

**Profiles of Tools and Tactics
for
Environmental Mainstreaming**

No. 11

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
(CSD)

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COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD)

| <i>What is CSD for?</i> | | | <i>What issues does a CSD focus on?</i> | |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|----------------|
| Policy development | √ | Sets vision & objectives for SD. Reviews & advocate policies. | Environmental | √√√ (always) |
| Planning | √ | Formulates integrated strategies as framework for action plans | Social | √√√ (always) |
| Field work | √ | For review of issues and M&E | Economic | √√√ (always) |
| Investment | √ | Determines & prioritizes investments. | Institutional | √√ (sometimes) |
| Assessment | √ | A key function | | |
| Monitoring | √ | Tracks plan/program implementation and SD progress | | |
| Campaigning | √ | A support function | | |

Purpose

Public participation is an essential and effective element for making progress towards sustainability. It often involves the creation of multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral coordinating bodies at national, local, sector, ecosystem, and other levels. At the national level, these bodies are often referred to generically as National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSD). But the nomenclature varies widely: some have been created as Commissions, Committees, Forums or Roundtables (see Table 1).

Councils for Sustainable Development (CSD) provide a valuable mechanism for enabling a coordinated and principled working relationship among government, business and civil society for a wide range of purposes. Notably, CSDs facilitate the integration of the multiple dimensions of sustainable development (i.e., economic, social, environmental, political, cultural, spiritual) - particularly in planning and strategy formulation, policy-making, programme implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). They provide a critical means for reconciling priorities at local to national (and global) levels, facilitating the translation of global commitments into national and local initiatives and SD priorities into concrete policies and actions. Many CSDs have served as forums for resolving conflicts among different interest groups, identifying opportunities and barriers to SD, promoting public awareness of SD and participation, and facilitating alliances for private-public action and investments. Among others, CSDs have also become useful mechanisms for the sharing of knowledge and information across communities and countries on best practices and successful initiatives for SD.

Background facts

The report of the Brundtland Commission (1987) suggested that countries may “...consider the designation of a national council or public representative or ‘ombudsman’ to represent the interests and rights of present and future generations” (Chapter 12, paragraph 84). This prompted the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to call on all countries to establish multi-stakeholder structures and mechanisms to assume the role of following up on commitments made through Agenda 21 - Chapters 8 and 38 of this accord specifically recommend the establishment of NCSDs to promote the implementation of SD strategies and policies. The Summit pushed for the involvement of all major stakeholders and integration of economic, social and ecological concerns in all sustainable development efforts. These calls were strongly re-affirmed and translated into specific recommendations by the Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS) in June 1997. The World Summit for Sustainable Development reiterated this call through the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in September 2002.

Multi-stakeholder CSDs were given full support and endorsement by the international community and the UN in view of their unique strategic features that make them effective mechanisms for achieving successes in SD efforts. As of 2002, some 100 NCSDs had been created worldwide, and many more

CSDs have been created at various levels and sectors since then (see examples in Table 1). Their roles and functions vary but many have assumed some or all of the following:

- Voice for sustainability & advocate of integrated policies;
- Mechanism for planning and policy integration (usually mandated to formulate the national and local sustainable development strategies);
- Venue for problem solving such as impacts of climate change and local implications of global agreements and international conventions;
- Means for cooperative action and commitment forging;
- Vehicle for promoting awareness & information dissemination;
- Mechanism for implementation and M&E of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS).

Table 1: Examples of Councils for Sustainable Development

| | Country | Name of Entity | Basis of Creation |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| National | | | |
| 1 | Argentina | National Council for Sustainable Development | Presidential Decree |
| 2 | Barbados | National Commission for Sustainable Development | Ministerial Decree |
| 3 | Burkina Faso | National Council for Environment Management | Decree |
| 4 | Canada | National Round Table on the Environment and Economy | Law |
| 5 | Chile | Council for Sustainable Development | Presidential Decree |
| 6 | Dominican Republic | National Follow-up Commission | Decree |
| 7 | El Salvador | National Council for Sustainable Development | Decree |
| 8 | Estonia | National Commission for Sustainable Development | Decree |
| 9 | Finland | Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development | Council of State Decision |
| 10 | France | National Council for Sustainable Development | Ministerial Decree |
| 11 | Grenada | Sustainable Development Council | Cabinet Decision |
| 12 | Honduras | National Council for Sustainable Development | Presidential Decree |
| 13 | Hungary | Commission for Sustainable Development | Decree |
| 14 | Kyrgyzstan | National Council on Sustainable Human Development | Presidential Decree |
| 15 | Mexico | National Consultative Council for Sustainable Development | Law |
| 16 | Mongolia | National Council for Sustainable Development | Government Resolution |
| 17 | Nicaragua | National Council for Sustainable Development | Presidential Decree |
| 18 | Niger | National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development | Decree |
| 19 | Norway | National Committee for International Environmental Issues | Letter from Environment Minister |
| 20 | Panama | National Council for Sustainable Development | Presidential Decree |
| 21 | Philippines | Philippine Council for Sustainable Development | Presidential Decree |
| 22 | Senegal | National Committee for Sustainable Development | Decree |
| 23 | South Korea | Presidential Council for Sustainable Development | Presidential Decree |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 2 4 | Switzerland | National Council for Sustainable Development | Government Decree |
| 2 5 | Tajikistan | National Commission on Sustainable Development | Government Decree |
| 2 6 | Uganda | National Environment Management Authority | Law |
| 2 7 | Ukraine | National Commission on Sustainable Development | Cabinet Resolution |
| 2 8 | Uzbekistan | National Commission on Sustainable Development | Decree |
| 2 9 | Vietnam | National Council on Sustainable Development | Prime Minister Decision |
| Sub-national | | | |
| 3 0 | Catalonia, Spain | Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia | Decree |
| 3 1 | Palawan, Philippines | Palawan Council for Sustainable Development | Law |
| Regional/Sub-Regional | | | |
| 3 2 | Europe | European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Council | |
| 3 3 | Europe | European Sustainable Development Network | |
| 3 4 | European Union | European Consultative Forum on the Environment and Sustainable Development | Commission Decision |
| 3 5 | Central America | Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES) | Leaders' Agreement |

Source: Earth Council

Main steps in establishing a CSD

There are no hard and fast rules for the creation of a CSD. The process varies with needs and contexts of a country or a sector or a province. As such, CSDs vary widely across countries in their form and structure, level and composition of membership, functions and mandates, and official stature. The important common thread is that these are mechanisms for engaging the various stakeholder groups in society to address SD concerns, especially the formulation and implementation of SD strategies and action programmes.

Box 1 provides a general description, not a prescription, of steps in forming a CSD. The number and order of steps may vary depending on the requirements of the creators and agreements of the stakeholders.

Box 1: General Steps in the Formation of a CSD

1. Organize a **multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral forum** that will discuss the importance and need for a coordinating and integrating mechanism for SD. If there is an agreement, the participants must discuss and propose the following:
 - a. name of the CSD (could be determined later);
 - b. vision, mission and objectives;
 - c. roles and mandates;
 - d. composition and leadership; and
 - e. funding sources and support secretariat.
2. Prepare a **concept paper** containing these proposals and subject this to wide consultation to:
 - a. encourage participation and ownership;
 - b. refine and improve the proposal; and
 - c. disseminate information and generate support for the CSD.

3. Draft the appropriate form of **legal issuance** (e.g. executive issuance or legislative action) for the creation of the CSD and submit this to the appropriate approving authority (e.g. Head of Government, Parliament) for further clearance and signature.
4. The government usually **appoints the members** of the CSD, especially those representing its institutions. Often, the government selects and appoints the members from a pool of experts, eminent persons, or representatives of the CSOs. In a few cases, the government requests nominations from stakeholder groups to give them the responsibility to choose their representatives. In this case, it is advisable that the stakeholder groups set up respective **selection criteria and process** for better representation, engagement and influence with government. It is useful for stakeholder groups to be ready with nominees even if the government does not ask for them.
5. Establish the **Secretariat** according to the provision of the legal issuance. Sometimes, this is lodged in a government institution - so funding will not be an issue. Where the Secretariat is established independently, funding must be assured and adequate time must be allocated for sourcing and hiring staff.
6. Formulate **operational procedures** and establish operational ethical norms. These may be elaborated in an operational manual drafted by the Secretariat, and approved by the CSD.
7. Experience shows that, as a first activity, it is useful to conduct an **initial workshop** for team building and levelling of CSD members' expectations, and planning and preparing an **action plan**. If there are no provisions for funding, the action plan must include the mobilization of funds.

Expected outputs

- A multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral CSD;
- A well-integrated and holistic sustainable development strategy and agenda for action;
- A more aware citizenry that supports and work for sustainability.

Basic requirements

Trust

Being a political entity, *trust* is a key element to the formation and success of a CSD. Mainstreaming citizen participation in development processes such as planning and policy-making means that government must allow non-government groups to take part in the exercise of its traditional roles and responsibilities. It also means that citizens must decide and commit to get engaged and participate in these processes with government. Therefore, it requires that government and citizens must change paradigms, trust each other and trust that working together in partnership will facilitate the pursuit of their common objectives.

Norms and Values

Trust is not acquired but must be built. The decision to trust one another is not enough. The process of engagement requires that norms and values are adopted – that can help build trust and confidence, eg. :

- **Consensus-building.** The power of the CSD is derived from its unique opportunity to create agreements that enable and persuade others to act. Consensus is needed to cross the boundaries of old disagreements that have obstructed sustainability. Where CSD members may have a history of mistrust and conflict, consensus-building is an effective means to build understanding, trust and an emerging set of values conducive to sustainability. It treats each member as equally important, and requires all members to understand one another.

- ***Engagement and partnership.*** Partnership denotes a relationship of equal standing and working together. It requires active engagement and participation by each partner, seeking synergies and combining efforts in good faith. Stakeholders must be mindful that working with others in synergy can make them very strong. They must strive to level their expectations, perspectives, and paradigms for development. Civil society must make an effort to learn and appreciate the mainstream paradigm that has been guiding policy-making and the context within which decisions are made by government. Government officials must shed strict biases and keep open minds to alternatives offered by civil society in confronting development issues.
- ***Fair process.*** Members must have an equal opportunity to express their views, participate in meetings, review matters and issues brought to the CSD, have access to information, and contribute to decision-making. Members without adequate resources should have access to staff support and financial assistance. In short, a clear and agreed set of rules is needed to ensure that the CSD's proceedings are fair and balanced.
- ***Transparency.*** The CSD's practices must be transparent, both internally and externally. Members need to fully participate in discussions and know what agreements and decisions are reached. The public must have the opportunity to learn about and participate on the CSD's activities and decisions. Everybody must strive to establish mechanisms for transparency and constructive discussions.

Champion/ Leader

The choice of the CSD leader or chairperson is critical. This position is often held by the Ministry or body responsible for environment and natural resources - due to the common notion that SD is solely about environmental integrity or natural resource conservation. Unfortunately, this idea, and the fact that environmental bodies have weak influence in government, makes close coordination with other sector bodies difficult; and also hinder the integration of environmental plans and programmes with such other bodies and vice-versa. Experiences of many CSDs show that the highest level of leadership (e.g. President or Prime Minister) is essential. However, for closer management, a Minister with an oversight function (e.g. Planning or Finance) but with strong guidance from the highest level, can also be effective. "Champions" beyond the chairperson (from amongst all stakeholders) can play a key role in pushing the agenda of the CSD and strengthening its relevance and indispensability.

Official Basis

Worldwide, CSDs have a wide range of official bases (see Table 1). Those created under legal statute are more permanent, have greater power and influence and are highly stable.

Clear roles and mandate

Conflict or duplication of functions with existing bodies results in confusion and "forum shopping" by other interest groups. Eventually, this can render the CSD inactive. Hence, it is imperative to clearly identify the niche or appropriate roles and functions of the CSD vis-a vis other existing bodies to make it relevant and stable.

Funds

Many CSDs have become inactive due to budgetary constraints and loss of external assistance. Adequate funding for both government and other member-organizations must be assured to ensure high activity and productivity of CSDs. Providing a dedicated source of funds is one good reason for establishing a CSD by law.

Skills and capacity

A CSD generally tackles multiple or complex issues. Hence it requires a multi-disciplinary team that has good capability to handle technical, political, financial and other matters. A high level of expertise must be assured and maintained within a CSD for it to effectively play its role and sustain its influence.

Secretariat

A key element in the success and sustainability of a CSD is its secretariat. Considerable effort and resources must be devoted to the establishment of a good secretariat

Pro's (main advantages) and Con's (main constraints in use and results)

The following advantages and constraints are conditional. They are highly dependent on the nature and contexts of the CSDs and on the political will of the leader (Chair) and members.

Advantages:

- Promotes coordination of the concerns of many stakeholders and sectors of society, and hence enables the integration of development dimensions in various development processes.
- Ensures wider reach, support and ownership for activities and outputs of the CSD.
- Provides a forum for many purposes such as resolution of issues and conflicts, exchange of experiences, and information dissemination.

Constraints:

- A CSD is a political entity, so it can easily be used differently or abolished (if not created by law) or made moribund by new government administrations with a different agenda.
- It can take substantial resources, effort and time to establish and operate.
- Resolution of issues could take time if members are difficult or less flexible.

Key sources of further information and useful web-links

Antonio, Ella (2008), Lessons Learned: Comparative View on Multi-Stakeholder Mechanisms for SD Planning in Europe and Asia-Pacific, Presentation (powerpoint) in the First Internet Learning Event of SDplanNet-Asia&Pacific, December 2, 2008, <http://www.sdplannet-ap.org/Pages/FirstInternet-basedLearningEvent.aspx>

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Earth Council (2000), National Experiences of Integrative, Multi-stakeholder Processes for Sustainable Development, NCSO Report, 1999-2000, San Jose, Costa Rica

Niestroy, Ingeborg (2005): Sustaining Sustainability – a benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states. EEAC series, Background study No.2. Lemma, Utrecht. 308p.