DRAFT ISSUES PAPER ON
STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Meeting the Challenges of the Post Rio+20 World

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Strategies for Sustainable Development
Meeting the Challenges of the Post Rio+20 World
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Preface

"without major course corrections…most internationally agreed goals
would be missed, many by a large margin"
Global Environment Outlook 5, UNEP 2012

This paper was compiled as background for the first international workshop of the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), November 14-16 2012 (Strengthening Planning and Implementation Capacities for Sustainable Development in Post Rio+20 Context). It is a draft paper that will be revised to incorporate key insights from the workshop. For more information on this workshop visit:
http://www.unosd.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=8&menu=177

This paper begins with a few basic premises. First is the acknowledgement that current progress toward sustainable development is not commensurate with the severity of the economic, social and environmental issues of the 21st century. Hence the urgency of informed strategy and action that takes the long view and can deliver sustainability, accountability and adaptability.

Second is the understanding that strategy without action is pointless, and action without strategy is risky. Hence the need to understand what is working and what is not with respect to both strategy and action for sustainable development.

This paper, and the workshop it is informing, is therefore not about discussing the survival of the thing that is known as the national sustainable development strategy (NSDS); but rather, it is about recognizing that strategy-making for sustainable development has in fact gained momentum over the past two decades, and at all levels of governance. It has come in the form of national development plans that have integrated sustainable development principles…it comes in the form of state-wide visions of wellbeing… it comes in the form of community wellbeing visions, plans and indicator systems…it comes in the form of corporate social responsibility reports…it has come in the form of strategies for green growth, and also in the form of the thing known as the NSDS.

The practice of strategy-making to achieve the societal shared vision that is sustainable development is not going away, for the simple reason that citizens innately want and need to know where they are going, how they might get there, and how they can improve and adapt along the way. It is in our nature. Therefore this paper and the first international workshop of the UNOSD is all about synthesizing, diagnosing, improving, and accelerating the creation and implementation of strategies for sustainable development.

Contents

1.0   Introduction: A Brief History of Strategy and Planning for Sustainable Development

Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, sustainable development has emerged as a new paradigm of development, integrating economic prosperity, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually supportive elements of long-term development. Chapter 8 of Agenda 21 called on countries to adopt national strategies for sustainable development (NSDS) that should build upon and harmonize the various sectoral economic, social and environmental policies and plans operating in the country. Five years later, the 1997 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly again noted the importance of NSDSs and set a target of 2002 for their formulation and elaboration. In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) urged States not only to take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development, but also to begin their implementation by 2005. In this context, countries that signed on to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation "…*solemnly pledged to the peoples of the world and the generations that will surely inherit this Earth that we are determined to ensure that our collective hope for sustainable development is realized"*. In addition, integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes is one of the targets contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration to reach the goal of environmental sustainability.

Most recently at the Rio+20 conference, the *Future We Want Outcome Document* called for "*…national, subnational and local authorities as appropriate to develop and utilize sustainable development strategies as key instruments for guiding decision-making and implementation of sustainable development at all levels, and in this regard we recognize that integrated social, economic and environmental data and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, is important in decision-making processes*."

Box 1: Principles guiding sustainable development strategy-making

An NSDS was once seen as a single, new, master plan for sustainable development. Today there is increasing consensus that it comprises a set of coordinated mechanisms and processes that, together, offer an integrated and participatory system to develop visions, goals and targets for sustainable development, and to coordinate implementation and review.

Rigid, standardised or blueprint approaches are best avoided. Instead, each individual country will need to structure its approach according to its own needs, priorities and resources. Thus, the term NSDS is increasingly being used to imply a continuous (or at least iterative) learning system rather than one-off exercises (Figure 2).

Recognising this challenge, the OECD DAC (2001) defines a 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*".

OECD DAC (2001) policy guidance sets out key principles for NSDS:
- Integration of economic, social and environmental objectives, and balance across sectors, territories and generations;

- Broad participation, effective partnerships, transparency and accountability;
- Country ownership, shared vision, commitment and continuous improvement;
- Developing capacity and an enabling environment, building on existing knowledge and processes;
- Focus on priorities, outcomes and coherent means of implementation.

Source: International Institute for Environment and Development (2009)

The international community has articulated a number of sustainable development goals and strategies, enshrined in documents such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States and the final outcome of the Rio+20 Summit, including the current process to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The development targets and strategies set by these instruments are intended to focus the energies and resources of governments to areas of development perceived by the international community to have the potential to reduce poverty and meet the development goals and aspirations of the peoples of the developing world.

The European Sustainable Development Network in their September 2010 Quarterly Report provide a cogent analysis of strategies for sustainable development. In their words (Gjoksi, N., Sedlacko, M. and G. Berger 2010):

> "…Firstly, in line with Mintzberg's concept of 'emergent strategy' (Mintzberg 2000, see also Steurer 2007) "all existing national SD efforts", i.e. processes of national capacity building, strategic planning, implementation and evaluation for sustainable development, can be seen as components of 'a national sustainable development strategy' (Cherp and Vrbensky 2002). Similarly, also the OECD suggests that NSDSs "do not have discrete beginnings or ends" (2001b). NSDSs in this sense can be understood as instruments to further pre-existing SD interests present in the society. However, such a concept of a NSDS, able to encompass practically any policy process, can thus become too blurry. Meadowcroft (2007) argues that it is helpful to keep in mind the distinction between the discrete NSDS strategy process and "the broader practice of strategic decision-making and policy implementation for sustainable development". However, there are many processes and initiatives, having their own networks of actors, which in a number of countries take place outside of the scope of NSDSs (such as pursuit of better regulation/good governance agenda, sustainability, regulatory and other types of impact assessment, attempts at improving management of concrete environmental sectors (e.g. climate change and energy, water management, land-use planning), sustainable development indicators and their monitoring reports, green public procurement, corporate social responsibility, socially responsible investment etc.). They can have significant influence on the social and environmental performance of the country.
>
> Secondly, as a logical extension of the first point, there has been a realisation that "[t]he label does not matter" as long as "basic strategic planning principles" are maintained and "a co-ordinated set of mechanisms and processes which ensure their implementation" is in place (OECD 2001b)."

Box 2. Schools of Thought on Strategy and Planning

"The means and ends of strategies in the public as well as in the private sector have been the subject of intense debates for decades. Nevertheless, there is still no consensus on what strategy processes should look like.

According to the so-called "planning school", complex organizations must plan formally (i) to coordinate their activities, (ii) to ensure that the future is taken into account in today's actions, (iii) to be rational, and (iv) to control the use of resources. Having formal plans or strategies implies that an organization ought to follow a detailed prescription of objectives or actions over a certain period. In the context of public policy, planning may also have the symbolic function of demonstrating political will to certain special interest groups. However, the planning school assumes that organizations can improve their performance when they do not rely on informal ad hoc deliberations and decisions, but streamline their activities according to a documented plan or strategy in a systematic and predictable way (Mintzberg, 1994, 6-21; Brews & Hunt, 1999; Williams, 2000). In this sense, traditional policy planning "is imbued with ideas that implementation is about getting people to do what they are told, and keeping control over a sequence of stages in a system" (Parsons, 1995, 466). Although this kind of formal top-down planning, which tries to increase predictability at the expense of empowerment and flexibility (Mintzberg, 1994, 173ff) saw its peak in the 1960s and 70s (Mintzberg et al, 1998, 353; Szulanski & Amin, 2001), it was prevalent in various policy fields into the 1990s.

With Henry Mintzberg (1994), the counter-position to the planning school can be described as informal and emergent strategy formation, which does not necessarily imply the formulation of a document. In the context of public policy, this so-called "learning school" goes back to Charles Lindblom's (1959) notion of "incrementalism". Lindblom and Mintzberg both advocate in at least some of their writings that strategies evolve rather through informal and mutual adjustments among a variety of actors than through formalized planning procedures, conducted by distinctive planners. Against this theoretical background, Mintzberg (1994, 227-321) charges the planning school with the fallacies of predetermination, detachment and formalization. These three "fundamental fallacies" can be summarized as follows: (i) planning builds on a predetermination of future developments and discontinuities, which are highly uncertain and therefore not predictable; (ii) since, according to the planning school, those who have developed plans are rarely the same people that implement them, planning is detached from implementation in terms of both the time line and the key actors involved; and (iii) the most fundamental fallacy of the planning school is the assumption that strategy formation can be accomplished by formalizing the process through distinct planners, who are isolated from daily routines.

Obviously, the planning and the learning schools represent two extreme standpoints in the debate on strategy processes. The space between the two extremes is the continuum…Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSDs) are one example of a variety of "third way mixtures", which build neither solely on formal planning nor on pure incrementalism."

Source: Steurer and Martinuzzi (2005)

2.0   Strategies for Sustainable Development: A Retrospective

There has been twenty years of experience in preparing and implementing strategies and plans for sustainable development. It is important to acknowledge at the beginning of this section that overall progress on substantive environmental, social and economic issues has been woefully inadequate since the first Earth Summit in 1992: this year's Global Environment Outlook 5 report concludes that "without major course corrections…most internationally agreed goals would be missed, many by a large margin (UNEP 2012)." But this in no way implies that nothing has happened. Indeed, from a societal learning perspective, twenty years is a mere blink of an eye. Governments from around the world at all levels and businesses both large and small have been exploring ways to implement the concept of sustainable development and have gained valuable experience. As one attempt at capturing this experience in strategy-making for sustainable development, this section takes a retrospective look at current global trends and provides a series of regional snapshots.

Global Trends

As part of a search process for their 2013 Reinhard Mohn Prize, Bertelsmann Stiftung recently studied examples of innovative strategy and action at the national and subnational level. Over thirty cases from around the world were identified and studied along four sets of criteria: strategy quality, implementation potential, forms of participation, implementation successes, and general aspects such as degree of innovation and political signalling effect. Bertelsmann Stiftung's preliminary multi-jurisdictional study reveals a number of clear trends in strategy-making for sustainable development. Many of the trends are exciting and bode well in looking to the next twenty years of progress toward sustainability, while others are concerning and will require further reflection in the spirit of continuous improvement toward winning strategies for a sustainable future.

First consider the exciting trends observed in the research (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012).

Integration of sustainable development principles directly within existing national planning mechanisms and/or constitutions. One of the exciting observations is the integration of sustainable development principles within existing national development planning processes. Countries like Ecuador, Costa Rica, Brazil, Bhutan, India, United Arab Emirates, Zambia, and China for example, are reflecting economic-social-environmental dimensions within their ongoing national development planning multi-year cycles. This represents an important indication of mainstreaming of the sustainable development concept – it is one thing to have a national strategy for sustainable development that operates at the periphery of existing government planning, and quite another thing to have the concepts embedded within existing planning and budgeting processes. But this integration into existing planning processes is not without its disadvantages of course, at least in the early phases of mainstreaming. For example, the environmental aspect of the plan can lack specificity when considered together with the entirety of the development picture; inclusion in a national plan does not guarantee inclusion in budget expenditures; and additionally, without adequate monitoring and review mechanisms in place, the rigidity of such

plans can potentially constrain adaptive policy-making and continuous improvement (Swanson and Bhadwal 2009).

High level of activity and quality at the sub-national level. Another very exciting trend is the current extent and quality of strategy-making at the subnational level. This is evident across Europe in places such as Aargau (Switzerland), Basque and Catalonia (Spain), Flanders (Belgium), Tyrol (Austria); in Australasia in places like Tasmania (Australia); and in Latin America such as the Paiter Suruí's 50-year sustainability plan, which after almost complex extinction of this indigenous peoples following first contact only decades earlier is a model for public-private and citizen-based partnerships and internet-based technology. And the trends show that the vertical nature of strategy-making goes even deeper to the community level, as evidenced in Spain's Basque country and Uldalsarea21 network of 196 municipalities that are now implementing Local Agenda 21 plans. The potential of this self-organizing power at the subnational level cannot be overstated and is a testament to the value of the shared societal vision that is embodied by the sustainable development concept.

Continued progress at national level. Another important observation is that countries which were early adopters of NSDSs have continued to evolve their strategy-making and have made good strides toward sustainability. European countries continue to lead in good practices at the national level, and countries like Brazil and Costa Rica in Latin America and the Republic of Korea in Asia have also continued to improve on their NSDSs over the past twenty years. As a testament to the importance of this staying power with respect to strategies for sustainability, South Korea in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis had the enabling conditions in place to lead the world in green stimulus spending (as percent of GDP). Even Canada, despite its withdrawal from the Kyoto Accord, has recently developed its first Federal Sustainable Development Act and Strategy, partly in response to lessons learned during its decade of experience with departmental sustainable development strategies.

Identification of measurable targets. Towards improved accountability to the public, governments have made conscious efforts for more results and outcome-based planning and reporting. This trend was apparent also within NSDSs as evidenced by the presentation of specific, measureable and time-bound goals within most of the strategies examined.

Bertelsmann Stiftung's global research also revealed some concerning trends in strategy-making for sustainable development. Among these were the following (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012):

Accountability mechanisms for achieving targets are weak. While it is certainly the case that more target-oriented goals are being cited in strategies and plans, it is also the case that the specific mechanisms to hold governments and stakeholders to account for achieving the goals are unclear. This trend is consistent with the shortcomings often cited of multilateral environmental agreements and supports the finding of UNEP's Global Environment Outlook 5 report cited previously - that "without major course corrections…most internationally agreed goals would be missed, many by a large margin UNEP 2012)."

Many multi-stakeholder bodies are being discontinued. A concerning trend observed was the discontinuing of a number of multi-stakeholder councils that had existed to support independent analysis on sustainable development issues and progress. Among these are the United Kingdom's Commission for Sustainable Development, Canada's National Round Table on the Environment and Economy, and the Tasmania Progress Board, each discontinued during the past year. Fiscal issues were cited among the reasons in two of these cases, but additionally, the councils were perceived by the current governments as no longer relevant to the discourse, either because the concept was believed to be already integrated across government, as in the case of the UK, or not reflecting current government policy, as in the case of Canada. Whatever the reason, the trend is concerning given the important role that participation plays in sustainable development, be it for legitimizing courses of action or more importantly, to obtain a level of perspective that is commensurate with the complexity of the issues being addressed.

European Snapshot

The European countries continue to lead in the practice of strategy-making and implementation of actions for sustainable development. This occurs at all levels including the supra-national via the European Union's sustainable development strategy, the national level, and more and more at the subnational and local levels. Knowledge sharing and capacity building in this regard is also the most advanced in this region of the world. The European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) and the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) network has facilitated peer-to-peer sharing of best practices and undertaken targeted research on current and emerging issues. An overview of strategy practices in Europe was prepared in the ESDN's quarterly report of September 2010 (Gjoksi, Sedlacko and Berger 2010). Considered here are some brief reflections from the ESDN on successes and innovations as well as some weaknesses and constraints that have been observed over the past decade.

Regarding successes and innovations:
- ***Germany:*** Has high-level political commitment and the State Secretaries' Committee on Sustainable Development is a political body that fosters cross-sectoral integration of sustainable development into all government departments. This institution guarantees that the strategy is embedded into the political process;
- ***Finland:*** Has a very good national sustainable development council that represents the most important stakeholder groups and steers the strategy processes;
- ***Switzerland:*** Aligned the strategy process with the legislative period;
- ***Austria:*** Was very successful in establishing a national sustainable development strategy that is binding for the national and sub-national levels. The exchange mechanisms between the national and regional level was established a number of years ago and has been continued ever since;
- ***United Kingdom:*** Introduced by the Labour Government, departmental Sustainable Development Action Plans are prepared, guaranteeing that the national strategy is addressed in sectoral ministries; and

- **SD indicators:** Are developed on the EU level and in most countries. There is no one sustainable development indicator set, but the EU system is fairly comprehensive to measure what has been achieved – the main drawback being that a failure to achieve objectives has no consequences.

Regarding weaknesses and constraints:

- It can be argued that the biggest drawback in Europe at this point in time is the **weak political commitment** towards sustainable development in general, and towards implementing strategy objectives in particular. The EU sustainable development strategy process shows this very clearly – it is a strategy that has no political backing;
- The current **financial and budget crises** put several constraints on sustainable development policy implementation and on strategy processes as well. Budget cuts mainly happen in Europe in those areas that would be crucial for sustainable development (e.g. environmental policy, poverty reduction, etc.);
- There are several good practices in parts of NSDS processes, but there is no single example where the whole strategy process was a big success. Such a success story is needed to achieve media attention and public awareness. The **movement lacks a visible, high-level champion** (i.e., an Al Gore of sustainable development);
- Sustainable development is a complex and comprehensive concept that is **difficult to translate** into political practice and hard to understand for non-experts; and
- The focus on win-win situations dominated the national sustainable development discourse for a long time and created the **false impression** that with sustainable development you can only win. In reality, however, there are trade-offs and losers – this needs to be addressed and decisions have to made accordingly.

Africa Snapshot

In 2011 the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA) published a sixteen country assessment of national strategies for sustainable development (NSSDs) across Africa (UNECA 2011). Countries included in the assessment were: Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, The Gambia, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia. The conclusions of the assessment, based largely on a 2006 survey, are quoted below.

"Effective NSSD processes provide strategic responses to addressing the complex challenges of sustainable development. In this context, this review indicates that most African countries have developed and are implementing NSSDs, but the types and approaches differ depending on the particular country context. Different countries put different emphasis on the three pillars of sustainable development. While some countries are improving/restructuring the decision-making process to achieve a full integration of social and environmental issues and a broader range of public participation, others are taking a complimentary approach, whereby a separate strategy document is prepared, and then existing planning frameworks are updated to incorporate sustainability principles. Increasingly, countries are applying the principles of sound leadership, good governance and multi-stakeholder ownership and participation. Also, ministries/agencies responsible for planning and finance are playing lead roles in NSSD development and implementation.

Priorities addressed by countries' NSSD vary in comprehensiveness, but most cover the economic, social, environmental and institutional dimensions of sustainable development. In terms of implementation, countries have decentralized to local levels. However, in some countries, the priorities specified and activities being implemented were at variance, as well as the key players specified and those actually involved in the implementation process. Countries have put in place M&E mechanisms to track implementation progress. But the indicator frameworks differ in comprehensiveness. Nevertheless, monitoring and evaluation have resulted in notable improvements in strategy processes. Countries have developed and are implementing PRS and some consider these as constituting their NSSDs. Countries recognize the need to link the different national planning frameworks such as NLTVs, PRSs, NDPs, MDGs and are ensuring complementarities among these. As regards the 2005 World Summit national development strategy-related resolution, countries consider that this has been adequately addressed in existing planning frameworks. More importantly, countries have registered good practices and useful lessons have been learned in the implementation process to inform and ensure continuous improvement in countries' NSSD process."

Asia & Pacific Snapshot

The Asia and Pacific region is an extremely diverse region "covering some 43 countries of various types, sizes, governance systems and beliefs. It is home to some of the richest countries or members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Singapore; and at the same time, to many of the world's poorest such as East Timor and Burma (Antonio 2008)." It is not surprising then that there exist a diversity of strategy approaches to be found across the region.

In 2008-09 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) completed the NSDS Asia Pacific project, supported by the Government of Norway and the Asian Development Bank. This initiative was "intended primarily to strengthen the capacity of the Asia Pacific region by assisting national governments in formulating NSDS and by mainstreaming sustainable development issues in the decision making process (UNEP 2008). Seventeen countries participated in the initiative including: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan; Mongolia; Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, Maldives, Nepal-national, Nepal-2 districts, Sri-Lanka and the Greater Mekong Sub-region including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Yunnan Province of People's Republic of China.

A snapshot of Kazakhstan, Maldives and Thailand from UNEP's NSDS Asia Pacific Project are provided below (UNEP 2008).

Kazakhstan: "Adopted a series of major SD policy documents: the Strategy on Sustainable Development up to 2030, the National Environmental Action Plan, Environmental Code. The Concept of Transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to SD up to 2024 (NSDS Concept) was elaborated in 2007 to respond to the Presidential Decree following 2002 WSSD & Address of the President to the People of Kazakhstan of 1 March 2006. Ministry of Environmental Protection with support from UNEP, UNDP, EU has processed

the Concept discussions with participation of parliamentarians, governmental agencies, national and international experts and academia in the field of SD, NGOs, business community."

Maldives: "In Maldives, there are 34 sustainable development challenges including high population growth, harmonized tourism development and equitable distribution of health services. Vision 2020 for Maldives includes social economical and environment goals; implementation strategy; tourism planning; natural resources (biodiversity and natural environment); institutions; environmental planning; laws and regulations; priority issues; and future policy directions and involvement in decision making. Maldives is committed to develop and pursue NSDS (Agenda 21, MDG and JPOI). Ministry of Environment and Construction, Maldives has initiated NSDS activities with the support of UNEP since November 2004."

Thailand: "Thailand has committed to Agenda 21 (1992), MDG and JPOI (2002) and acted early in addressing the institutional requirements in 1975. Thailand has formulated a middle-term sustainable development plan: National Social and Economic Development Plan No. 10 (2007-2011), with the implementation period of 5 years. Governments were urged to develop the National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) to bring in SD principles into national planning and development process by 2005. The National Council for SD was established but not activated yet. The National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand (NESDB) has initiated a process to develop the NSDS and requested UNEP's assistance."

In 2012, Bertelsman Stiftung undertook global research as part of their 2013 Reinhard Mohn Prize process. There were several interesting trends in strategy-making and action for sustainable development in the region. For example:

Republic of Korea: Two strategies have been developed in ROK, the 2006-2010 National Strategy for Sustainable Development (available at UNEP RRCAP 2012) and the 2008 National Green Growth Strategy (ROK 2012). Together these strategies provide the broader sustainable development view along with a view toward implementing and transitioning to a green economy. The NSSD's vision is for "Balanced development of economy, society and environment" and the National Green Growth Strategy includes three main objectives: mitigation of climate change and the strengthening of the country's energy independence; creation of new growth engines; and improvement in the quality of people's lives and enhancement of Korea's international standing. The NSDS was supported by the Presidential Commission for Sustainable Development and the green growth strategy is currently led by the Presidential Committee on Green Growth.

Pacific Island Forum's Pacific Plan: The Pacific Plan is a ten-year supranational strategy that was adopted by all the governments of the Pacific Island nations. The strategy provides a detailed yet simple holistic vision that includes elements of sustainable development in addition to priorities such as supporting peace, harmony and spiritual values. It aims to stress the importance of collaboration and partnership between nations in the region. The vision is specified along seven principles and 13 sub-goals and includes over 100 success indicators, most with measureable targets. The strategy implementation is reviewed annually and the reports are published, listing progress in each goal in each

country of the Pacific. All countries in the regions are actively involved in implementing goals, and monitoring and reporting on the progress, despite no formal institutionalization requirements. The plan is spearheaded by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. This is supported by the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific and its agencies and collaborators, including international banks and development agencies. [source: Bertalsmann Stiftung 2012]

Tasmania Together: The *Tasmania Together 2020* Plan includes a community owned and generated vision, 12 goals, and 143 benchmarks that are ambitious but measurable. The plan is legislatively mandated, revised and reissued every five years, and there is a requirement to report to State Parliament. The Tasmania Together Progress Board is an independent statutory authority reporting directly to Parliament and the extensive community consultations. The 20 year plan encompasses social, economic and environmental goals which reflect community priorities. The five year reviews identify current and emerging areas of concern, allowing the Board to adapt its 20 year plan to reflect the issues that matter most to Tasmanians. Additionally, "there is a formal horizontal integration process whereby government agencies plan against, budget for and report upon Tasmania Together goals and benchmarks, and a vertical integration whereby local government reports against goals and benchmarks in partnership agreements with the state." [source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012]

West Asia Snapshot

As is the case in many other Asian, Latin American and African countries, the principles of sustainable development are being integrated directly into national development plans in West Asia.

For example, the United Arab Emirates Vision 21 and its supporting government strategic plan for 2011-13 presents a coherent and binding planning process rooted in the country's existing planning and budgeting processes. The vision is holistic: "In a strong, safe union, Knowledgeable and innovative Emiratis will confidently build a competitive and resilient economy. They will thrive as a cohesive society bonded to its destiny and enjoying the highest standards of living within a nurturing and sustainable environment". There is also sustainable development planning and action at the individual Emirate level as evidenced by initiatives in Abu Dhabi. Among these were the Abu Dhabi hosted *Eye on Earth Summit* and Eye on Earth Declaration at Rio+20, the emergence of the multi-stakeholder Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group, and the plans for Masdar City. [source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012]

Box 3. Sustainability Strategies and Multi-stakeholder Participation: Sub-national Perspectives and Experiences from the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group

The Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group (ADSG) is a public-private partnership to champion sustainability in Abu Dhabi. Its purpose is to encourage government entities, private companies and not-for-profit organizations to be partners in working towards achieving Abu Dhabi's economic, environmental and social vision while ensuring that they take responsibility for a sustainable future. The ADSG was initiated in June 2008 by the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi with the support of the Executive Council-Abu Dhabi and the participation of 15 founding members that represented some of the most important sectors for the sustainability of Abu Dhabi. Since then, the Group has grown to include 38 local and multinational organisations.

How has the group fared so far and what are the lessons learnt? It is probably fair to describe success to date as sporadic, given that impacts driven from the bottom up, are largely ad hoc, limited to improved awareness for some but not for all, and consist of individual 'green' initiatives, often driven by well-intentioned but not fully developed corporate social responsibility programs. Each stakeholder perhaps is working to their interpretation of what sustainability means and not necessarily seeing the wider context. This is normal, but makes it much more difficult to move away from business-as-usual thinking, and seeing a holistic systemic view and innovate towards a more sustainable future.

Individual interpretation of sustainability is not the only difficulty, as even the basic concept of a strategy is open to many different underlying mental models and assumptions, both of which can hinder effective communications and a shared understanding. If you have three people in a room to discuss a sustainability strategy, one is likely to view strategy as a reactive adaptation to environmental circumstances, another might see strategy as a learning or research process, while yet another may see it as an implementation planning process. The discussion is therefore likely to diverge making it challenging to develop a cohesive strategy underpinned by strong commitment from all.

The ADSG experience also reveals that stakeholders are most comfortable with actions, especially if they can be delegated to somebody else. Even the need for any planning process to be conducted democratically to ensure buy in, is often questioned under the pretext that the answers are known, responsibilities can be assigned and accountability is the same as buy-in. This makes it difficult to explore issues conceptually, use inductive rather than deductive thinking, consider options or scenarios and drives sustainability policy towards being a technical instruction manual. Causal relationships and correlations are often confused and the connectivity between systems is not well understood leading to simplistic policy instruments which assume linear relationships, ignore feedback loops and result in unexpected policy responses.

The experience of the ADSG is that focusing even on only a very limited number of key sustainability issues, a key part of any successful strategy, is much more difficult than first thought and requires significant effort, which has to start with a much better understanding of the language and words used and the real meaning we attribute to them. Dealing with these issues of clarity thoroughly up front may feel excessive at the time, but can pay dividends later on in the process.

Source: Volker Soppelsa, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group; Disclaimer: *The content of this commentary is the sole responsibility of the author, and the views and opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of any agency, group or organisation.*

There are other exciting sustainable development planning initiatives underway across West Asia, some of these at the regional level. For example, Friends of the Earth – Middle East (FoEME) in 2012 launched an initiative to produce the first ever trans-boundary integrated master plan for the Jordan River. The Israeli government has launched a process to prepare a master plan for the Israeli section of the Lower Jordan River and FoEME will work to "develop complementary plans for the Palestinian and Jordanian sections of the Lower Jordan (FoEME 2012)."

Latin America & Caribbean Snapshot

There are interesting examples of strategy-making for sustainable development across the Latin America and Caribbean region, many with their roots extending back to the 1992 Earth Summit. For example,

Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Ecuador are among the examples of national development plans that have nicely integrated the principles of sustainable development.

Mexico: The "Mexico Vision 2030" project establishes the future perspectives for a "Sustainable Human Development" of Mexico. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2007 – 2012 is based on these perspectives and formed the first step of this envisioned sustainable human development. Based on the "Mexico Vision 2030" project, the National Development Plan 2007 – 2012 tries to achieve an "integral" development of the nation with a view towards new generations. The Mexico Vision 2030 presents a shared future vision of Mexico that can only be achieved by collective action, through the efforts of all Mexicans. The goal is to achieve an "integral" development of the nation with a view towards new generations. The integrality involves economic, social, environmental, judicial and political issues, which are translated into five axes: (1) State of rights and security; (2) Competitive economy that generates employment; (3) Equality of opportunities; (4) Environmental Sustainability; and (5) Effective democracy and responsible exterior policy. [source: SDplanNet-LAC, 2008].

Brazil: The 2003 Brazilian Agenda 21 was linked to the country's Pluriannual Plan (PPA), beginning in 2004 -2007. In the most recent PPA the goals are associated with "a vision of the future that defines how Brazil should be recognized: by sustainable development; regional and social equality; quality education with the production of knowledge and technological innovation; environmental sustainability; to be a democratic and independent nation that defends its human rights, freedom and peace in the world." The PPA is a multi-year development planning mechanism legally established in Brazil's 1988 constitution, serving to provide strategic guidance in the allocation of public resources. With each election (every four years) a new PPA is established, and the previous is reviewed. The Brazilian Ministry of Environment monitors the elaboration and implementation of Agenda 21, including monitoring and evaluating the PPA and annual budget. [source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012].

Costa Rica: Costa Rica's national development plan (NDP) mission statement is "…more secure development, led by innovation, science and technology, and strengthened by solidarity and commitment to environmental sustainability." The plan incorporates a present-day analysis of Costa Rica's socio-economic, political and environmental situation and establishes sixteen objectives anchored by four pillars: (i) social well-being; (ii) public peace and order; (iii) environment and land-use planning; and (iv) competitiveness and innovation. The NDP is legally binding under the 5525 National Planning Act and designates the Ministry of National Planning and Political Economy as the politically responsible entity to coordinate and implement the NDP within all levels of the Costa Rican government. [source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012].

Ecuador: Buen Vivir 2009-2013 is Ecuador's National Development Plan which seeks to shift the socio-economic paradigm in Ecuador, and whose mission is to "give strength to the Five Revolutions of the Citizens' Revolution, promote the gradual construction of a Pluri-national and Intercultural State, and support the social contract contemplated in the new 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador. The Plan is based on a "cohesive vision of society based on a rights-and-opportunities approach". An interactive website enables viewers to peruse all aspects of the plan, including its 12 objective areas and the array of goals and supporting policy statements. [source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012].

In the Caribbean there exist regional, sub-regional and national examples of strategy-making for sustainable development. For example, The ***Single Development Vision for Sustainable Development for the Caribbean Community*** (CARICOM) was approved by the 28th Conference of Heads of Government in 2007 including six broad elements to be achieved by 2015: (a) Sustaining economic growth; (b) A full employment economy; (c) Spatially equitable economic growth; (d) Social equity, social justice, social cohesion and personal security; (e) Environmental protection and ecological sustainability; and (f) Democratic, transparent and participatory governance.

At the sub-regional level, in 2001 governments of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States adopted the ***St. George's Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability*** which has as its fundamental principle, the need to foster sustainable improvement in the quality of life of the peoples of the sub-region. Of particular note is the principle, which states that "All local, national and regional development policies and plans will be fully integrated to include environmental, social, cultural and economic factors which affect the small island systems of the region".

Regional governments have therefore declared clear intentions to pursue national sustainable development agendas consistent with international and regional calls to give effect to sustainable development strategies. Below are a few a few examples of country efforts.

Trinidad and Tobago: The Cabinet of Ministers established a Multi-Sectoral Group, also called the Vision 2020 Planning Committee, and mandated it to lead the process of developing a national strategy that would guide this country to becoming a developed nation by the year 2020. The Planning Committee responded to its mandate by preparing a 15-year Vision 2020 Draft National Strategic Plan, which was approved by the government of Trinidad and Tobago. In fulfilling its mandate, the Planning Committee established twenty-eight (28) Sub-Committees to formulate draft strategic sector plans for key sectors as supporting documents to the Draft National Strategic Plan. The Vision 2020 National Development Strategy is under implementation, although the evidence suggests that the emphasis is on the infrastructural components of the initiative.

Barbados : Following the 1992 Earth Summit, Barbados established the National Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD) comprising key agencies of government and a number of para-statal and non-governmental organisations with a mandate to advise Government on measures required to integrate environmental and economic considerations in decision-making processes; on global issues of sustainable development; to facilitate national level coordination mechanisms on sustainable development; and to promote greater understanding and public awareness of the cultural, social, economic and policy approaches to attaining sustainable development in Barbados. A series of national consultations were held, starting with sustainable development in general, then following with various sectors of importance. Based on the work of its various sub-committees, the NCSD made recommendations to the government on the Barbados National Sustainable Development Policy (NDSP). The NSDP was finalized in 2002, approved by Cabinet in 2003 and laid before parliament and approved in 2003 (UN 2012).

Guyana: Preparation of the Guyana National Development Strategy (NDS) started in 1997 on the initiative of the President of the Republic of Guyana with support from the Carter Foundation. Even though there was broad societal collaboration in the formulation of the document, the collaboration was not formalised and structured to ensure control of the process by civil society. This resulted in the refusal of the parliamentary opposition to accept the NDS as a national strategy. Subsequently, in 1998 the Carter Centre persuaded the Government to establish a National Development Strategy Committee (NDSC) comprising individuals drawn from a broader civil society pool and who were promised total control over the final document. The Committee immediately began its work, which was not simply to update the original draft but to instill into the document a coherent, holistic vision and philosophy that would be acceptable to all Guyanese. Their work was completed by 2001. For three years politics overtook the need for a national consensus. As a consequence, the NDS remained in limbo and was never brought into Parliament for debate and approval. This changed in December 2005 when the parliamentary opposition moved a motion for its adoption, and received unanimous support.

Saint Lucia: The Saint Lucia experience differed from that of the other Caribbean countries' approaches discussed above from the onset and in a significant way. Whereas the other countries' strategies were initiated by either the Head of State or the cabinet of ministers, Saint Lucia's initiative emerged from a decision taken at the technical level and was later endorsed by Cabinet. The significant difference is perhaps the genesis of the difficulties the initiative faced from the onset and which later caused its failure. At this point it is worth noting that in February 2008 Cabinet appointed a National Consultative Committee with a mandate to prepare a National Development Strategy. This committee reported to two cabinet sub-committees on Social and Economic Development respectively. This new beginning is more likely to succeed, given its birth in the political arena. In 2011 the Ministry of Finance in Saint Lucia approached the Commonwealth Secretariat to *Support an Integrated Approach to National Development Planning* project in Saint Lucia, demonstrating a commitment to ushering in a new approach to sustainable development planning. This project was approved by the Commonwealth Secretariat and is due to commence in the coming months.

North America Snapshot

Despite the seeming withdrawal of Canada and the United States from the global sustainable development discourse, there has been notable activity at the national and in particular, the sub-national levels. At the federal level, *Canada* responded quickly to the 1992 Earth Summit, establishing its Commissioner for the Environment and Development within the Office of the Auditor General and legislating the preparation of departmental sustainable development strategies, for which it now has over 15 years of experience. In 2008 Canada passed a Federal Sustainable Development Act mandating the preparation of a Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (Government of Canada 2012). The federal strategy in principle was welcomed guidance to government departments, which up to that point were preparing individual strategies; however, the first version of the strategy tabled in 2009 addressed only environmental issues. The new federal strategy approach and process did bring with it a closer integration with the Treasury Board's management accountability framework and annual departmental budget planning and reporting requirements, and also a continued emphasis on the strategic environmental assessment of policies and programmes and on green procurement in the

federal government sector. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada recently cut funding to its primary multi-stakeholder body for informing sustainable development action, Canada's National Round Table on the Environment and Economy.

At the subnational level, provinces such as Manitoba and Quebec have passed Sustainable Development Acts and have over a decade of experience in their implementation. The Government of Manitoba presented its new Tomorrow Now Green Plan at Rio+20 and is undergoing public consultation (Manitoba 2012). In addition, Manitoba's capital city underwent an extensive *SpeakupWinnipeg.com* consultation effort to prepare its official development plan guiding growth and change for the city (Winnipeg 2011). Additionally, a consortium of community organizations led by the United Way of Winnipeg is creating an innovative online community indicators system, *www.myPeg.ca*, for tracking wellbeing and sustainability across the city and inspiring action. There are indeed other examples of community-level strategy and reporting processes underway across Canada, many of which were incentivised by the federal government's allocation of gas tax revenue for the completion of *Integrated Community Sustainability Plans*. For instance, in the heart of Canada's oil sands development, the Municipality of Wood Buffalo recently completed an extensive public consultation process to prepare its new 20 year development plan and also its strategic plan entitled 'Implementing Sustainability" meant to align all municipal planning decisions, provide direction for departmental business plans, and to continually monitor progress toward desired outcomes (Wood Buffalo 2011).

In the **United States**, as has typically been the case, there is a significant level of activity at the community and state levels that tends to percolate upward and influence federal direction and policy. For example, the Community Indicator Consortium is an extensive network of community planners and practitioners that fosters knowledge sharing and capacity building on community indicators use and performance measurement, with the intent of "providing ways for community groups and governments to coordinate efforts and jointly enhance knowledge about the use of indicators to leverage positive change (CIC 2012)."

Participating in this network is an exciting array of wellbeing, quality of life, sustainability and government planning initiatives from across the country. The state of Oregon is a good example of both state and community planning that follows and implements the common principles and approaches embodied in sustainable development strategy-making. The Oregon Shines statewide vision and its Oregon Benchmarks (Oregon 2012) and independent Progress Board were for two decades one of North America's most innovative examples of holistic planning and reporting. However, it would appear from the government's website that these elements are no longer as active as they once were. Extending to the community level, the city of Portland and the Great Portland region of Oregon also illustrates this innovative nature in its Portland Pulse, an initiative that uses both data and dialogue to inspire coordinated action for better results across the region (Portland Pulse 2012).

And finally, the state of California under the leadership of then Governor Schwarzenegger catalyzed strategy and action for sustainable development. The vision of the California Strategic Growth Council strategy 2012-14 (CSGC) is for "healthy, vibrant, and resilient California communities, environment, and

economy" and its mission is that the CSGC "coordinates the activities of State agencies and partners with stakeholders to promote sustainability, economic prosperity, and quality of life for all Californians." California is repeatedly ranked as the top US state for sustainability. There are two key pieces of legislation driving cross-cutting sustainable development impact in California: the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 and the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, along with the Vision California project for land-use and transportation investments advanced under Governor Schwarzenegger. These have in turn driven an array of programs manifesting most visibly at the municipal level. [source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012]

3.0   The Post Rio+20 Context:
Complex and Uncertain Terrain

The 21st century is shaping up to be very complex and uncertain terrain to navigate, from both an issue and a governance perspective. First consider the landscape of complex issues.

The Issue Landscape

The World Economic Forum's 2012 Global Risk Report identifies an extensive suite of 50 global risks. Those risks that experts cited as having the highest likelihood and highest potential impact are: Water supply crisis; Food shortage crisis; Extreme volatility in energy and agriculture prices; Chronic fiscal imbalances; Severe income disparity; Rising greenhouse gas emissions; Terrorism; Failure of climate change adaptation, and Recurring liquidity crises. This analysis is essentially highlighting that the challenge of the 21st century at this point in time is a nexus framed by water, energy, food, fiscal, and physical security, against a backdrop of income disparity and climate change.

The World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report further illustrates that these are not disparate issues, but rather are a complex and co-mingled set of issues clustered around five 'centres of gravity' that represent the most influential and consequential risks in relation to others. The entire constellation of risks and their connections is depicted in Figure 1. Among the five centres of gravity were: Chronic fiscal imbalances (economic); Greenhouse gas emissions (environmental); Global governance failure (geopolitical); Unsustainable population growth (societal); Critical systems failure (technological).
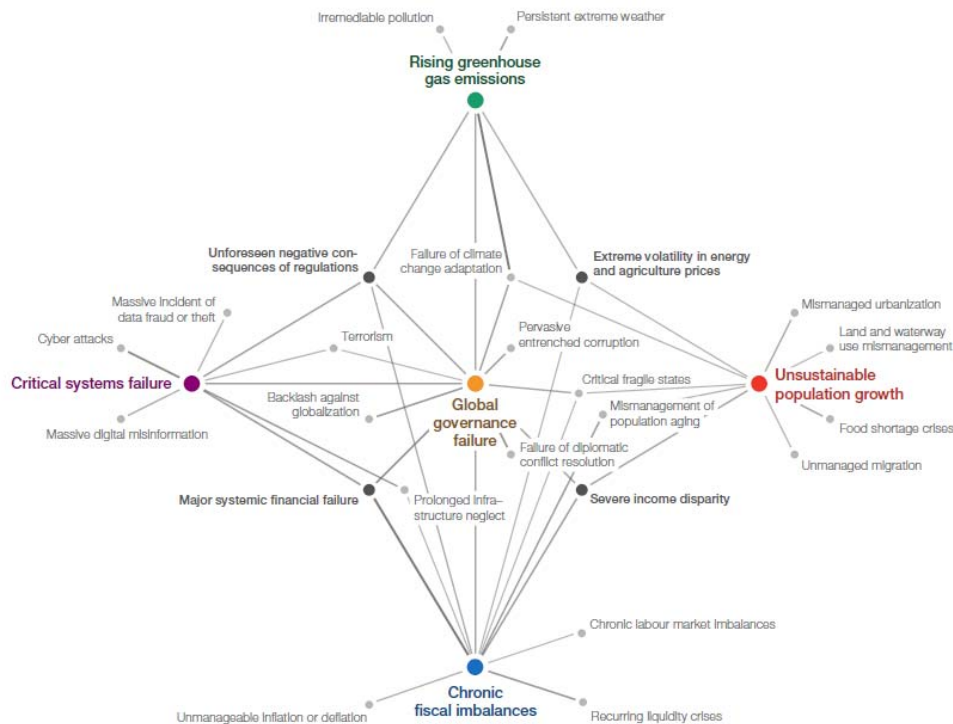

Figure 1. Global Risk Map 2012 (from: World Economic Forum 2012).

The Global Environment Outlook 5 report was published in 2012 by the United Nations Environment Programme and its Division of Early Warning and Assessment (UNEP 2012). Their review of global scenario studies delivered a stark reminder of the urgency of the issues landscape for the 21st century: "…without greater efforts to implement appropriate short-term policies, to shift investments to achieve necessary long-term structural changes, and to introduce behavioural transformations, it will not be possible to meet sustainability targets. These relate to international agreements on environmental protection and human development for issues like atmosphere and climate change, land and food security, water and biodiversity." Taken in conjunction with the results of the World Economic Forum's global risk report which revealed a water-energy-food security nexus as among the most critical risks, the world does not appear particularly well positioned to successfully navigate the complex terrain ahead.

Key insights from the outlook report relevant to strategies and planning for sustainable development in the 21st century include (UNEP 2012):

"Transforming both consumption and production is important. Scenario studies suggest that targets can be met, but only if measures are taken to influence the levels and patterns of consumption and production. Most current policies focus on changes in production processes to achieve targets, but fail to address consumption. However, changes in consumption levels and patterns have great – but as yet unrealized – potential to reduce environmental pressures.

Effective implementation of wide-ranging technical and policy measures needs to be supported by a shift in underlying motivations and value patterns. Changes need to be both short and long term, and to combine technology, investment and governance measures along with lifestyle modifications grounded in a mindset shift towards values based on sustainability and equity. They also need to reflect regional differences and priorities. Technical measures alone are unlikely to be enough, and will not have the required level of societal support if not accompanied by transformations at all leverage points.

Accomplishing such complex transformations requires a gradual but steadily accelerating transition process. Some successful policy innovations are already happening, but need to be mainstreamed to be more effective. There is also a need to stop doing the things that pull the Earth System towards unsustainability. At the same time, it is important to provide resources, build capacity and create an enabling environment in a way that is consistent with visions of a sustainable world.

Broad-based social contracts grounded in jointly developed visions of a sustainable future would help to bring key stakeholders on board. The transition requires a high degree of consensus and coordination of action between social actors – governments, the private sector and civil society. To ensure coherence, contextually sensitive transition pathways could be developed as joint visions of the future. These can be agreed on as informal or formal social contracts that respect the requirement to assure sustainable access to the resources necessary for human well-being.

The transition process needs to be based on adaptive management. Uncertainties play a key role in the problems of the Earth System. As a result, management should be based on learning-by-doing processes, periodic reassessment based on new learning, and a great diversity of measures. This will provide better insurance against wholesale failure on critical issues – due either to inherent uncertainties or inadequate implementation – and be mutually strengthening as well.

There is a need for clear long-term environment and development targets and for stronger accountability in international agreements. Given that environmental and societal Earth System changes can be slow, long-term visions and goals – expressed as social contracts – could help focus investments and technology development, induce societal change, and engage other actors in society."

The Governance Landscape

The governance landscape in the Post Rio+20 world is also an important contextual backdrop to summarize for a conversation about strategies and planning for sustainable development in the 21st century. The European Sustainable Development Network provided a cogent synopsis of *The Future We Want – Rio+20 Outcome Document* (UNCSD 2012) for purposes of sustainable development strategies. They note that the agreed text of the Rio+20 Summit was structured along six areas, namely:

    I.   Our Common Vision
    II.   Renewing Political Commitment
    III. Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
    IV. Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development
    V.   Framework for action and follow-up
    VI. Means of Implementation

The ***'our common vision'*** that was advanced was as follows:

> *4. We recognize that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development. We also reaffirm the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration and restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.*

Section 2 on ***renewing political commitment*** mainly reaffirms the Rio 1992 principles and past action plans and calls for an assessment of progresses made and gaps that have remained since the 1992 Rio Declaration. Four areas in particular were highlighted as urgent and being far from resolution: Poverty (par.21, 23); Unemployment (par.24); Climate Change (par.25); and the relationship between people and ecosystems (par.30).

Section 3 of the outcome document addresses the first theme of the conference: ***Green Economy in the context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication***. ESDN's synopsis of the document notes that "while addressing the role of the green economy as an important tool for SD and poverty eradication, it is, nonetheless, undoubtedly reaffirmed that sustainable development is humankind's overarching goal. Accordingly, no critiques can be advanced on the possibility of a substitution of the green economy as a global goal for humanity." It is also noted specifically in paragraph 59, that countries, when implementing green economy policies, can choose an appropriate approach "in accordance with national sustainable development plans, strategies and priorities".

Section 4 of *The Future We Want* addresses the second theme of the conference: ***The Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development***, and covered five sub-sections: (i) strengthening the three dimensions of sustainable development; (ii) strengthening intergovernmental arrangements for sustainable development; (iii) environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development; (iv) international financial institutions and UN operational activities; and (v) regional, national, sub-national, local.

Particularly important for sustainable development strategies are a series of statements in the sub-section dealing with regional, national, sub-national and local. For example the ESDN notes that the outcome document makes a call for "***more coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at the national, subnational and local levels***" and for countries to "***strengthen national, sub-national and/or local institutions or relevant multi-stakeholder bodies and processes***" dealing with sustainable development. More specifically, the text elaborates the following:

> *98. We encourage regional, national, subnational and local authorities as appropriate to develop and utilize sustainable development strategies as key instruments for guiding decision-making and implementation of sustainable development at all levels, and in this regard we recognize that integrated social, economic and environmental data and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, is important in decision-making processes.*
> *99. We encourage action at the regional, national, subnational and local levels to promote access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, as appropriate.*

The ESDN further elaborates from the outcomes document that the overall strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development is meant to strengthen the three dimensions of sustainable development in order to, inter alia:

a) promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development;
b) be based on an action- and result-oriented approach giving due regard to all relevant cross-cutting issues with the aim to contribute to the implementation of sustainable development;
c) underscore the importance of inter-linkages among key issues and challenges and the need for a systematic approach to them at all relevant levels;
d) enhance coherence, reduce fragmentation and overlap and increase effectiveness, efficiency and transparency, while reinforcing coordination and cooperation;
e) promote full and effective participation of all countries in decision-making processes;

f) engage high level political leaders, provide policy guidance, as well as identify specific actions to promote effective implementation of sustainable development, including through voluntary sharing of experiences and lessons learned;

g) promote the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development, building on existing mechanisms, as appropriate; in this regard, strengthen participation of all countries in international sustainable development processes and capacity building especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments;

h) enhance the participation and effective engagement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the relevant international fora and in this regard promote transparency and broad public participation and partnerships to implement sustainable development;

i) promote the review and stocktaking of progress in the implementation of all sustainable development commitments, including commitments related to means of implementation.

Section 5 dealt with the **Framework for Action and Follow-up**, and it is in this section that **Sustainable Development** Goals (SDGs) are discussed. The outcome document confirms (par. 246) that SDGs should be based "on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation" and, furthermore, "fully respect all Rio Principles", and that (par. 246) "these goals should not divert focus or effort from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals" and need to be "coherent with the processes considering the post-2015 development agenda" (par. 249). Regarding the approximate nature of SDGs, the outcome document underscores that the goals "should be action oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities". These affirmations align well with the main messages of the Global Environment Outlook 5 report in relation to the importance of "…broad-based social contracts grounded in jointly developed visions of a sustainable future (UNEP 2012)."

4.0   Strategies for Sustainable Development:
A Prospective

The topic of this section, and the next on enabling conditions, will be addressed more fully at the UNOSD's November 2012 workshop. What follows is some initial thinking on key aspects of strategies for sustainable development going forward that will help seed discussion at the workshop.

Guiding Frameworks for Strategy Formulation

Framing concepts for articulating and guiding national development efforts must necessarily include the full range of issues that are important, and the notion of keeping an eye on economic, social and environmental dimensions of development seems to be an accepted phrasing for this holistic view. We see from experience over the past two decades that some have given names to this multi-dimensional view that embodies the needs of current and future generations, such as wellbeing and happiness to name just a few. But the sustainable development paradigm contends that it is not enough just to think about current and future needs independently, but that they need to be considered together.

The 2008 Stiglitz-Sen report on measuring the social and economic progress of societies also brings this sustainable development and wellbeing dichotomy into focus by illustrating their inherent coherence – "…the time is ripe for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's well-being. And measures of well-being should be put in a context of sustainability... (Stiglitz-Sen 2008)." In their minds, the two are both sides of the same coin: the wellbeing of the current generation must necessarily consider economic, social and environmental dimensions, and that the wellbeing of the future generation is based on the sustainability of the current generation's wellbeing.

Some jurisdictions have brought the concepts of wellbeing and sustainability together, including the well-known case of Bhutan and its 10th Five Year Plan and their 2020 "Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness" and Thailand's inclusion of the King's self-sufficiency philosophy into the national economic and social development plan. Others are grappling with how to bring the two concepts together. For example, in the case of Canada, the Ministry of Human Resources website reports on indicators of 'wellbeing' (HRSDC 2012) as does an independent civil society organization via the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW 2012); while at the same time the Government's new federal sustainable development strategy and supporting indicators focus on environmental issues with no linkage to, or from, the other wellbeing frameworks and indicators within and outside government.

On the whole, jurisdictions have learned over the past twenty years that sustainable development is about the *wellbeing* of current generations and also the *sustainability* of that wellbeing into the future. The degree to which wellbeing and sustainability are truly understood and considered as two parts of the same whole in government strategy-making, planning and policy, has however, advanced at various paces around the world.

The other important trend relating to guiding frameworks is the emergence of green economy and green growth strategies as a means for helping to implement sustainable development. Consider the examples of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Republic of Korea's National Strategy for Green Growth.

The European Union's current Europe 2020 strategy describes its goals as "Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth." More specifically, the strategy's objectives include: (i) smart growth – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; (ii) sustainable growth – promoting a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy; and (iii) inclusive growth – fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. This Europe 2020 strategy is a successor of the so-called Lisbon strategy "for growth and jobs" of 2000. Since the adoption of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy in 2001 the relationship between the two strategies has been disputed: Officially the EU SDS was considered as the "overarching" strategy, but this was only superficial. The EU SDS was revised in 2006, with some improvements for (multi-level) governance; but, none of this came true, and was all overrun by the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy in 2010. It is considered as achievement that the Europe 2020 strategy includes "resource efficiency" as one objective, and this is included in the monitoring and reporting etc. However, there have been strong advocates for revising and reinvigorating the EU SDS, as the Europe 2020 strategy is not an overarching strategy, but predominantly driven by economic objectives. On October 25, 2012 the Environment Council reaffirmed the undiminished resolve of the EU and its Member States to an ambitious follow up to Rio+20 and to put forth initiatives to move forward and fully implement all the commitments in "The Future We Want" at EU and Member States level, in particular through the European Sustainable Development Strategy, which therefore should be reviewed until 2014 at the latest (EU 2012).

The Republic of Korea is another important case given that it indeed emerged as the global leader in both the conceptualization and implementation of green economy and green growth strategies in response to the 2008 global economic crisis, a response that just may have been paved by its national sustainable development strategy and processes (see Section 2 of this paper, Asia and Pacific Snapshot).

It is apparent given the statements emanating from *The Future We Want – Rio+20 Outcome Document* and recently from the EU, that sustainable development will continue to be the primary overarching shared vision and framing for future development, but that frameworks will emerge, such as green growth, resource efficiency, and circular economy, that will provide stepping stones to better understand and realize the linkages among the environment and the economy. UNEP's 2011 green economy report provide a comprehensive analysis of the concept, including economic modelling and enabling conditions. The reader is also referred to Jacobs (2012) for an elaboration of the economic theory and political discourse surrounding the green growth concept, and the works of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI 2012) for discussions on this new model of economic growth which the GGGI describes as "simultaneously targets key aspects of economic performance, such as poverty reduction, job creation and social inclusion, and those of environmental sustainability, such as mitigation of climate change and biodiversity loss and security of access to clean energy and water."

Indeed, experience in government planning and policy (see section 3), as well as the results of academic study (see section 1) both show that it is not desirable nor even possible to penetrate and articulate the

details of all country development plans in one overall strategy. Germany is an example of this whereby the country has a robust and vibrant overall NSDS and process, but also has delivered a new energy policy and plan for 2050 to guide and implement its aspirations on this aspect (Germany 2012).

Multi-stakeholder Participation

This aspect is core to the sustainable development paradigm, and as such, has been a big part of societal learning with regard to strategy-making for sustainable development. The retrospective analysis from section 3 of this paper noted the concerning trend which has seen several multi-stakeholder bodies around the world be discontinued or their status revised (i.e., UK, Canada, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Tasmania Together). Additionally, there is the observation of many governments creating separate councils to deliberate on the climate change discourse. These experiences will certainly be a topic of discussion at the UNOSD's November 2012 workshop, to better understand the lessons learnt, as will of course a discussion of why other countries chose not to establish a council at all. It is apparent nonetheless that the operation of multi-stakeholder bodies has been complex and difficult, and inherently so with multiple perspectives brought into important, complex and political discourses, and in a current era of economic and fiscal crises.

At the same time however, The Future We Want – Rio+20 Outcome Document reaffirms country commitment to "strengthen national, sub-national and/or local institutions or relevant multi-stakeholder bodies and processes" and the Stakeholder Forum is positioned to put in place a new global network of multi-stakeholder councils to advance this aspect of strategy-making for sustainable development.

The Rio+20 statement and the proposed global network are born out of an immense body of experience and knowledge sharing over the past two decades. For example, Antonio (2008) reports on approximately 100 multi-stakeholder councils that have operated around the world, some purely government, some purely civil society, and others multi-stakeholder, and spanning all levels of governance.

Among some of the demonstrated benefits of multi-stakeholder councils noted by Antonio (2008) are: mechanism for integration and coordination; means for cooperative action and forging commitment; voice /advocate of sustainability; venue for resolving inter-sectoral issues/conflicts; vehicle for education, information dissemination and awareness raising; and mechanism for formulating, monitoring and assessing implementation of national SD strategies. Among some of the challenges faced by actors are:

Non-government Actors:
- Some countries do not have developed or vibrant civil society (Limited democratic spaces; limited engagement; Lack of recognition and encouragement from government; Low capability, maturity, expertise to engage governments);
- Mechanisms for representation, feedback and accountability remain weak at all levels;
- Inadequate and unsustainable financing; and

- Limited access to information.

Government Actors:

- SD is seen as environmental so is usually lodged with Environment Ministry, which has limited capacity to lead and coordinate being generally outranked by other ministries
- Too many competing government priorities and resources
- Lack of integration tools
- Lack of capability among LGUs especially in integrated planning
- Policy inconsistencies between national and local levels

Niestroy (2012) takes stock of the experience of sustainable development councils at the national and subnational levels and makes several observations. In her words:

"There are examples of successful SD councils, with respect to all their functions of advising government and raising awareness about sustainable development. SD circles in Europe clearly acknowledge cultural and political diversity. There should be, in any case, some baselines; for stakeholder involvement, - a good basis for dialogue, sharing of experiences and maybe more.

SD councils are not a panacea. They are a good and simple model for some kind of structured approach for civil society involvement in policy development and monitoring. There are, and should be, other, and more legally binding mechanisms for participation, as foreseen in 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' or other 'Impact Assessment' attempts. An SD council is more of an advisory body, which works in conjunction with its respective country/government to monitor SD strategies. However, it needs to be reminded and clarified that the key purpose of an SD council is civil society involvement. So while they have an important role in promoting the creation of integrated policy, an SDC is not the coordination mechanism of the government. Mixed bodies should hence have a sufficient number of civil society members, and for the advisory function it is useful to establish sub-groups of these members.

First and foremost, civil society organisations need to be established: without them, there can be no SDC. Governments can foster this wherever needed, and should be interested in doing so for the various reasons given above. Given the somewhat disappointing developments in this respect in the global picture sketched above, also organisations of development cooperation should put more emphasis on the self-organization of civil society in their capacity building programs for SD.

In sum, civil society organisations play an important role in SD governance. And SDCs are responsible for opening up SD dialogue between government and non-state actors. Without them, there would be less evolved and effective fora for public discussion and the social, economic and environmental opportunities of sustainable development."

Vertical Integration Among Multiple Levels of Governance

It is extremely important to note activity at the subnational and local level has significant momentum at present. Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012) picked up on this trend in their recent global analysis. Additionally many participants and followers of the Rio+20 summit will also have seen this trend in the myriad of

specific initiatives and projects featured within the Rio Pavilion site and Rio Centro side events, as well as the conference website. This trend is extremely important as it highlights the self-organizing potential of stakeholders, governments and businesses around the shared vision of sustainable development.

Formally, Austria is the first EU country that has adopted a national strategy that is binding both for the national and sub-national levels, aligning federal and state sustainable development strategies. Examples of this vertical integration can be seen in the strategy of the Austrian state Tyrol. Bertelsmann Stiftung noticed that evidence of this vertical alignment, although less formal, can be seen in Switzerland (and the canton Aargau), and in Spain's Basque Country and its local Agenda21 network, Uldalsarea 21. [source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012]

Clearly, the vertical integration and/or enabling of national, subnational and local levels will be among the most important aspects of strategy-making for sustainable development going forward in the 21st century.

Horizontal Integration Among Multiple Levels of Governance

This aspect of strategy-making has been a focus of much discourse and effort over the past twenty years. There are successes, failures and lessons have been learnt, and this will be the topic of much discussion at the UNOSD's November 2012 workshop.

Traditional approaches to development planning mirrors the structure of government with ministries and public sector agencies pursuing individual mandates which, for the most part are seen as mutually exclusive agenda. Formal integration across sectors is generally lacking or loosely defined. This does not allow for a coordinated approach to development, nor does it allow for the optimal level of cross sectoral collaboration in pursuit of individual or common goals. Whereas much will be gained through mechanisms such as inter-ministerial dialogues in programme design and execution, the absence of formal frameworks, mainly in the form of long term, agreed development goals to frame the dialogues makes this much more difficult than it first appears. The absence of a long-term perspective also means that there is too much focus on short-term goals and too little focus on a longer-term vision. This results in development that is skewed towards certain communities and/or sectors in the economy and a failure to attain full human welfare potential and an economy too heavily dependent on one economic sector.

These complex challenges cannot be meaningfully addressed through project interventions because any lasting solution will require cultural shifts in the way the agencies of government engage each other, other public and private sector entities and indeed the population as a whole. In this regard, a common platform should be established through wide consultations across the entire spectrum of development partners, including especially civil society groups to define the sustainable development agenda. This platform should be structured in ways that require inter agency and/or cross sector collaboration to define the programmatic and project level interventions to be pursued and address resource allocation issues in ways that foster this collaboration.

The process to arrive at an agreed development agenda should be fashioned to ensure meaningful inputs into the final product, but more importantly, must allow for empowerment of participants and nurture a sense of ownership of the outcome. In addition to the benefits of wide scale embrace of the resulting development agenda, this will also help force the vertical integration necessary for resource allocation, policy shifts and implementation of the agreed development framework.

Financing and Implementation

This is clearly one of the most crucial and from experience, most difficult aspects of sustainable development over the past twenty years. The UNOSD's upcoming November 2012 workshop is aptly titled "Strengthening Planning and Implementation Capacities for Sustainable Development in Post Rio+20 Context." Therefore, implementation will be a key part of the discussion at the office's first international workshop and a focus of knowledge sharing and capacity building going forward.

With a long list of international conventions currently in play with respect to the environment, the big question being posed in this beginning of the 21st century is about accountability to existing commitments. The United National Framework Convention on Climate Change being a case in point. With this discussion on accountability comes the seemingly age old discussion about political will (i.e., priorities) and fiscal resources. The continuation of this discussion will again need to confront both political will and fiscal resources with one part persistence, and one part, fresh thinking. One example of such fresh thinking is the Earth Security Initiative (ESI). The ESI looks at sustainable development from an investment perspective and focusing on land as "basic building block of national sovereignty, and an investable asset that is critical to achieve food security, economic growth and environmental conservation (ESI 2012)." ESI is supported by an array of private foundations and trusts from Germany (BMW foundation), United States, UK, Sweden and Switzerland who see the investment questions as integral to long-term sustainability. The ESI notes that "If in producing these commodities, investments deplete natural capital and compromise food security and human rights, they face unprecedented risks. If on the contrary they find common ground between these agendas, they have the opportunity to achieve long-term wealth and security." Towards this premise, the ESI "translates the risks and opportunities of land-use changes to the investment community. With the support of inter-disciplinary research and integrated data it brings together investors and experts across silos in order to learn from one another, and jointly define a trajectory for land investments that support long-term security." It will take initiatives like this to shed new light on the importance of natural capital to water, food and energy security, and not just a basic minimal amount of natural capital , but an excess of it, as a necessary hedge against the risks the confront the 21st century, most notably climate change.

At base, the discourse on strategy- and policy-making for sustainable development will need to better integrate the visions, plans and operations of the business community. A case in point is this paper which at this point provides mostly a public sector perspective on strategy-making for sustainable development. The policies of large multi-national corporations have significant potential for broad impact along the supply the supply chain (i.e., Walmart) and influence on consumer behavior. As the work of the new UNOSD advances over the coming years, issue papers like this and workshops like the one to be held in November 2012 will need to be informed by a balance of public and private

perspectives if the discourse on implementation is ever to move beyond the stasis characteristic the past twenty years.

Monitoring and adaptive governance

The Future We Want – Rio+20 Outcome Document emphasized the importance of global monitoring and early warning functions such as UNEP's Global Environment Outlook reporting. Additionally, the 2012 GEO5 report itself stressed the importance of monitoring and adaptive management in 21st century governance for sustainable development. And if the risk landscape painted in the World Economic Forum's 2012 Global Risk Report is any indication of what lies ahead, adaptive approaches to strategy-making, policy-making and governance will be more a necessity than a theoretical discussion. Box 4 provides an excerpt from the GEO5 report which provided guidance on adaptive governance for sustainable development (UNEP 2012).

Box 4. Guidance for Adaptive Governance and Policy-making in the 21st Century

"Recognizing that humanity is encroaching on critical planetary boundaries, new modes of adaptive governance are needed to initiate transition management and achieve internationally agreed goals and targets.

This analysis has demonstrated that the transition path towards a sustainable world scenario is feasible but requires navigating a wide range of highly complex and interrelated issues simultaneously. Contextually, society's pursuit of well-being and the requisite use of natural resources is a complex adaptive system, where different systems interact and adapt to one another, giving rise to the emergent ability of both people and ecosystems to self-organize in response to sudden shocks and more slowly changing stresses (Liu et al. 2007). Such a system is never at a standstill, but rather is in a constant process of incremental adaptation, reconfiguration, modification, revision and re-ordering, where long periods of stability or equilibrium are visited by short periods of radical change (Grin et al. 2010; Loorbach 2007).

In such unpredictable settings, it is nearly impossible to create a fail-proof blueprint or to formulate optimal policies. What is required instead is an inclusive, learn-by-doing process with careful monitoring of policy effects, and an ability to make critical choices and improvements consistent with the trajectories leading to established goals. Society has already experienced the inadequacies of inflexible blueprint-style approaches and is gaining both experience and insights into alternative strategies and policies that are more adaptive and that help build resilience. Resilience thinking puts three aspects of social-ecological systems at the centre: resilience, adaptability and transformability. Resilience refers to the capacity of a system – such as a country or an ecosystem – to adapt to change, deal with surprise, and retain its basic function and structure while remaining within critical boundaries. Adaptability – part of resilience – represents the capacity to adjust responses to changing external drivers and internal processes, and thereby channel development along the preferred trajectory in what is called a stability domain. Transformability is the capacity to cross thresholds, enter new development trajectories, abandon unsustainable actions and chart better pathways to established targets (Folke et al. 2010).

There are different related approaches emerging that put these concepts into practice, including adaptive management, sustainability transition management, adaptive governance and adaptive policy making. They each have common features as well as different niches and scales in which they are relevant. The adaptive management approach, pioneered in the 1980s and 1990s (Lee 1993; Holling 1978), offers practical and experience-based guidance for the type of skilful navigation that would be necessary for local and regional place-based natural resource management efforts.

Recommendations for managing the transition to sustainability, resilience thinking and intervening in complex adaptive systems all provide governance-level insights (Grin et al. 2010; Loorbach 2007; Berkes et al. 2003; Rihani

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2002; Ruitenbeek and Cartier 2001; Axelrod and Cohen 2000). In relation to the design and implementation of adaptive policy instruments, there is also an array of research and experience with practical applications to draw from that embody many of the same principles as adaptive management and managing sustainability transitions (Swanson et al. 2010; Walker and Marchau 2003; Bankes 2002; Dewey 1927). The range of research and experience cited in this paragraph reveals a consistent set of critical functions for adaptive governance and managing the transition to sustainability, here largely adopting the terminology of Loorbach (2007):

- *Multi-actor deliberation and agenda building.* Many stakeholders influence societal change. Governance must, therefore, be participatory to recognize advantageous leverage points, the levers for change and the correct direction to move them; to achieve coherent coalitions for creating shared notions of goals and ambitions; and to strengthen policy design and implementation.
- *Futures analysis and long-term collective goal setting.* Integrated and forward-looking assessments are critical tools that inform ongoing processes of change by systematically reflecting upon the future and developing shared notions of future goals and targets.
- *Enabling self-organization and networking.* Creating opportunities for cooperation and replicating successes, ensuring that social capital remains intact, and guaranteeing that members of the population are free and able to interact, are all fundamental elements of building the capacity of actors and policy itself to plan for and adapt to surprises.
- *Variation, experimentation and innovation.* Diversity of responses forms a common risk-management approach, and continuous reflection and improvement helps to develop a context in which innovation for desired change can thrive.
- *Reflexivity and adaptation.* Systemic review of past, present and future sustainability conditions and policy performance through interaction and cooperation with a range of stakeholders is critical for continuous improvement and social learning.

These critical functions of sustainability transition management and adaptive governance, together with the other strategic elements described earlier – social consensus for achieving compelling visions, discarding the unsustainable, and applying leverage in policy making – provide practical guidance for advancing sustainability and achieving internationally agreed targets."

Source: UNEP (2012), Ch. 16, p. 450.

5.0   Creating the Enabling Environment for Transformation in the 21st Century

What is needed to elevate strategies and planning for sustainable development
to a level commensurate with the challenges of the post Rio+20 context?

The post Rio+20 context elaborated in Section 3 of this paper mapped out the landscape upon which strategies for sustainable development must navigate. It is a complex and uncertain terrain with respect to both substantive issues and the governance arrangements for addressing them. From a high altitude view of this complex and uncertain terrain there would appear to be three core abilities that must be juggled in the design and implementation of strategies for sustainable development: sustain-ability, account-ability, and adapt-ability (IISD 2012). For lack of an existing word to describe this nexus, these abilities can be collectively referred to as govern-abilities.

Figure 2 illustrates the three core govern-abilities and the nature of the principles that guide them. Sustain-ability represents those principles, approaches and tools that move society towards '*our common vision*' of sustainable development (referring to The Future We Want – Rio+20 Outcome Document). Account-ability represents those principles, approaches and tools that make governments, businesses and civil society organizations accountable to taxpayers, shareholders and stakeholders to do their utmost to achieve commitments made. And finally, adapt-ability acknowledges that static master plans simply do not work in this age of complexity and uncertainty, and represents the principles, approaches and tools necessary to continually improve and adapt to changing circumstances and to leverage the self-organizing capacity of individual governments at all levels, businesses and civil society organizations.
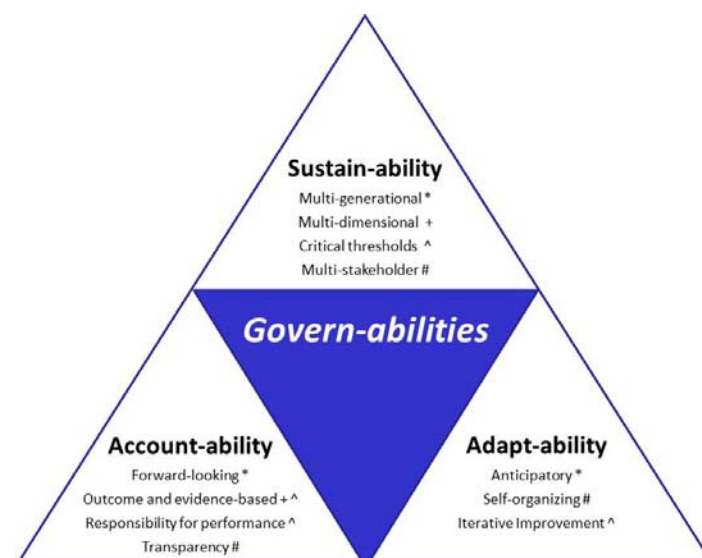

Figure 2. Govern-abilities: the collective pursuit of sustain-ability, account-ability, and adapt-ability (IISD 2012).

Experience shows that often these three abilities are being pursued by different actors within a government or business. For example, it is often the case that an environment department is championing the sustainability pursuit, while a finance or planning department is responsible for reporting to the public on expenditures and also more and more on whether measureable outcomes or results have been achieved, and still yet, a government's audit department might be in charge of ensuring that risks for key programme expenditures and policy instruments are properly understood and addressed by line offices. Yet as Figure 2 depicts, there are commonalities in the guiding principles for the pursuit of these seemingly disparate abilities, and consequently, many of the same approaches and tools are being developed and applied unknowingly by the various departments within the same government, business or civil society organization. So there is much to gain with respect to horizontal and vertical integration by just recognizing that these three govern-abilities are being juggled at the same time. As such, this framing can provide a pragmatic means for framing knowledge sharing and capacity building in the design and implementation of strategies for sustainable development at global, national, subnational and local levels.

The remainder of this section explores some of the critical capacity gaps for successful development and implementation of strategies for sustainable development at all levels. This represents just an initial reflection on this question, as the intent of the UNOSD's first international workshop in November 2012 is to help shed light on this very question.

Identifying Critical Capacity Gaps for Strengthening Planning and Implementation in a Post Rio+20 Context

The nature of sustainable development planning demands caution in designing capacity development interventions. Sustainable development plans must be fashioned as living documents that fully integrate the principles of sustainable development, not the static plans we have grown accustomed to producing. Hence capacity development must be framed as a process rather than an activity. And in so doing, it must be borne in mind that approaches are likely to be country specific, or at a minimum must be fashioned to accommodate national level sensitivities and uniqueness. To this end capacity development must be an integral part of the process to produce strategies for sustainable development. Of necessity, therefore, any external interventions to support the process must be defined in terms of guidance to a process which will be executed by teams whose members reflect the entire spectrum of development partners. This approach will also engender a sense of ownership of the output, thereby improving the chances for successful implementation.

Capacity also includes institutional arrangements and again there is no one size fits all solution. Each case must be analysed and recommendations made to define an optimal arrangement to support the process as well as the implementation of the resulting strategy. What is important is to be clear on the desired outcome, which will include, *inter alia*, arrangements for the equal consideration of the three pillars of sustainable development, opportunities for broad based consultations at all levels, opportunities for multi-level cross and inter agency collaboration, clear processes for political inputs into

the process and outcome, wide public education and advocacy and built in flexibility and responsiveness of the strategy to changing internal and external circumstances.

The UNOSD's November 2012 international workshop will be synthesizing and diagnosing the experience of strategy-making and action for sustainable development over the past few decades as an entry point for understanding how to best strengthen planning and implementation capacities. Based on the retrospective and prospective views compiled in section 3 and 5 of this paper, a number of critical capacity gaps are sure to be discussed and elaborated at the workshop, including:

- The use of integrated and forward-looking assessment and participatory scenario planning and analysis approaches for informing and adapting strategies;
- Setting SMART goals in conjunction with establishing accountability mechanisms;
- Creation and operation of multi-stakeholder bodies or mechanisms/processes;
- Horizontal integration across sectoral departments through better understanding of the linkages between ecosystem services and human wellbeing ;
- Vertical integration across all scales of governance through formal mechanisms and informal enabling conditions; and
- Making the investment and risk management case for sustainable development and resilience.

Knowledge Sharing, Capacity Building and Networking in a Post Rio+20 Context

Understanding and assessing the efficacy and suitability of existing knowledge and policy frameworks used for capacity building, including communities of practice for scaling up successful models will be also be discussed at the UNOSD's November 2012 international workshop. A separate issues paper is being prepared in this regard and will inform the office's second international workshop to be held in March 2013.

Experience has been gained in knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer networking over the past decade. With respect to sustainable development strategies and implementation, the efforts of the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)[1] and the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC)[2] network provide good practices examples that could be emulated in other regions of the world. These networks have helped share knowledge and build capacity in strategy-making and implementation, and in the operation of councils and analysis of issues, respectively across the countries of the EU. Other networks have attempted to follow suite including UNEP's NSDS Asia-Pacific project (UNEP 2008)[3], SDplanNet-Asia & Pacific[4] and SDplanNet-Latin America & Caribbean, but have only just completed pilot phases and have not yet matched the level of activity enjoyed in the European networks. There have also been significant advances in content management

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[1] ESDN: www.esdn.eu/
[2] EEAC: http://www.eeac.eu/
[3] UNEP-RRCAP: http://www.rrcap.unep.org/nsds/
[4] SDplanNet-Asia & Pacific: www.SDplanNet-AP.org

systems for sustainable development over the past two decades. The Reporting Services division of the International Institute for Sustainable Development[5] is one example. In addition to its Earth Negotiations Bulletin which participants have in the international sustainable development and environment conventions and conferences have come to rely on for up-to-date briefings on negotiations, IISD Reporting Services via its Linkages website provides an array of issue area email list serves, regional coverage, meeting bulletins, and policy and practice information sites.

Taking stock of the lessons learned from these and other networks operating regional and globally for sustainable development will be an important task going forward. As a glimpse into the nature of these lessons, the ESDN shares the following:

- Good exchange mechanisms on good/best practices are certainly important and always achieve great interest from the policy-makers. The ESDN is certainly a case in point in a way that its 36 member countries explicitly share experiences and information. In addition, ESDN identifies policy shortcomings and issue policy advice/recommendations for the national and EU level. Although role models provide interesting insights, a lot nevertheless depends on the individual national circumstances and framework conditions;
- The ESDN has been set up in 2002 as a small, informal "exchange club" between just a few national representatives. Since the establishment of the ESDN Office and a website in 2006, the network has certainly achieved a more structured way of exchange. So a structure with a permanent secretariat that provides background knowledge, studies, and organises meetings is crucial;
- Also crucial are regular face-to-face meetings and events. The ESDN runs one annual conference and 1-2 workshops per year. This onsite exchange is important to create trust among members and to allow for networking: it's easy to talk about challenges when you met someone in person;
- Leadership of the network and commitment are crucial. The ESDN has a number of individuals, i.e. NSDS coordinators, who make up the ESDN Steering Group and act as the backbone of the network. Their engagement, commitment and responsibility for ESDN make a difference.
- What would be great, but what falls short in the ESDN simply because of limited resources, is a stronger research base for the network. The ESDN Quarterly Reports provide an overview of certain topics, however, it would be beneficial to also undertake research and analyses that then benefit the whole network.

Two significant developments have occurred in 2012 that will help pave the way for enhanced knowledge sharing and networking with regard to strategy-making and implementation for sustainable development. The first is the opening of the new United Nations Office for Sustainable Development which has as its focal areas:

- *Knowledge Exchange:* Through its portal, UNOSD will ease access to the vast and sometimes overwhelming knowledge on sustainable development. It will also facilitate connections

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[5] IISD Reporting Services: http://www.iisd.ca/

between researchers and practitioners, notably for national and local policy making and programming.

- *Research and policy analysis:* Assessing gaps in, and promoting solutions for the implementation of critical sustainable development issues.
- *Capacity development:* The first two components will result in training material and events, as well as implementation toolkits and support for strengthening the capacity of developing countries in advancing the Post-Rio sustainable development agenda.
- *Partnerships:* To implement the above activities, UNOSD will nurture cooperation towards efficient and effective recognition and sharing of resources, including expertise, capital and knowledge from all stakeholders.

Second, the UK based Stakeholder Forum recently launched an initiative to establish a global network of national councils for sustainable development (NCSDs) with funding from GIZ (NCSD 2012). The network[6] will be open to multi-stakeholder bodies set up by governments as NCSDs, or other government related bodies working on issues of sustainable development. It will have a lean structure that relies on what participants want to present and to share.

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[6] NCSD: http://www.ncsds.org/

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