **Key words**

NSDS (National Sustainable Development Strategy)

CSD (Commission on Sustainable Development)

ISO (International Organization for Standardisation)

Sustainability

Policy integration / horizontal integration / vertical integration – Policy coherence

Peer review – Experience sharing – Information sharing – Collaboration

Continuous improvement approach – Evaluation – non-judgmental approach

Governance / Environmental governance – international co-operation

Mainstreaming environment – Processes convergence

Participatory approach – Local Agenda 21 – Ecosystem services

Public private partnership – Voluntary initiatives

Corporate Social Responsibility / Social Responsibility – ISO 26000

Environmental Charter – Senior Official for Sustainable Development

## **1. Introduction. International context**

The first call for National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) implementation was made at Rio in 1992 for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The program of action for sustainable development states “each country should aim to complete, as soon as practicable, if possible by 1994, a review of capacity- and capability-building requirements for devising national sustainable development strategies. (...) As an important aspect of overall planning, each country should seek internal consensus at all levels of society on policies and programmes needed for short- and long-term capacity building to implement its Agenda 21 programme. This consensus should result from a participatory dialogue of relevant interest groups<sup>1</sup>”. Agenda 21 recognises that a huge agenda inherent in sustainable development needs an orderly approach – a ‘strategy’.

Five years later, the 1997 Special Session of the UN General Assembly noted that there had been continued deterioration in the state of the global environment under the combined pressures of unsustainable production and consumption patterns and population growth. This assessment led governments to reinforce their effort by setting a new deadline of 2002 for “the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development”<sup>2</sup>.

In 2000, at the Millennium UN Summit, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed by 147 world leaders include one relating to environmental sustainability, with a target, but no date, to “integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and to reverse the loss of environmental resources” (Goal 7, target 9). NSDS processes offer therefore an effective mechanism to achieving this particular target and, conversely, an NSDS needs to find ways to address the different Millennium Development goals and targets.

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of Johannesburg called on all countries “to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and begin their implementation by 2005” (§ 145b)<sup>3</sup>. It encourages (§19): “relevant authorities at all levels to take sustainable development considerations into account in decision-making, including on national and local development planning, investment in infrastructure, business development and public procurement. This would include actions at all levels to: Provide support for the development of sustainable development strategies and programmes, including in decision-making on investment in infrastructure and business development”.

Parallel to this, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has set a target date of 2005 for NSDSs to be in the process of implementation. This is one of the seven international development goals (IDGs) agreed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996: “Environmental sustainability and regeneration: There should be a current national sustainable development strategy (NSDS) in the process of implementation, in every country, by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015 (derived from a commitment

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<sup>1</sup> UNCED (1992) Agenda 21 - Report of the United Nations Conference on environment and development, Rio de Janeiro, §37.4 and 37.5.

<sup>2</sup> UN DSD (2004) Division for Sustainable Development

<sup>3</sup> Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002, A/CONF.199/20

agreed at UNCED in Rio de Janeiro)". These goals were based on targets agreed by the international community through several UN conferences.

Having passed the Johannesburg deadline, it seems the right time now for the Commission on Sustainable Development to take advantage of the experience of countries on the implementation of NSDS for reviewing the whole process. France strongly supports that the CSD serves as a focal point to share good practices, provide a framework for analysis and organise the sharing of experiences. Indeed it was proposed in the 1997 UN General Assembly<sup>4</sup> that the CSD "should provide a forum for the exchange of experience on regional and subregional initiatives and regional collaboration for sustainable development. This could include the promotion of the voluntary regional exchange of national experience in the implementation of Agenda 21 and, inter alia, the possible development of modalities for reviews within regions by and among those countries that voluntarily agree to do so."

## **2. Experiences with national sustainable development strategies**

On those recurrent bases some countries have implemented strategic approaches in developing, planning, implementing, and monitoring a mix of specific policy initiatives. Others are just beginning, or are yet to begin, this complex strategic process.

Different documents have proposed definitions and frameworks for NSDS. Based on the outcomes of the International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies held in Accra, Ghana, in 2001<sup>5</sup> in preparation for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) defined NSDS as: "a coordinated, participatory and iterative process of thoughts and action to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner at the national and local levels". The participants elaborated guidance on the process of developing and implementing NSDSs. This guidance emphasises multi-stakeholder processes, continuous learning and improvement, and effective mechanisms for coordinating strategic planning.

At the same time in April 2001, considering that sustainable development cannot be limited to fragmented success stories, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has sought to clarify the purposes and principles underlying effective national and local strategies for sustainable development and to describe the various forms they can take in developing countries. OECD proposed strategic planning approaches and defined NSDS as: "a co-ordinated 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". A policy guidance<sup>6</sup> on NSDS principles, possible approaches and on how development cooperation agencies can support them was endorsed by OECD countries aid Ministers.

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<sup>4</sup> Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Nineteenth Special Session, Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, 27 June 1997, General Assembly, Nineteenth special session Agenda item 8, §133c

<sup>5</sup> United Nations (2002), *Guidance in Preparing a National Sustainable Development Strategy: Managing Sustainable Development in the New Millennium*, Background Paper, Outcome of the International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies, Accra, Ghana, 7-9 November 2001, n°13, DESA/DSD/PC2/BP13, New York.

<sup>6</sup> OECD-DAC (2001), *Strategies for Sustainable Development: Practical Guidance for Development Co-operation*,

Following this OECD study, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) compiled in 2002 a Resource Book on NSDS<sup>7</sup>, funded by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the OECD. This study reviewed existing strategy process and described being strategic as “developing an underlying vision through consensual, effective and iterative process; and going on to set objectives, identify the means of achieving them, and then monitor the achievement as a guide to the next round of this learning process.” Their research found that nations appear to be transitioning from “misconceptions of ideal and static master plans and one-off initiatives” to “sets of co-ordinated mechanisms and continuing processes of monitoring, learning and improvement”.

Beyond those definitions, actual experiences must be considered. We can refer to a report<sup>8</sup>, from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) among others, which identifies some recurrent key challenges through the study of 19 country NSDS:

- The feedback mechanism – including monitoring, learning and adaptation. It aims to implement a continuous improvement approach to manage sustainable development strategies and change the values and visions through a cognitive process.
- Co-ordination of strategy objectives and initiatives with the national budgeting process. It aims to implement what we can call: horizontal integration.
- Co-ordination with sub-national and local sustainable development actions. This refers to the concept of vertical integration.
- Implementing a mix of policy initiatives, and in particular, environmental fiscal reform initiatives.

In the context of this study of 19 countries, four kinds of approaches are observed:

- Comprehensive strategies: 15 countries as U.K. or Philippines strategy process,
- Cross-sectoral strategies: 4 countries as Cameroon and Madagascar PRSPs,
- Sectoral strategies as in Canada,
- Integration with existing planning as in Mexico or India.

On a wider basis it is interesting to consider the recent report of good practices on NSDS in OECD countries<sup>9</sup> that was presented on 3-4 October 2005 in Paris at the OECD Annual Meeting of Sustainable Development Experts. It identifies 8 components:

1. Policy integration - national strategies should give consideration to environmental, economic, and social concerns in integrated approaches and plans.
2. Intergenerational timeframe - national strategies should adopt long-term time frames, which enable inclusion of intergenerational principles and indicators.
3. Analysis and assessments - integrated assessment tools should be used to identify the environmental, economic and social costs and benefits of policy and strategy options.

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<sup>7</sup> IIED, Barry Dalal-Clayton and Stephen Bass (2002), *Sustainable Development Strategies: A Resource Book*

<sup>8</sup> IISD & coll. (2004), *National Strategies for Sustainable Development: Challenges, Approaches and Innovations in Strategic and Co-ordinated Action*, International Institute for Sustainable Development, Stratos Inc and Freie Universität of Berlin.

<sup>9</sup> *National Strategies for Sustainable Development: Good Practices in OECD countries*, Paris, 3-4 October 2005, OECD, SG/SD(2005)6

4. Indicators and targets - strategies should be based on structured indicator systems to assist in monitoring progress and to serve as quantitative targets.
5. Co-ordination and institutions - a wide range of government departments and agencies should be involved in the formulation and implementation of national strategies, with overall responsibility in the office of the Prime Minister or equivalent.
6. Local and regional governance - local and regional authorities should be fully involved in the development of national strategies, with certain delivery aspects devolved to sub national levels.
7. Stakeholder participation - stakeholder (e.g. business, unions, non-governmental organisations) should participate with government representatives in commissions responsible for developing and implementing national strategies.
8. Monitoring and evaluation - independent bodies or processes should be established to act as watchdogs monitoring implementation of national strategies and providing recommendations for their improvement.

From this diversity of definitions, frameworks and experiences emerge some constant components. They mostly appear as a transition from the traditional fixed plan and traditional policies, towards operating an adaptive system that can continuously improve. They are processes involving a large panel of stakeholders and not only strict frameworks applied by governments. Most approaches emerge from experience, and we cannot propose a “one fits all” approach. So any reference must be adapted to the context. In this respect, the peer review mechanism can help to adapt the generic process and the proposals to each specific context.

### **3. French approach**

France has addressed its NSDS through two elements.

On the one hand, the integration of an Environmental Charter in the Constitution that, among other things, states in its article 6, that public policies should be based on sustainable development. The Charter is placed in the Constitution at the same level as the historic text of 1789 on human rights, which is of great symbolic value for France. The Constitutional Council is, from now on, able to analyse the laws and their conformity with the Environmental Charter.

On the other hand a national strategy for sustainable development was elaborated in 2003 through multistakeholder consultation of civil society through the National council for sustainable development.

France had previously adopted a national sustainable development strategy in 1997, but it failed to materialise in operational terms, because of a change of political majority. In September 2002, the speech of the French President Jacques Chirac at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg – “Our house is burning down and we are blind to it” – provided a strong political impetus and led to broader political will across government to address sustainable development.

In 2002-2003, a new strategy was developed in order to give everybody a common vision of the issues and of the necessary developments in the short- and medium-term, to specify the methods of integration of sustainable development in public policies, and finally to follow the progress achieved in this field. The government's ambition was for France to “change course”, in a spirit of responsibility, coherence and solidarity among regions, generations and peoples. Rather than an academic exercise, the government decided to elaborate a document limited in its overall

considerations, but decidedly action-oriented and backed up with clear guidelines for fast implementation. As stakeholder participation was recognised as a key factor, a National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) was established in January 2003 to take into account the views of civil society.

The current National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS), adopted in June 2003, provides therefore the government with an action framework to take into account long-term and global effects resulting from economic development and individual behaviour. It directs the governmental action in overall policy-making for five years and fixes practical objectives to every minister and, whenever possible, progress indicators.

The NSDS text focuses on the three dimensions of sustainable development (to reconcile economic development, social equity and environmental protection) and a fourth dimension – culture – has been introduced.

The strategy is constructed around seven strategic axes and ten action programmes. These action programmes contain a detailed list of objectives and actions, centred on specific issues or sectors. Each strategic axis focuses on the role of a specific class of actors.

1. **Social and health dimension of sustainable development** – gender equality, family cohesion, solidarity with disabled or dependent persons, integration of immigrants, social cohesion plan,
2. **Citizens as actors for sustainable development** – Information, awareness-raising, education, participation,
3. **Territories** – land use policy, urban environment and urban planning, cultural heritage, rural environment, biodiversity, water resources, local Agenda 21,
4. **Economic activities, companies and consumers** – Production and consumption patterns, waste strategy, eco-innovation, responsibility of businesses, certification and labelling, socially responsible investment, fiscal reforms,
5. **Climate change and energy** – climate change plan, renewable energy, new technologies,
6. **Transport** – full cost pricing, inter-modal switches, energy efficiency of vehicles, global transport and urban development policy,
7. **Agriculture and fisheries** – biological agriculture, environmentally sound agriculture practices, selective fishing practices, reduce capacity, modernise fleet, research,
8. **Prevention of risks, pollution and other environmental and health problems** – environment and health plan: industrial and natural risks, information, expertise and research, strong environmental policing, dissuasive legal system,
9. **Exemplary State** – integration of sustainable development in public policies, reform of public procurement rules, eco-responsibility of administrations, sensitisation, training programmes, benchmarking,
10. **International actions** – struggle against poverty (health care, education, research, access to basic services, fair trade, sustainable tourism...), global governance, creation of a United Nation Environment Organisation (UNEO), Kyoto protocol, partnership with Africa and Mediterranean countries, European Union, cultural diversity and French language.

Each Minister is responsible for the implementation and follow-up of the actions in the strategy that fall under that ministry's authority. To this end, a **Senior Official** in charge of sustainable development has been nominated to 'champion' sustainable development within each ministry.

An **Inter-Ministerial Delegate in charge of Sustainable Development** was appointed in July 2004, to lead and co-ordinate the actions of all ministries with regard to the government's sustainable development policy, in the name of the Prime Minister. The Inter-Ministerial Delegate is responsible for preparing materials for consideration by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development (ICSD, committee of Ministers chaired by the Prime Minister) and watches over their follow-up and implementation. He also chairs the Permanent Committee of Senior Officials in charge of sustainable development, which serves the ICSD and is associated with defining the work of the National Council for Sustainable Development.

At the local level, State strategic action projects are developed at the regional level (PASER) and departmental level (PASED) under the authority of Prefects<sup>10</sup>, trying to ensure consistency with the French NSDS.

To track progress, the NSDS provides for two annual reports with two separate sets of indicators on which are required to be submitted to French Parliament: the state of sustainable development in France (45 indicators) and the state of NSDS implementation. The first annual report on NSDS implementation was presented to the Council of Ministers on 1st December 2004. A very readable, tabular monitoring board on the state of implementation of the 500 actions in the NSDS, to be updated every 6 months, was developed. Both reports and monitoring board are made public, on the websites of the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development and the Prime Minister.

Furthermore, a project was launched to develop an evaluation method for the strategy and to provide a framework set of indicators to monitor its day-to-day implementation, against eight national sustainable development stakes, identified and adopted by the Senior Officials in charge of Sustainable Development.

This project and the French NSDS peer review exercise (see below) constitute the first stage of the NSDS mid-term evaluation in 2005, before the NSDS revision in 2008.

#### **4. The framework of the French peer review mechanism**

At the World Summit on sustainable development in 2002, France committed itself to submit its NSDS to be 'peer reviewed' by other countries, following the proposal by the European Union to develop such a system in order to promote the sharing of experience. As a follow up, a project, initiated in 2004 by the French government with the participation of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), was put into place to help to develop a methodology and facilitate the national process.

The NSDS peer review of the French strategy process, involving Belgium, Ghana, Mauritius and the United Kingdom, presented to the 13th UN Commission on Sustainable Development, appears as a meaningful information sharing exercise.

The project set out to develop and test a methodology for 'peer review' of, and information-sharing about, national strategies for sustainable development, using the French strategy as an experimental case. It brought together, for each participant country, representatives from government and civil society. European Commission, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and French-speaking countries organisation (Francophonie) were part of it.

The recommendations of the peers are presented in four sections:

- **Process** – actual NSDS development process, roles and contributions of key actors;

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<sup>10</sup> Local representatives of the central government in Regions and Departments

- **Content** – structure and content of the strategy, main themes and issues addressed, proposed actions;
- **Implementation & outcomes** – actions and initiatives undertaken since the NSDS adoption and their results in terms of fostering sustainable development;
- **Monitoring & indicators** – steps taken to monitor NSDS implementation, indicators both for the state of sustainable development in the country and for implementing NSDS actions.

The final report on the peer review process also includes experiences from the peer countries, regarding the same four components, and is available, with all related documentation, on the web, at [www.nssd.net](http://www.nssd.net) and [www.developpementdurable.gouv.fr](http://www.developpementdurable.gouv.fr).

The aim throughout has been to demonstrate that such a process has common benefits for the involved countries, and broader generic value. A strong asset of the methodology is to propose a non-judgmental approach, based on sharing experience and learning lessons, through a cost-effective exercise and in a relatively short time. As the purpose of a review exercise might well be different from one country to another, an options-based approach is proposed. It is hoped that the methodology can be used (and developed further) by other countries through similar exercises, and that such an approach will be of help to countries in their progress toward sustainable development.

For that purpose an Expert Group Meeting on Reviewing National Sustainable Development Strategies was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 10-11 October 2005. The meeting, organised by UN DESA in partnership with the French government, highlighted the French experience and put into perspective other international initiatives on NSDS (OECD, European Union, UNEP...). The crucial role of NSDS was reinforced, and a number of participating countries expressed interest in organizing a peer review, or similar shared learning exchange.

## **5. NSDS and international governance**

Sustainable development tries to correct mainstream development, or indeed for some countries “mainstream underdevelopment”, through the integration of new approaches: to preserve an inheritance for future generations, manage global and local public goods, preserve the basic functions of the ecosystem and ecosystem services for human well-being, and to spread societal responsibility with respect to environmental and social concerns. Those processes should address four level of governance: global, regional, national and local.

### *5.1. Variety of initiatives being confusing*

In addition to strategy development and review, at the country level, an important question is how to coordinate all the international processes that consider sustainable development, launched by different institutions, conventions, or networks that do not communicate with one another. Regarding the UN system itself, we can be impressed by the number of global initiatives, in addition to all the multilateral agreements, that deal with these issues: Millennium development goals, the UN Commission on sustainable development, Poverty Reduction Strategies, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Global public goods network...

Some other processes deal with the public private relationships: Global Compact, Global reporting initiative, Marrakech Process on sustainable consumption and production, standard-setting processes for the environment (ISO 14001 and ecolabelling), social responsibility through ISO 26000 process, geographical indications for products... And we can also mention a great



number of private initiatives on fair trade, organic agriculture, social responsibility and accountability...

Some other global linkages have also to be addressed in this context: the integration of environmental concern in World Trade Organisation (WTO) processes and the exportation of pollution from industrialised countries to developing countries.

The main question, with which we are faced, is **how to mobilize and coordinate the actions of the various actors** operating on the sustainable development scene? The creation of an **United Nations Environment Organisation (UNEO)**, could enhance the coherence of environmental international policies. This question appears also to be covered rather well by the concept of “governance” which includes the processes and systems by which organisations or societies operate at large.

It is a process that both allows and constrains actors in interdependent relationships in the absence of an overarching political authority. This governance is based in particular on co-operation. It is not a question of replacing systems of government and authority. But for some subjects, including most of those covered by sustainable development, the traditional modes of authority are not effective.

International organisations policies are compartmentalised, each one having its administration of predilection, the World Bank turning more readily to Ministries for Finances, the PNUE towards Ministries of Environment. Each one of these organisations will require from countries specific reporting according to different frameworks between the social and the environmental economic pillars of sustainable development.

NSDS can play this role of providing coherence between sectoral programs, as mentioned above, but one can also imagine that the mechanism of peer review makes it possible to put around the table, not only peer countries, but also international organisations intervening in the country in order to organise this convergence in a practical way.

### *5.2. Mainstreaming environment in development goals*

Some strategies in relation to other processes are unclear, considering for example the recent 2005 UN World Summit Outcome<sup>11</sup> that proposes (§22a) “to adopt, by 2006, and implement comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals;” and in §34 “long-term national development strategies”.

The text refers several times to those development strategies for different sectoral issues: §47 poverty reduction strategies, §56h integrated water resources management, water efficiency plans, access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, §60c human resources and science and technology, §114 elimination of supply and demand for illicit drugs.

The only use of the term national sustainable development strategies was on §55(c) for the adaptation to the effects of climate change.

According to most texts on sustainable development, and more precisely the ecosystem assessment, we must read in the 2005 Summit: national development strategies and long-term national development strategies as close to NSDS.

The question is the coordination of the comprehensive national development strategies of the 2005 World Summit and the national sustainable development strategies of 2002 Johannesburg

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<sup>11</sup> 2005 World Summit Outcome, Draft resolution of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly

Summit. Beyond that issue, the question is the mainstreaming of environmental concerns in development related international and national strategies.

## **6. National and local level**

### *6.1. Stakeholders and councils for sustainable development*

Stakeholder's participation is a recurrent issue since Rio. According to its experience, the network of European environment and sustainable development advisory councils (EEAS)<sup>12</sup> considers that the "participation of stakeholders and civil society needs to be fostered and spread more widely" and recommends countries to create councils for sustainable development. Such councils "are a specific mechanism for fostering dialogue among different stakeholders, which has the potential for innovative approaches and solutions, and for achieving (unexpected) agreements."

The workshop<sup>13</sup> organised in May 2005 with French-speaking country councils for sustainable development made also statements to implement proposals of Johannesburg Summit<sup>14</sup> "to enhance national institutional arrangements for sustainable development, including at the local level (...) encouraging participatory approaches", and enhancing "the role and capacity of local authorities as well as stakeholders in implementing Agenda 21".

We can note that the French National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) was involved in the peer review process as well as representatives of such councils from the peer countries.

### *6.2. Local strategies known as local Agenda 21*

At the local level, problems are the same. The name of the strategy is the "*local Agenda 21*" process. Having a global strategy helps local authorities to coordinate their local actions with the national level and stakeholders. Coordination between national and local level should be then obtained through coordination of the national strategy for sustainable development and the local Agenda 21 process. Some parts have to be coherent, for example sustainable development indicators.

The coordination between NSDS and local Agenda 21, known as vertical integration, appears of great importance. It can be interesting to quote the definition of local Agenda 21 in Rio program Action 21<sup>15</sup> which remains in advance 13 years later and is not far from the most mature approaches on NSDS: "each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt 'a local Agenda 21'. Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. The process of consultation would increase household awareness of sustainable development issues. Local authority programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve

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<sup>12</sup> Ingeborg Niestroy, EEAS (2005), a benchmark study on national strategies toward sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member state, European environment and sustainable development advisory councils, EEAC series, Backgrounds study n°2

<sup>13</sup> Atelier de concertation des conseils nationaux du développement durable de l'espace francophone, Paris, 11 au 13 mai 2005, organisé par l'Institut de l'Énergie et de l'Environnement de la Francophonie (IEPF) et le Conseil National du Développement Durable (CNDD) de la France.

<sup>14</sup> Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002, A/CONF.199/20, §166-167.

<sup>15</sup> UNCED (1992) Agenda 21 - Report of the United Nations Conference on environment and development, Rio de Janeiro, §28.3

Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified, based on local programmes adopted. Strategies could also be used in supporting proposals for local, national, regional and international funding.”

We can identify in this definition, among others, the importance of sharing information between different stakeholders within the local community. And on a wider scale, networking, such as ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability: a world-wide movement of local governments)<sup>16</sup> or EuroCities (network of major European cities)<sup>17</sup> and cooperation between local authorities should help to share experiences.

## **7. Other stakeholders engagements**

### *7.1. Scientific advices for sound decisions*

The issue of scientific advice has been often addressed by indicator approaches. Without hindering the importance of such tools, the question is to bring knowledge into the decision-making process. Some composite indicators, such as ecological footprint, have a more controversial scientific basis, but strong political mobilisation capacity, as we have observed with the address by the President of the French Republic Jacques Chirac made in Johannesburg.

As noted above, more coherence is necessary at the international level, particularly concerning science-based decision-making. The creation of a centralized UN body for biodiversity, based on the model of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), should help to strengthen the role of scientific considerations in international environmental governance, informing public opinion, and assisting international public decision-making. Political decision-makers must be informed and guided in their choices by high level, internationally recognized and easy-to-use scientific expertise, providing information at both global and local levels. Secondly it could help to improve coherence and coordination, including convergence of standards and global environmental processes, and sustainable development as a whole.

In this respect, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report<sup>18</sup>, established in terms of ecosystem services, gives new arguments for integration of environmental concerns in the Millennium development goals and the core concerns of NSDS.

### *7.2. Economic issue: Enterprises and corporate social responsibility*

Finally the economic pillar of sustainable development, i.e. business, can also be addressed through national and local strategies on sustainable development. It is a major issue even for traditional vision of development.

The recent UN “2005 World Summit Outcome” provides a vision of creating a domestic environment conducive to attracting investments through, inter alia, achieving a transparent, stable and predictable investment climate with proper contract enforcement and respect for property rights and the rule of law and pursuing appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks that encourage business formation.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)

<sup>17</sup> [www.eurocities.org](http://www.eurocities.org)

<sup>18</sup> Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Synthesis Report, Strengthening capacity to manage ecosystem sustainably for human well-being, Pre-publication Final Draft Approved by MA Board on March 23, 2005, [www.millenniumassessment.org](http://www.millenniumassessment.org)

Sustainable development raises the reverse issue: how can business contribute to sustainable development, and local and global public goods production.

Since CSD 6, in 1998, it has become clear that the contribution of business is essential to sustainable development. In 1999 an initiative was launched by the General Secretary of United Nations Koffi Anan, the Global Compact, with engagements of business on social and environmental objectives. The firms that have signed the Global Compact were mobilised, last June in Paris, to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals. The §18(a) of Johannesburg plan of implementation “encourages industry to improve social and environmental performance through voluntary initiatives, including environmental management systems, codes of conduct, certification and public reporting on environmental and social issues, taking into account such initiatives as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards and Global Reporting Initiative guidelines on sustainability reporting.” This situation evolves presently in context of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The benchmark done by network of European environment and sustainable development advisory councils<sup>19</sup> has considered three bottom line approaches of CSR as the contribution of business to sustainable development strategies. Movement advocating CSR is present in most countries but not in coordination with NSDS.

### 7.3. ISO 26000

Important next steps are ahead in this matter, mainly through ISO Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility - ISO 26000. The guidance standard should be relevant to all organisations and not only to enterprises.

The main issue of this negotiation is the relation between voluntary initiatives and conventions and mandatory obligations at global, national and local level. For international labour standards, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between International Labour Organisation (ILO) and ISO “with a view to ensuring that any ISO International Standard in the field of SR (Social Responsibility), and any ISO activities relating thereto, are consistent with and complement the application of international labour standards world-wide, including fundamental rights at work”<sup>20</sup>. Other international organisations are also part of the process as category D liaison organisations with the Working Group on Social responsibility: UNEP, UNCTAD, UNIDO, WHO, OECD and other organisations such as UN Global Compact and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

According to the present discussion we should consider, in addition, the relation between national strategies on sustainable development, and where relevant local Agenda 21, and the enterprises operating at those levels.

The negotiation conditions and design specification structure of ISO 26000 was fixed in Bangkok on 26-30 September 2005. Things are only beginning, but it can be interesting to put into perspective the design specification structure and identify how it could be the concern to NSDS implementation specialists. The 2nd section, for example, will refer to normative

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<sup>19</sup> Ingeborg Niestroy, EEAS (2005), a benchmark study on national strategies toward sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member state, European environment and sustainable development advisory councils, EEAC series, Backgrounds study n°2

<sup>20</sup> ILO/ISO (2005) Memorandum of understanding between the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Standardization in the field of social responsibility. ISO/TMB/WG SR N 18, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2005

references and documents, which must be read in conjunction with the guidance standard. The international conventions should be addressed here.

But we can also have in mind both the national legislation and the objectives identified in national strategies of sustainable development. If so, the NSDS should address this issue, and identify the main issues and objectives for public authorities, and also the business operating in the country. It appears to be a new issue for NSDS, and a challenge for policy makers.

## **Conclusion**

National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) should not only be conceived as obligations imposed to countries but as powerful mechanisms for implementing sustainable development and mainstreaming environmental concerns in development related strategies. It could help for coordinating local to global strategies, sectorised policies and implement scientific knowledge in policy making, i.e. solve governance issues for implementation of sustainable development. The multiple experiences conducted on those strategies have developed a consistent framework of NSDS that can be shared among countries through a peer review process.

Although each country has the sovereign right to define its own path to sustainable development, cooperation and information sharing processes can help to do it more efficiently. No one country can tell another what to do, but based on cooperation on equal basis among industrialised and developing countries, a peer review process of national strategies allows knowledge sharing and adaptation to specific situations. Such a process can also be set up between countries from the same region, the objective being then to consider the relation between the regional strategy and national strategies.

Multilateral framework under UN organisation authorities cannot ignore other initiatives as ISO Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility of organisations (ISO 26000) that is presently discussed through a public private negotiation framework. It should be coherent with NSDS patterns.