



**Sustainable Development Commission response to Questionnaire for
the Major Groups on Experiences, Success Factors, Risks and Challenges
with regard to the Objective and Themes of the United Nations
Conference on Sustainable Development
October 2010**

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Secretary General's report to the Second Preparatory Committee on the Objective and Themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD).

The SDC is the Government's independent watchdog on sustainable development, reporting to the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. Through advocacy, advice, appraisal and capability building in government departments and agencies, we help put sustainable development at the heart of Government policy.

Following the election in May 2010 the Coalition Government has decided to make new arrangements in England *"to mainstream sustainability, strengthen the Government's performance in this area and put processes in place to join-up activity across Government much more effectively"* and has withdrawn funding with effect from 31 March 2011. As a consequence new arrangements are also now being considered in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It is hoped that the new governance arrangements for sustainable development in the four countries will be clear before March 2011.

With regard to the questionnaire, the SDC has responded only to those questions where we are able to offer a view as a key stakeholder on sustainable development. The responses do not represent a statement of policy from the four governments.

Attachment A

Questionnaire on Renewing political commitment for sustainable development

I. Introduction

The overarching objective of UNCSD is to renew political support for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and addressing new and emerging challenges.

The issue of renewed political commitment will need to be addressed in the longer term context of how agreement among governments and other stakeholders at UNCSD could help accelerate progress towards, *inter alia*: (i) the demographic goal of stabilizing the global population; (ii) the developmental goal of extending the benefits of development equitably to all segments of global society; and (iii) the decoupling goal of ensuring that the use of materials and generation of wastes is within the regenerative and absorptive capacities of the planet.

II. Questionnaire

Major groups and other stakeholders are invited to provide contributions on experiences, success factors, challenges and risks pertaining to the UNCSD objective “Renewing Political Commitment to Sustainable Development” in response to the following questions which have been developed based on the discussions which took place at the first Prepcom.

Experiences

1. Are there objective ways of measuring political commitment? What are the relevant indicators? Which indicators are most useful from your perspective? (e.g., New legislation enacted, Policy announcements, Budgetary allocation and support, Prominence of relevant institutions, Level of media interest, etc.)

In fulfilling its remit, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has advised on and advocated for improvements across priority areas of the UK Government’s business, and reported on its progress. Drawing on extensive experience gained over 10 years, the SDC has identified four criteria for any new sustainable development (SD) arrangements in Government which would measure *objectively* the extent of political commitment to sustainable development: **Governance Arrangements, Mechanisms, Capability Building and Engagement**. Measuring the number and type of policy announcements, the amount of budget allocated to SD or the level of media interest are not objective measures to test political commitment as SD covers such a wide range of issues. Measuring the following would allow comparison to be made across countries.

1. Governance arrangements must be put in place to drive SD through leadership, strategy, structures and scrutiny. They should also encourage innovation, long-term thinking and ensure effective cross-departmental working.

- **Political Leadership** -there is a need for political leadership from the very top of Government. Ideally, the lead for sustainable development should be the Prime Minister or a Government Minister who monitors Government activity on SD (policy and operational performance) with support from a committee or grouping of Ministers which has a clear remit on SD and access to impartial, expert advice. SD becomes an organising principle for the development of Government policy, rather than a ‘bolt on’ afterthought.

- **Strategy and Vision** - Government must have an inspiring vision of sustainability for the future that demonstrates its commitment to SD and brings together departments, local authorities, civil society and business. Any strategy must be explicit in how Government's economic, social and environmental activities are mutually reinforcing, and set out how an improved quality of life within environmental limits can be achieved, both in the short and longer terms.
- **Governance Structures** – there should be governance structures also at official level responsible for overseeing policy and operational performance, and they must be aligned and well co-ordinated to ensure effective and efficient delivery of agreed government goals for SD. Operational performance should explicitly help support and drive national policy ambitions. These bodies must also have clear remits and agendas covering the areas for which each is responsible, and be given appropriate levers and mechanisms to make effective change on cross-Government issues.
- **Scrutiny** – Government must have an *independent* scrutiny/assurance function which is informed by robust evidence, developed in part through ongoing challenge which necessitates close and regular liaison with Government officials. Reporting on progress must be transparent and provide a comprehensible overview of progress especially to the public. Independent, well- informed scrutiny is essential, not only for a Government's credibility on the SD agenda, but also to challenge departments and drive improvements in priority areas.

2. Mechanisms must be established that enable Government to deliver its commitments set out in the SD vision and strategy. All the mechanisms must be applied consistently across the Government's Operations **and Procurement, People and Policy**.

- **Performance Management Frameworks** – Government must have an agreed holistic set of standards, indicators, targets or explicit goals against which it, and others, can measure impacts, performance and progress towards agreed pan-Government outcomes.
- **Delivery Plans and Tools** – All public bodies need agreed plans which demonstrate how they will contribute to mainstreaming and delivering SD. SD must be embedded in all decision-making tools and processes for both its policy and operations. Examples in the UK include the Green Book (HM Treasury guidance for Central Government, setting out a framework for the appraisal and evaluation of all policies, programmes and projects), Impact Assessments, SD indicators, Business Plans and environmental management systems (EMS).
- **Monitoring and Reporting** – Government must ensure that there is a timely and transparent process for reporting progress against agreed performance management frameworks for all elements of public sector business – policy and operations - and that it provides easily understood information and progress reports for the public.

3. Capability building – Government must have a systematic approach to incorporating capability building into all aspects and levels of SD in Government – leadership, civil service skills, systems and procedures and tools to ensure the continuous improvement and efficiency of performance.

4. Engagement of business, civil society, wider public sector and international bodies is vital to encourage dialogue, debate and decision-making to improve Government policies and provide independent, expert advice to decision-makers. Government must therefore ensure it has arrangements in place for ongoing engagement in order to:

- Inform domestic policy as well as influence the European and international agenda

- Share best practice and learn from international examples
 - Act as a focal point and sounding board for those organisations needing advice and guidance on specific areas of SD relevant to their organisation's aims.
2. Based if possible on these indicators, how would you evaluate the political commitment today to sustainable development in the country(ies)/region(s) of interest to your group, compared to 1992? How would you evaluate the political commitment of the international community compared to 1992?

Until the recent election the UK Government was seen as a world leader on Sustainable Development. New arrangements are being established so it is not clear whether this reputation will be maintained. An evaluation of the status before the election in May 2010 is set out below.

- **Political Leadership - MODERATE.** The commitment to SD has ensured the UK is seen as a world leader. However, implementation of SD has been piecemeal e.g. SD is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. However, this means that SD is often seen as mostly an environmental issue and had little traction across Government until the SDC was established. There is currently no grouping of Ministers with a clear remit on SD. Access to impartial, expert advice was available through the SDC. It is not clear what new structures will be put in place, if any.
- **Strategy and Vision - GOOD.** Government has published an SD Strategy *Securing the Future*, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy in 2005 which set out 5 SD principles (living within environmental limits and ensuring a strong, healthy, just society through achieving a sustainable economy, using sound science responsibly and promoting good governance. The priority actions have now been achieved and the strategy needs to be revised. It is not clear whether Government will publish a new strategy.
- **Governance Structures – POOR.** There are governance structures at official level responsible for overseeing policy and operational performance but they are ineffectual and poorly co-ordinated. This is partly due to the fact that co-ordination was led by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, but also because its remit was unclear – rather than monitor performance on SD indicators and advise Ministers of key issue or ensure good tools were developed for use across Government it was more of a talking shop. It is not clear what new structures will be put in place, if any.
- **Scrutiny – GOOD.** Government set up an *independent* scrutiny/assurance function through the strengthening of the SDC's remit to include the formal scrutiny "watchdog" function in 2005. Alongside, the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) has provided parliamentary scrutiny on SD since 1997. SDC has worked with Government's data and through regular liaison with Government officials to give regular and transparent reports on progress. This has improved performance on its operations dramatically. For example, for every pound invested in that work with us, the Government has saved at least £15 for every pound invested (based on the fact that savings accrued to date per year to Government are in the region of between £60 million and £66 million a year, and the SDC costs about £4 million a year). Government is proposing that scrutiny be left to Parliament and it is not clear what new structures will be put in place to support the EAC.
- **Performance Management Frameworks – GOOD.** Government had an agreed holistic set of standards, indicators, targets or explicit goals against which it, and others, can measure

impacts, performance and progress towards agreed pan-Government outcomes. This was reported regularly and was assessed by the SDC.

- **Delivery Plans and Tools – MODERATE.** All public bodies need agreed plans which demonstrate how they will contribute to mainstreaming and delivering SD. SD must be embedded in all decision-making tools and processes for both its policy and operations. Examples in the UK include the Green Book (HM Treasury guidance for Central Government, setting out a framework for the appraisal and evaluation of all policies, programmes and projects), Impact Assessments, SD indicators, Business Plans and environmental management systems (EMS). However, they are not applied consistently and do not properly reflect issues such as environmental limits.
- **Monitoring and Reporting – GOOD.** Government regularly reported on its performance both policy and operations. SDC's role was to provide an independent assessment which was also regularly and publicly reported. It is not clear what new structures will be put in place, if any.
- **Capability building – POOR.** There is no systematic approach to incorporating capability building into all aspects and levels of SD in Government. SDC provided some leadership in this area but this was only selectively taken up and implemented by departments. At local government level or with public sector bodies there have been some good examples such as the development of a tool by the SDC with the National Health Service to promote better SD practices.
- **Engagement of business, civil society, wider public sector and international bodies – MODERATE.** Much of this engagement was undertaken by SDC on SD issues but Government departments would engage on individual policy issues.

3. What actions have been introduced in your country to strengthen political support for sustainable development?

National level

The establishment of the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) in 2000 to act as the Government's independent advisor and "critical friend" was a major milestone. The SDC's remit was strengthened to include the formal scrutiny "watchdog" function in 2005.

The publication of *Securing the Future*, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy in 2005 led to a number of achievements:

- A renewed Government commitment to SD was adopted by the whole of the UK and a strengthened for the SDC as Government's watchdog on sustainable development.
- The Strategy set out the five principles of sustainable development which would be the framework for all action and decision-making.
- The Strategy focused the efforts of departments in improving their performance and progress on sustainability via the Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOG E) Framework and the Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) process.
- Groups and networks formed to share best practice and innovative approaches to improving as a result of the Strategy's existence.

The 1999 sustainable development strategy for the UK, *A better quality of life*¹ identified a set of headline and core indicators to be used to report on progress. A key feature was the setting of 15 headline indicators of sustainable development which provided a 'quality of life barometer' of issues such as employment, education, health, crime, air quality, road traffic and waste. This was intended 'to provide a high level overview of progress, and be a powerful tool for simplifying and communicating the main messages for the public'.

In 2005, the four UK governments (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) agreed a new shared framework for sustainable development, *One Future Different Paths*². The framework, launched in conjunction with the UK Government Strategy, *Securing the Future*³ comprises a shared understanding of sustainable development; a common purpose outlining what the four governments were trying to achieve and the guiding principles to follow to achieve it; sustainable development priorities for UK action, at home and internationally together with indicators to monitor the key issues on a UK basis.

The Welsh Assembly Government is one of only a few Governments in the world to have a statutory duty with regard to sustainability⁴ and in 2009 it made a commitment to make sustainable development the 'central organising principle' of Government in Wales in its *One Wales: One Planet Strategy*.⁵

The Scottish Government has established a Purpose for all its work (*To let all of Scotland Flourish... though sustainable economic growth*) underpinned by a National Performance Framework that encompasses economic, social and environmental measures of progress and a set of desired outcomes for policy.

Regional Level

The Government established a regional level of governance through the creation of Regional Assemblies (RA). The RAs were responsible for a new layer of planning, providing strategic advice on spatial, housing and transport issues, all of which were to be based on sustainable development principles.

At the same time Regional Development Agencies were created, with a statutory duty to contribute to sustainable development.

Local Level

Having moved on from the focus on Local Agenda 21, the Government introduced the requirement for all local authorities to develop a Community Strategy. The aim of the document was to set out a long term vision for an area based on the needs of the local community. After several years further guidance was issued by central government to upgrade the Strategy to become a Sustainable Community Strategy. The Strategy was to be delivered by the Local Strategic Partnership which is

¹<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20080530153425/http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy99/index.htm>

²<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20080530153425/http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/pdf/SD%20Framework.pdf>

³http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/publications/uk-strategy/documents/SecFut_complete.pdf

⁴ The statutory duty is contained in Section 79 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. It states that "Welsh Ministers must make a scheme ("the sustainable development scheme") setting out how they propose, in the exercise of their functions, to promote sustainable development."

⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/publications/onewalesoneplanet/?lang=en>

made up of local government, statutory bodies, business, the third sector and community representatives.

Latest position

In May 2010, a new coalition government came into power in the UK. Following the statement by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 22 July 2010 stating that Government wants “to mainstream sustainability, strengthen the Government’s performance in this area and put processes in place to join-up activity across Government much more effectively”, the SDC’s funding has been withdrawn by Defra, effective from 31 March 2011. . As a consequence new arrangements are also now being considered in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It is not yet clear what these will be but it is hoped that the new governance arrangements for sustainable development in the four countries will be clear before March 2011. Similarly, the regional level of governance has been abolished and the future of SD at the local level is not known.

4. Are there specific sectors or areas (e.g., water, energy, biodiversity, other) where national political commitment to achieve sustainable development goals has been especially strong? If so, what factors explain that commitment?

Energy and Climate Change

Energy and Climate Change has been the most significant area. The main factor driving this has been the international consensus on the need to tackle climate change. Climate Change and Energy was one of four priority areas identified for immediate action in the UK SD Strategy (*Securing the Future*).

The three other priority areas are:

- sustainable consumption and production: the main focus has been on working towards more sustainable and consumption production of food, largely in response to concerns over food safety, domestic and global food security, depletion of natural resources, climate change, and diet-related ill health; increasing sustainable procurement in the public sector; and reducing waste to landfill and increasing recycling
- natural resource protection: the main focus has been on better environmental stewardship and raising awareness of the need to live within environmental limits
- sustainable communities: the main focus has been on ensuring that land use planning integrates sustainable development principles and approaches.

5. What examples or experiences from other areas demonstrate how political support for critical issues was enhanced (e.g., MDGs, climate change)? How could they be applied to SD?

Climate Change is a good example in that it used a combination of sound science and public interest/grassroots action to turn politicians’ attention to the issue. The SDC, as an independent advisor to Government, played a role in providing impartial expert advice on key issues such as the potential for tidal power.

This approach has enabled the last Government to feel it had the support to introduce robust legislation to commit it and future Governments to action on climate change. This resulted in a Climate Change Act with a statutory carbon reduction target (the first of its kind in the world), an independent Committee on Climate Change (whose role it is to monitor and report regularly on Government’s performance) and further instruments and levers (e.g. carbon budgets for all Government departments in the Climate Change Act 2008) represent a significant step in assigning environmental limits to government decisions and policy.

Challenges

6. Looking forward to the next 10 years, what are your highest priorities for accelerating progress towards sustainable development?
 - Ensuring our society stays within environmental limits. There is huge pressure to deliver the sustainable security of supply of energy, water, natural resources, biodiversity and food and the development of essential infrastructure. However, this must be done within the finite limits of the planet.
 - The transition to a sustainable economy. This is particularly important as action is being taken across the world to reduce deficit and strengthen the economy in the short term, there is a need to take action to move to a more resilient and more inclusive economy that takes a long-term view and respects environmental limits. This is NOT the move to a “green” economy as this only relates to environment/low carbon.
 - Ensuring Fairness. How can Government ensure that policies reduce disadvantage in certain sections of our society rather than having a disproportionate impact?
 - Enabling Sustainable Lives. Our current consumption patterns are unsustainable given the environmental limits within which we have to live.
7. How can international cooperation ensure support for sustainable development? What are your expectations for UNCSD in this regard?

To raise expectations of Governments to achieve the highest standards on SD and to secure commitments to deliver in their respective countries.

UNCSD should provide benchmarks, best practice guidance and – where appropriate – funding.

Risks

8. Among senior national policy makers in the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group, would you say the predominant view of the three pillars of sustainable development is that: ____ there are difficult trade-offs among them? ____ they are strongly complementary? Please briefly elaborate on your answer.

Both. There is an understanding that they are complementary and a commitment to delivering on the three pillars but when taking decisions it is difficult not to do so without trade-offs which emphasise growth as the predominant pillar.

Attachment B

Questionnaire on Assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development

I. Introduction

1. Agenda 21 (A21) is a comprehensive and detailed programme for sustainable development, adopted by consensus at UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. JPOI was adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002. It builds upon A21 by concentrating attention on implementation, especially by introducing additional ways of reducing fragmentation and integrating all three dimensions of sustainable development into policy clusters, which in turn laid the foundation for the subsequent programme of work of the CSD.

2. An important, and perhaps the core, framework for assessing progress is the extent to which economic, social, and environmental goals (the “three pillars” of sustainable development) begin to converge. Indeed, the consistent message of sustainable development is that these represent not three separate goals but a single integrated one. The goal, and indeed the ultimate test, of sustainable development is the convergence among the three trajectories of economic growth, social development, and environmental protection. In this regard, UNCSO provides an important opportunity to assess what has worked, and what has not.

3. Some information on trends is available from the history of national reporting on sustainable development, including for the Commission on Sustainable Development and in various Trends in Sustainable Development reports on the DSD website⁶. On poverty and the social pillar in particular, information on MDG indicators has been tracked since 1990 and has been described in detail in the Secretary-General’s report for the high-level event on the MDGs to take place in September 2010.⁷

II. Questionnaire

Major groups and other stakeholders are invited to provide contributions on experiences, success factors, challenges and risks pertaining to GA Resolution 64/236’s call for “assessing the progress to date and remaining gaps in implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development” in response to the following questions which have been developed based on the discussions which took place at the first Prepcom.

Experiences

1. What indicators or information on sustainable development have proven to be most useful for assessing gaps and progress towards sustainable development? Please rank according to importance with 1 = most important. Please also attach or provide a web link to relevant statistical databases.

- Economic Indicators (e.g., GDP growth, trade performance)
- Comprehensive Indicators (e.g., HDI, MDGs)
- Poverty Indicators (e.g., Headcount or other measure, please specify)

⁶ http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_publtrends.shtml

⁷ Keeping the promise – a forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

- Environmental Indicators (e.g., ESI, Footprint, other, please specify)
- Social Indicators (e.g., Unemployment, life expectancy)
- Results of Public Opinion Surveys
- Other (please specify)

The UK has a set of sustainable development indicators developed as a part of its 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy (*Securing the Future*). These 68 sustainable development indicators have been useful measures of progress against sustainability commitments to date. Government reports annually on the entire indicator set and a summary 'basket' of indicators. These indicators have been very useful in terms of the promotion and awareness-raising of sustainable development. For example, there has been considerable take up of the publications by education institutions as educational resources, and the indicators have helped to clarify the breadth of SD beyond simply the environment, and to home in on specific issues, e.g. poverty and life satisfaction.

However, this is not an ideal set of indicators and is being revised by the SDC, Defra, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Cabinet Office to ensure that key issues are addressed e.g. the over-reliance on GDP as a measure or where issues are addressed are hard to measure, for example well-being.

We have taken as our starting point the five principles set out in the last Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*. These require equal weight to be given to measurement of environmental limits (not just carbon) and social progress, together with better economic indicators. On well-being (which we see as being synonymous with quality of life), the SDC agrees with the assertion of the Stiglitz Commission that appropriate measures can provide a current status report, but do not provide information about the potential for future well-being or sustainable development. Sustainable development is inherently forward-looking, requiring information about the future as well as the present

In its National Performance Framework Scotland has a series of 9 Purpose targets (encompassing social cohesion, greenhouse gas emissions and economic performance) and 45 National Indicators and Targets.

2. What indicators of integrated goals and strategies have been most useful? Please rank according to importance.

- =1 Outcome indicators (e.g., correlation between indicators of economic, social, and environmental change)

As above, the SD indicators measure outcomes of policy.

- Commitment indicators (e.g., fiscal or other support for integrated sustainable development programmes)

- =1 Institutional indicators (e.g. use of integrated strategies, establishment of coordination mechanisms)

The Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOG E) Framework has driven significant progress on Government's operations and procurement activity with progress reports made publically available through annual Sustainable Development Commission reports.

The Sustainable Procurement Task Force's Flexible Framework provided Government with agreed measures for progressing on the sustainability of their procurement activity which has driven performance.

- Information-related indicators (e.g., development of analytical and assessment tools, collection of data, investment in research)
 - Other (please specify)
3. Based as far as possible on these indicators, please provide an assessment of the progress made towards sustainable development over the past 18 years (1992-2010), (a) at the level of the country(ies) or regions of interest to your group, where relevant and (b) globally. Please attach any relevant technical studies or policy analyses. For each input, kindly provide the original article or url, and enter a short abstract.

No response

Success Factors

4. What factors explain progress in implementation? Please rank in order of importance.
- use of integrated strategies
 - generalized economic growth and prosperity
 - investment in technical and institutional capacity
 - financial support from international sources
 - other; please specify:

A key success factor has been the requirement for departments to report on progress and for SDC to independently monitor and report.

SDiG - Operations and procurement has arguably been the most successful part of the SD agenda in Government. Started as the Greening Government programme by the EAC, the Sustainable Development in Government (SDiG) report and process has been successful in turning pan-Government performance from "poor performance" to either being or nearly being "on track". Key to this success has been the role of the SDC in undertaking independent assessment of performance and producing the SDiG report with recommendations, the majority of which have been accepted and implemented by Government. Responsibility for data collection has been a success in capability building terms to the extent that it has now been handed back to Government who recently began real time reporting on operational performance (e.g. energy consumption in buildings).

SDAPs Progress Reports – *Securing the Future* committed departments and executive agencies to produce Sustainable Development Action Plans (SDAPs) and report progress against them regularly. To facilitate this, the SDC produced a progress reporting tool for organisations, and worked closely with practitioners to understand how to record and report progress on actions and impacts. The SDC scrutinised the first round of SDAP Progress Reports and provided detailed feedback to departments. The SDC also monitors and tracks departmental progress in the SDAP process to maintain public accountability.

5. Have the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group introduced integrated planning and decision making for sustainable development? If so, under what title (NSDS, PRSP, Five Year Plan, NCS or NEAP, Other)? What are the lessons from this experience?

There is no integrated planning and decision-making approach across Government on SD. However, there has been increasing recognition within Government that sustainable development offers a helpful framework within which to evaluate and manage the costs and benefits of different policy options, for example:

- The Government Economics Service (GES) review on the Economics of Sustainable Development that seeks to operationalise the definition of SD as well as conduct further research into the measurement of social impacts
- The establishment of a cross-Government Social Impacts Task Force to develop a coherent and consistent approach to the understanding of social impacts and social capital for use in advising on policy decisions
- The SDC has conducted a small review on Impact Assessments (IA) and used the findings to advise Government (the GES, the Better Regulation Executive (BRE)) on how to improve the process, as well as Defra on how to improve the SD Specific Impact Test (SD SIT), as part of the IA process.

In addition, a number of individual departments have developed their own approach to ensuring sustainable development is both an input and an outcome of their policy-making.

6. Are there examples of strong public-private partnerships for sustainable development in the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group? How have these been promoted?

No.

7. Is the technical assistance from UN system entities a key factor in explaining success? If so, in what areas or sectors (e.g., MDGs, water, energy, health, agriculture, biodiversity, forests, climate change, jobs, other)?

Not for the UK.

Challenges

8. What are the major barriers to implementation? Please rank in order of importance 1 = most important.

- 2 inadequate coordination between ministries
- 1 low political priority for integrated decision making
- problems created by slow growth
- 4 lack of data
- inadequate or unpredictable international support
- 3 inadequate public awareness or engagement
- other; please specify: _____

9. What steps need to be taken to address these barriers in an effort to bridge the implementation gaps?

Clear global leadership on SD which raises expectations of Governments to achieve the highest standards on SD and to secure commitments to deliver in their respective countries. Strong support to ensure social and environmental outcomes are recognised as being just as important as economic

outcomes and the importance of considering social and environmental impacts not just economic impacts and those which can be monetized.

UNCSD should provide benchmarks, best practice guidance and – where appropriate – funding. Guidance is needed on how to measure social capital and how to measure environmental limits and how to weigh up monetised alongside non-monetised impacts and recognition that non-monetised impacts are *equally* as important.

10. What are the main difficulties experienced in promoting integrated planning and decision-making?

No response.

11. What further actions could be taken to promote effective voluntary actions and partnerships?

Commitment and funding by Governments. Giving communities and organisations the power to make a difference.

Risks

12. What are the risks to sustained progress towards convergence among the three pillars of sustainable development?

The unwillingness to countenance the need to move to a more sustainable economy which recognises the need for more sustainable consumption and the need to live within environmental limits will risk the planet's future. An ever increasing global population and depletion of natural resources, exacerbated by climate change, will heap further pressures on the planet's population and environment and will risk increasing the divide between rich and poor, developed and developing leading to greater unrest, poverty and unfairness as those "with" seek to protect themselves and their country's resources from those "without".

Attachment C

Questionnaire on Addressing New and Emerging Challenges

I. Introduction

Although there is no such thing as a definitive list of “new and emerging challenges”, the following are the most significant ones:

- Climate Change, as new evidence has emerged to suggest that the danger is a more imminent one than previously thought.
- Rising water scarcity and increased desertification
- The unfolding of the financial crisis in developed countries, and its transmission to other countries through financial markets as well as through the ensuing global recession.
- Halting progress, and even reversal in progress, towards MDGs despite consistent political support.
- Food crisis, caused by the rapid escalation of food prices.
- Energy crisis, precipitated by the unprecedented volatility in energy prices.
- Other environmental trends that had worsened more rapidly than anticipated, including concerns that some “planetary boundaries” had been exceeded, especially biodiversity;
- Degradation of marine ecosystems
- Inefficient and wasteful patterns of consumption and production; and
- A succession of disasters.

All countries face these challenges, but they differ widely in their ability to cope with the risks and shocks inherent in them. Challenges have been exacerbated in developing countries by poverty, competition for scarce resources, the rapid pace of rural/urban migration, and the concomitant challenges to provide food, infrastructure and access to basic health, water and energy services.

The sustainable development challenge posed by climate change illustrates well the importance of a holistic response from the international community.

II. Questionnaire

Major groups and other stakeholders are invited to provide contributions and inputs on experiences, success factors, challenges and risks pertaining to GA Resolution 64/236’s call for “Addressing new and emerging challenges” in response to the following questions, which have been developed based on the discussions that took place at the first Prepcom.

Experiences

1. What five new and emerging challenges are likely to affect most significantly the prospects for sustainable development in the coming decade? Please rank in order of importance.

- 1 Global economic conditions – we have yet to realize that we cannot ‘grow’ ourselves out of our present problems; it will require more radical shifts in perception.
- 2 Energy, food and water security – how we meet these issues within the emerging impacts of climate change and the knock on effects on various elements e.g. palm oil replacing petroleum and the impact on biodiversity
- 3 Land use constraints – we have an increasing population and numerous European requirements on biodiversity, water, renewable energy which will place considerable strain and challenges to the way we allocate land.
- 4 Recognition of environmental limits - environmental trends are worsening more rapidly than anticipated, including concerns that some “planetary boundaries” are already being exceeded, especially biodiversity

2. What mechanisms have been put in place in the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group to address these challenges: At the local level? At the national level?

Global economic conditions – the new Government has stated that a more responsible economy is needed but the focus is still on growth.

Energy, food and water security - awareness of these issues is being raised and may be addressed in emerging legislation. The UK has published Energy Scenarios to 2050 to understand energy demand and is developing policy which recognises energy security is an issue alongside reducing our carbon emissions. Little work is being done on reducing demand. The previous Government published the Food Strategy 2030 which recognised sustainable consumption and production and food security as an issue. Water scarcity is recognised as an issue but there is no water master planning.

Land use constraints – recognized in the planning system as an issue but little guidance on dealing with increasing conflicts. Government is publishing a Natural Environment White Paper which may address these issues.

Environmental limits – work is being done to ensure the issue is factored into guidance on government decision-making but this is a partial approach and has not been completed.

For all of the above the SDC role has been to raise these issues with Government as being major concerns. We have published research and advice in these areas e.g. Prosperity without Growth? – the transition to a sustainable economy; Food Security and Sustainable Diets

3. In which of these areas has support from the international community been forthcoming? In what areas is new or enhanced international support needed?

Following the breakdown of climate talks in Copenhagen in December 2009 and the failure to meet the 2010 biodiversity targets, enhanced international support is needed in both these areas with a concerted effort to reconcile both developed and developing country interests.

4. What new and emerging challenges should be acted upon at UNCSD?

The theme of green economy *in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development* represents an important route to addressing the unfolding of the financial crisis in developed countries. As explained in Attachment D, the green economy is not simply about technological advancement and new jobs, it must be understood in terms of improving wellbeing socially, economically and environmentally.

There needs to be a much stronger focus on addressing decline in biodiversity.

Success Factors

5. What factors explain the successful ability to address new and emerging challenges?
- adequate financial resources
 - strong government leadership
 - investment in essential infrastructure
 - dedicated government programmes
 - literacy and awareness among the population
 - effective communication systems
 - availability of data and technical capacity
 - speed and adequacy of international support
 - leadership by international organizations
 - south-south cooperation
 - regional cooperation
6. What steps have been taken or are under consideration in the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group to enhance these success factors?

The EU will shortly be revising its Sustainable Development Strategy which is an opportunity to focus on key priorities and drive action in member states. The adoption of various EU directives has been helpful in driving some aspects of SD but the economic imperative often impedes delivery.

Challenges

7. How can the link between science, education, and policy be strengthened to address the new and emerging challenges, especially those identified above?

No response.

8. How can international support be harnessed effectively to address these challenges?

No response.

Risks

9. Do the new and emerging challenges pose a fundamental risk to the prospects of economic growth and development in the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group?

Yes.

10. How can the risks to the poor and other vulnerable populations be addressed?

Sharing of best practice and low-tech solutions.

Attachment D

Questionnaire on Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

I. Introduction

The concept of the green economy is one of the several closely related constructs that have emerged in recent years to enhance convergence among the three pillars of sustainable development. While the idea has an intrinsic appeal, questions have been asked regarding conceptual clarity, precise definition, and implications for key social and economic goals.

One specific question pertains to the difference between the ideal concept of a “green economy” and the near-to-medium term implications of the “transition to a green economy”.

In the literature, most treatments invoke the term in order to outline elements and actions that should normally be described as “greening of the economy”. The more comprehensive of such treatments seek to unite under a single banner a broad suite of economic policies that are relevant to achieving sustainable development.

The Prepcom also raised a number of questions regarding the impact of the “transition to a green economy” on other goals, notably macroeconomic outcomes (especially income growth), trade competitiveness, protectionism, aid conditionality and poverty and livelihoods. In addition, the delegates asked for sharing of experiences, success factors, challenges, and risks in the practical application of some of the recommended instruments.

II. Questionnaire

Major groups and other stakeholders are invited to provide contributions and inputs on experiences, success factors, challenges and risks pertaining to the UNCSD theme “Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” in response to the following questions, which have been developed based on the discussions that took place at the first Prepcom.

Experiences

1. Does your group have a common understanding of the meaning of the term “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”? If so, how is it defined? [If relevant, please provide any official publications or analytical studies on the concept of green economy or its operational or social implications, together with a short abstract]

Our analysis is summarised in our publication *Prosperity without Growth?* This is authored by our Economics Commissioner Professor Tim Jackson and we have provided a copy of along with this questionnaire⁸.

Critically this analysis shows that a “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” is not an issue that is separate from macroeconomic outcomes. Indeed our

⁸ http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/prosperity_without_growth_report.pdf

analysis is that the sustainable development imperative demands that conventional macroeconomic thinking makes a transition.

Our understanding of a “green economy” is not limited to technological change in a few sectors but identifies the need for macro as well as micro economic progress toward sustainable development across the whole economy.

What are the main examples of green economy policies that are currently in place in the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group? (e.g., government expenditures on green infrastructure, incentives for private investment in green sectors, subsidy reform, pricing of pollution, public procurement, other)

There are a number of green economic policies currently being utilised within the United Kingdom, though their implementation has been mixed. The most significant are summarised below:

Carbon Budgets

The UK was the first country to adopt carbon budgets – where climate policy for the traded and non-trade sectors is framed not by target emission rates in a certain year but by cumulative budgets of carbon emissions as this what matters in terms of avoiding catastrophic climate change. Although the carbon budgets are yet to be fully integrated in policy making in the UK they already provide a strong intellectual guide to approaching an environmental limit or threshold. The UK is now examining the case for a similar aggregate impact approach for biodiversity.

Environmental standards

Environmental standards continue to be essential as defining minimum standards. Reliance on price based policies alone can lead to investment locking-in development to high-carbon or high-resource infrastructure which will be highly costly in even a few years. For example when the EU ETS price fell following the financial crash, unabated coal-fired power stations became an attractive option. If high environmental standards were demanded of any coal-fired power station then this type of investment lock-in can be avoided.

Green Tax reform

Green tax reform has been a successful in the UK and other countries and continues to offer great potential for both driving the transition to a sustainable or ‘green’ economy and increasing employment throughout the economy. The UK Green Tax Commission provides a good overview⁹. However, Governments have failed to provide the continuity required for a policy of tax shifting both in terms of not continuing to increase ‘green’ taxation but most significantly failing to realise the employment benefits of what ‘green’ taxation there is by significantly raising rather than reducing labour taxation.

Green Investment policy

Our analysis shares the view of many that investment is central to recovering from the financial sector driven recession, to making the transition to a low-carbon economy and to eradicating poverty. However, investment is being sought in a highly turbulent context. Public finance is shrinking, private finance already highly leveraged is reducing risk, and the relationship between the two is being renegotiated. Deficit reduction plans reduce the scope for public investment yet investments for the transition to a sustainable economy often remain risky or ‘below market rate’ because the public policies that create such markets do not ensure correct prices or confidence in on-going commitment, even on climate change.

⁹ <http://www.greenfiscalcommission.org.uk/>

New models of investment policy are required such as establishing green investment banks and we provide evidence on this particular approach as an appendix. At the same time, as the Sarkozy Commission report¹⁰ explains, action is needed to account for environmental and social ‘wealth’ in economic policy. Doing so will significantly alter the risk-return profile of many investments which currently do not account for ecological thresholds, social capital or economic resilience. Community finance takes many forms and remains a very small niche in total investment terms. But it does offer an approach that has begun to balance the value of protecting and enhancing environmental and social wealth with financial return. Often such investment accepts lower or longer-term financial return in exchange for greater resilience. They also offer innovative approaches that engage communities and address poverty

Economic indicators

Economic indicators offer the potential to drive the transition to a sustainable economy. We agree with the Sarkozy Commission report that the current convention of using GDP as the prime measure of economic success is a barrier to both environmental sustainability and the eradication of poverty and inequality. We are concerned that current efforts in the UK and elsewhere to respond to the Sarkozy Commission will simply establish a contextual set of wellbeing indicators that have little traction with policy and fail to address the fundamental issue raised in the report.

Policy guidance

In the UK poverty and other possible social impacts are considered for all policy making according to the guidelines laid out in the ‘Green Book’ produced by HM Treasury¹¹. However, there is concern within Government that this approach needs to be improved¹². We agree with these concerns, however, ultimately our analysis suggests that dealing effectively with these issues alongside environmental imperatives also requires reform of macro-economics as well.

2. Are these policies being implemented as part of a coherent green economy, or green growth, strategy?

These policies are to some extent being pursued as a part coherent strategy. The previous Government announced a Low-Carbon Industrial Strategy, which attempted to align investment, skills and training and business incentives with the need to keep the UK economy within the carbon budgets. The current Government will bring a Green Economy Bill to Parliament shortly.

It remains to be seen what impact the deficit reduction plans will have on the scope and scale of these strategies. It is also true that the strategy falls short of asking questions about the need for a transition in our understanding of growth.

3. What are the main perceived benefits of implementing a national/regional green economy strategy?

For Government and business the main focus is on the benefits in terms of investment, exports and employment; beyond that the issues of resilience and avoiding catastrophic climate change are also considered but more as context.

¹⁰ <http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/en/index.htm>

¹¹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_greenbook_index.htm

¹² <http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/economics/susdev/documents/esd-review-report.pdf>

4. What economic sectors do you consider to be most important to building a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication?

As mentioned above our analysis is a whole economy analysis as set out in *Prosperity without Growth?* Please refer to answer to question 1.

Success Factors

5. What green economy policies would you rate to be most effective?

The most effective policies have been those that are strong (high tax rates, tight caps, high standards) and are part of a coordinated package of measures.

6. How have those policies contributed to poverty eradication, other specific sustainable development goals?

Fuel poverty is a greater problem in the UK than most countries. There is a careful balance to be struck between increased fuel prices and investment in the housing stock to eradicate fuel poverty. To date, although public spending programmes have been introduced to increase energy conservation in the homes of the fuel poor this problem remains a significant issue.

7. What in your view are the principal reasons for their success? (e.g., availability of relevant institutional or technical capacity, strong political support, broad engagement of business and civil society, international support, other)

Successful policies have been brought forward when the longer term case for strong measures is made clearly and the policies themselves are well thought through and coordinated with other policies.

8. What steps and actions have proven effective in building political and popular ownership for green economy measures?

The carbon budgets were introduced due to widespread engagement of the public and politicians. For households the most effective measures have been those that make it cheaper and easier for them to do the right thing.

Challenges

9. Are there studies for the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group that identify success factors, challenges or risks associated with green economy policies identified under Question 1? For each, kindly provide the original article or web link, and a short abstract.

Links have been provided above but we add the work of the Committee on Climate Change¹³.

¹³ <http://www.theccc.org.uk/>

10. Based on all of the above, what is (are) the key outcome(s) you think could emerge from the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 with respect to a 'green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication'?

'Green' economy is not a subset of the existing economy neither is it a case of incremental changes in technology in a handful of sectors. At its heart it is about rethinking economic growth and its relationship with a finite planet, poverty eradication and well being.

Risks

11. What is the relationship of green economy policies to other policies and policy domains (e.g., poverty, growth, employment, trade, etc.)? Are there cases of conflict and, if so, how have these been addressed?

It is these relationships which are key; if the transition to a green or sustainable economy does consider these at a macro and micro level it will not be successful – please see *Prosperity without Growth?* Here we argue that sustainable development requires these to be re-negotiated.

Attachment E

Questionnaire on Institutional framework for sustainable development

I. Introduction

Institutional support for sustainable development works horizontally across different domains, agencies, ministries, functional groups, and countries, while the traditional organization of authority and action is vertical, precisely along the lines of the same agencies and ministries and other specialities. So, the challenge is to identify institutional elements that can facilitate integration, on a continued basis, across existing lines of authority and programme structures, without undermining or displacing them.

At the international level, UNCED led to the establishment of three main institutional structures to pursue sustainable development, namely the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) for political leadership, the Inter-Agency Coordination on Sustainable Development (IACSD) for coordination within the UN system, and the High Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development (HLB) for intellectual guidance. CSD remains the principal policy making institution on sustainable development within the UN system, but the other two structures were discontinued. Since Rio, many UN bodies and international organizations have aligned their work with the principles of sustainable development, which is referred to in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (GA Resolution A/RES/06/1) as “a key element of the overarching framework of United Nations activities”.

At national levels, early innovations include national sustainable development councils (NSDC), and integrated strategies. The experience with NSDCs needs to be assessed to identify lessons of success as well as failure. The process of developing integrated strategies has taken root, including in the form of national sustainable development strategies (NSDS), but there is a need to review this experience to assess how best the goal of integration can be advanced, and in particular whether the existence of several competing strategy processes (e.g., PRSP, development plan, national conservation strategy) can undermine the very goal of integration.

At local levels, Local Agenda 21 was developed by local institutions and urban municipalities, and again there is a need to draw lessons from this experience.

II. Questionnaire

Major groups and other stakeholders are invited to provide contributions and inputs on experiences, success factors, challenges and risks pertaining to the UNCSD theme “Institutional framework for sustainable development” in response to the following questions, which have been developed based on the discussions that took place at the first Prepcom.

Experiences

1. Various changes in the global institutional framework for sustainable development have been discussed. What is the importance of the following avenues for reform?

- Strengthen existing institutions

- Merge institutions
- Improve coordination among existing institutions
- Establish new institutions
- Change mandate(s) of institution(s)
- Streamline institutions

Kindly explain your choices, indicating what concrete measures could be considered in this regard.

No response.

2. How can the institutional framework ensure effective synergies between the CSD and other existing inter-governmental instruments and processes, including different multilateral agreements, UN programmes and funds, and regional processes?

No response.

3. How can the institutional framework ensure effective coordination among different agencies and organizations responsible for aspects of sustainable development?

No response.

4. Do(es) the country(ies) of interest to your group have an active national sustainable development council (NSDC) in place? Yes/No. Do you think an active NSDC could facilitate national preparations for UNCSD? If so, how?

Following the election in May 2010 the Coalition Government has decided to make new arrangements in England *“to mainstream sustainability, strengthen the Government’s performance in this area and put processes in place to join-up activity across Government much more effectively”* and has withdrawn funding with effect from 31 March 2011. As a consequence new arrangements are also now being considered in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It is hoped that the new governance arrangements for sustainable development in the four countries will be clear before March 2011.

There are some national preparations for UNCSD underway within Government but this has not involved any stakeholders.

5. In your assessment, how effective have national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) been in promoting integrated decision making?

- The publication of *Securing the Future*, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy in 2005 has been critical in ensuring Government departments have addressed SD in decision-making. A number of achievements:
 - A renewed Government commitment to SD was adopted by the whole of the UK and a strengthened for the SDC as Government’s watchdog on sustainable development.
 - The Strategy set out the five principles of sustainable development which would be the framework for all action and decision-making. The five principles are shown in Figure B.

- The Strategy focused the efforts of departments in improving their performance and progress on sustainability via the Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate (SOG E) Framework and the Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) process.
 - Groups and networks formed to share best practice and innovative approaches to improving as a result of the Strategy's existence.
 - The Welsh Assembly Government is one of only a few Governments in the world to have a statutory duty with regard to sustainability¹⁴ and in 2009 it made a commitment to make sustainable development the 'central organising principle' of Government in Wales in its *One Wales: One Planet Strategy*.
 - Scotland has established a clear Purpose for Government and a National Performance Framework which is broadly compatible with sustainability goals. The civil service and Government has been reformed to remove 'silo' working and encourage all action in Government to address economic, social and environmental outcomes.
6. Has your group been actively involved in developing and/or implementing local agendas 21? If so, where?

No response.

7. In the country(ies) of interest to your group, what role have sub-national and local sustainable development councils played in implementing sustainable development since Rio? What role has your group played in such councils?

Local Government initially played a strong role in implementing Local Agenda 21 strategies since Rio but many have refocused their activities as other priorities have taken over. The SDC has provided guidance to local government, both directly and through financing mechanisms, on the implementation of SD and a key area of activity has been to assist local authority auditors (the Audit Commission) with guidance on SD implementation when assessing local authorities' performance.

8. Since the UNCED (Rio) in 1992, has the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in national decision-making processes on sustainable development significantly increased?

No

Please indicate which of the following forms of engagement of major groups in decision making are commonly used in the country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your group (ranking in order of importance with 1 equal most important):

- 1 participation in policy development
- public hearings
- 2 partnerships
- scientific panels
- inclusion in international delegations

¹⁴ The statutory duty is contained in Section 79 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. It states that "Welsh Ministers must make a scheme ("the sustainable development scheme") setting out how they propose, in the exercise of their functions, to promote sustainable development."

- multi-stakeholder consultations for international meetings

9. Name the governments with which your group has had the closest collaboration. For each, briefly describe the main features of the collaboration.

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is the UK Government's independent adviser on sustainable development (SD), reporting to the UK Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. Through advocacy, advice and appraisal, we help put sustainable development at the heart of Government policy.

Success Factors

10. Are there examples, whether in the sustainable development domain or in related policy domains (e.g., MDGs, other), where an effective institutional framework has contributed to significant positive outcomes at national level? international level?

No response.

11. How can the lessons from such successes be used to enhance the effectiveness of the institutional framework for sustainable development? Are the lessons relevant to the Commission on Sustainable Development?

No response.

12. How can the lessons from such successes be used to enhance the effectiveness of international environmental governance/policy guidance?

No response.

13. What in your experience have been the most effective means of strengthening major groups' and other stakeholder's participation in national sustainable development efforts?

No response.

Challenges

14. What are the most significant challenges facing international institutions charged with promoting sustainable development?

Its broad definition, long-term nature and the complexity in balancing environmental, social and economic outcomes without adequate guidance.

15. What are the most significant challenges facing national institutions charged with promoting sustainable development in the country(ies) of interest to your group?

- The lack of clarity on new SD arrangements and the lack of commitment
- Without an up-to-date strategy or statement on SD the UK's reputation internationally as a leader on SD could be called into question, particularly in light of the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (following on from the Earth Summit at Rio in 1992), and other international developments (e.g. France's new SD Strategy and the revision of the EU's SD Strategy in 2011).
- The lack of a stated vision or strategy on SD from a new Government as well as high-level leadership from the Prime Minister and all departments in order to put it into practice.
- The focus on a "greening" agenda which focuses simply on carbon or the environment risks ignoring many other key challenges facing the world e.g. social cohesion and fairness, the transition to a more sustainable economy, enabling more sustainable lives and shaping sustainable places. This is exacerbated by the lead SD departments being two environment departments (Dept of Environment and Department of Energy and Climate Change).

Risks

16. What decisions should UNCSD aim to reach on the institutional framework for sustainable development? What are the main risks threatening a successful UNCSD outcome on the institutional framework?

National arrangements should show the following:

- High level Political Leadership
- Stated Strategy and Vision
- Governance structures to oversee policy and operational performance on SD which should be cascaded through all levels of governance e.g. local government
- Performance management framework to measure progress towards agreed pan-Government outcomes with progress reported regularly
- *Independent* scrutiny/assurance function
- Decision-making tools and processes for both its policy and operations which integrate SD principles.
- Systematic approach to build SD capabilities
- Mechanism to engage business, civil society, wider public sector and international bodies.

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Country(ies) or region(s) of interest to your organisation:

United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)

European Union

Attachments:

SDC (2009) *Prosperity without Growth? The transition to sustainable economy*

SDC (October 2010) Green Investment Bank - Response by the Sustainable Development Commission to the Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry