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# A New Sustainable Development Strategy: An Opportunity Not To Be Missed

Peer Review NSDS

Report of a Peer Review of The Netherlands Sustainable Development Strategy

Conducted by a peer panel from Finland, Germany and South Africa
2007

Compiled and edited by
Barry Dalal-Clayton and Fieke Krikhaar

ADVICE

# A New Sustainable Development Strategy: An Opportunity Not To Be Missed

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*Den Haag, June, 2007*

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## Colophon

**A New Sustainable Development Strategy: An Opportunity Not To Be Missed**
is the published under the responsibility of a peer panel from Finland, Germany and South Africa who reviewed the Netherlands SDS during the first half of 2007. The RMNO organised this process by invitation of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Development Cooperation. This publication belongs to the series Advice, number A.10 (2007). ISBN 978 90 72377 72 2

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## Note on the content of this report

The recommendations on the Netherlands National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) agreed by peer participants at a peer review workshop, 1-5 April 2007, are given in full in the Executive Summary and in boxes in Chapters 3-6.

The remaining text of this final report has been prepared by Dr Barry Dalal-Clayton of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and Drs Fieke Krikhaar of the Dutch Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature & the Environment (RMNO), and revised to incorporate edits suggested by the peers as well as a number of boxes on aspects of the experiences with NSDS in the peers' and other countries.
The report is written under the responsibility of the peers.

This document is structured around the recommendations. Boxes containing one or more related recommendations are followed by explanatory text. Where available, the text is supported by examples of international experience, approaches, practice and related material from peer or other countries that, it is hoped, will be useful either to explain the recommendations or help the Netherlands in building a new strategy. To aid the flow of the text and to provide a broader overview, additional material is provided in annexes.

Annex 1 draws from international experience of NSDS and is included to provide a contextual background for the main chapters of the report.

# Introduction

What is sustainability? Is it something to achieve as a result; or is it a process, bringing people with different interests together, all looking for new approaches to make their own lives and those of their children more valuable? In truth, it must be both. Regarding the former, there is a clear and urgent imperative to halt and reverse a range of threatening unsustainable and negative trends. But the Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment (RMNO) is convinced we need to make particularly strong efforts to achieve the latter.

The RMNO tries to build bridges between society and government, between science and policy, between theory and practical experience with knowledge as a tool for improving ongoing political processes. The concept of sustainable development can inspire people to look from different angles - the 3 P's - to problems or challenges. That may result in sustainable solutions. The issue of knowledge about sustainability is highly relevant - whether knowledge exists and is available, or is insufficient, or certain knowledge is lacking.

The Netherlands supported the EU-initiative, to stimulate mutual learning in the context of the European SD-strategy by inviting three countries (two member states and one from Africa) to undertake a peer review of the national SD-strategy. A peer review is a successful, interactive instrument to collect and share state-of-the-art knowledge.

The RMNO was pleased to accept the request of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Development Cooperation to coordinate the peer review in the Netherlands. We facilitated the process, being able to connect this project to opinions and experiences from different groups in Dutch society. We invited other advisory councils to join us in the process.

This review is not only about the past or on how the existing strategy was developed. It aims to inspire – by drawing on 'lessons learned' - how a SD-strategy should function in the Netherlands in the present situation, having a new Cabinet and a new policy programme. The result is the work of the eleven peers. I want to compliment them, for they have succeeded to present us their recommendations for an approach to develop a new sustainable development framework for the Netherlands.

The report provides the advice from the peers to the government of the Netherlands. It is presented in the RMNO series 'Advice', but the RMNO is merely the message carrier on behalf of the peers. The report does not represent advice from the RMNO itself. The new Cabinet is ambitious when it comes to sustainable development and I hope, with the peers, that it will make the best use of these findings and recommendations.

*Prof. dr. Roeland in 't Veld*
*Chair RMNO*
*Chair Steering committee Peer Review*

# Preface

It has been a great honour for my colleagues and I to serve on the peer review panel of the Netherlands Sustainable Development Strategy. The recommendations contained in the report are based on the extensive engagement process that started in late December 2006.

As chair I would like to thank all those that participated in the review process, especially our Dutch colleagues from all walks of life who gave their time to share with the peers their insights, perspectives on challenges, achievements, frustrations, disappointments and views on the way forward for the Netherlands sustainable development agenda.

The recommendations we have crafted represent the collective voices of all those we engaged with and all that we have done as peers is to find a common thread that pulls these views together. We sincerely hope that government can use the recommendations to inform and shape its policies for sustainable development at home and abroad.

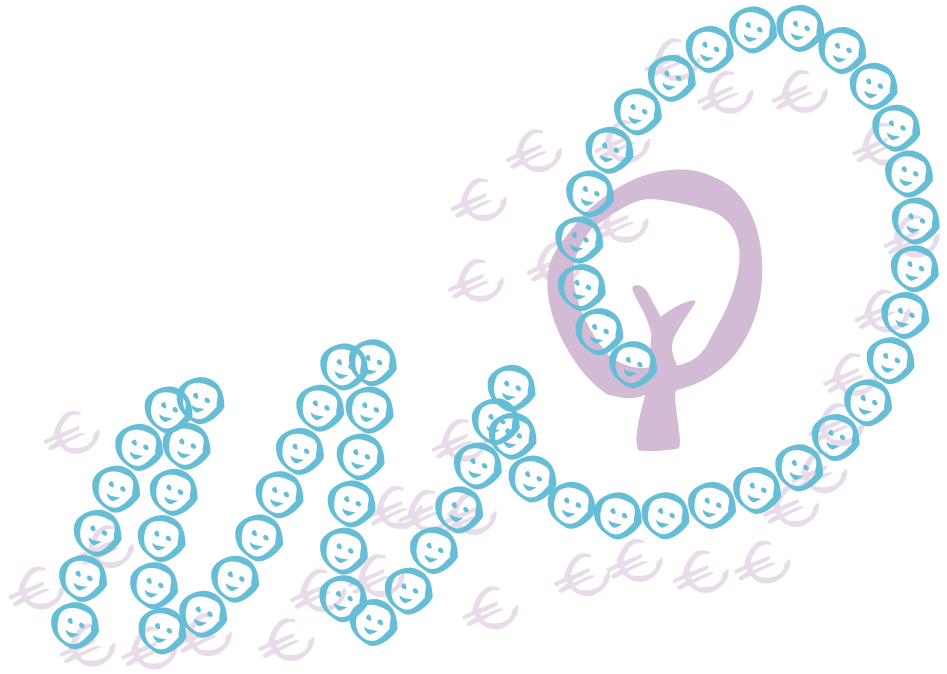
The Coalition Agreement of the new government provides a unique window of opportunity for government to commit to the development of a new sustainable development strategy that is aligned with, and helps deliver on, the objectives of its Coalition Agreement.

There is worldwide recognition that governments cannot deliver sustainable development alone and there is a need to create a platform that mobilises the rest of society to play an active role. As peers we believe a new sustainable development strategy is the appropriate vehicle to mobilise the rest of Dutch society. The success of the process of developing such a strategy will depend on broader stakeholder participation from civil society organisations, business, labour, government departments, research institutions and professional associations, and individuals wishing to contribute to sustainable development in the Netherlands.

I had the privilege to meet with Prime Minister Balkenende, Minister Cramer (Spatial Planning and the Environment) and Minister Koenders (Development Cooperation) to discuss the recommendations tabled by the peers. In this meeting, there was genuine agreement that a sustainable development path that builds on the Coalition Agreement will help create a better quality of life at home and in the developing world. I was pleased to hear from the PM that sustainability will be one of his key areas of focus in the next four years and that he is keen to get his government to focus on what is “doable” and create an appropriate process that will help mobilise the rest of society.

In conclusion, I sincerely believe that a new sustainable development strategy that is developed in partnership with the rest of society will help the government steer the Netherlands towards sustained economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and social cohesion, in line with the Coalition Agreement’s motto – “working together, living together”.

*Pancho Ndebele: MBA, LLM, MSc, BEng(Hons)*
*Chairman of the Peer Review/ Review team of the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Netherlands*



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# Executive summary

## A New Sustainable Development Strategy: An Opportunity Not To Be Missed!

### 1.0 Background and review process

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (2006) commits member states to completing (at least) a first National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) by June 2007. It proposes that Member States undertake voluntary peer reviews of their NSDSs. In response to an invitation from the European Commission, in the autumn of 2006, the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation started preparations for a peer review of the Netherlands NSDS. The RMNO was invited to manage the process as a project.

The peer review project has been guided by a steering Committee established by the RMNO involving other participating Dutch Advisory Councils (AER, VROMraad, RLG, RAWOO, SER) as well as experts from MNP and representatives of the Ministry of Environment, EC, OECD and UNDESA. The Network of European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) was invited to observe and report on the process so other countries considering a peer review will hopefully benefit from the experiences in the Netherlands. The progress of the project was discussed regularly with the inter ministerial coordinating body for SD (TFDO), chaired by the Dutch Ambassador for sustainable development.

Twelve experts from three countries (Finland, Germany and South Africa) were invited to serve as peers (four per country representing government, business and science, civil society (NGO) and academia).Unfortunately the government representative from South Africa was unable to attend. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) was engaged to provide consultative/facilitation services to RMNO and the peers for the review process.

The peers were asked to review the existing Dutch NSDS and to make recommendations on how best to develop a new Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) based on their own and other international experiences.

The review involved several steps: preparation of a background report; a scoping workshop to design the methodology; interviews and telephone conferences; a peer review week (1-5 April 2007) with discussions with Dutch participants from government, the private sector, civil society, academia and youth; and preparation of a final report to be launched at a national working conference in June 2007.

## 2.0 Executive summary contents

The peers' conclusions are presented in the following sections:

3.0 Headline Conclusions and Recommendations
4.0 Overall Remarks
5.0 SD Strategy - Process Recommendations
6.0 SD Strategy - Content Recommendations
7.0 SD Strategy - Implementation & Monitoring Recommendations

Other perspectives on the existing NSDS and future options were gathered from those interviewed during the preparatory process for the review, and from discussions during the peer review week. These can also be considered when considering next steps. They are reflected in this final report of the peer review. Examples of approaches to illustrate the recommendations are also provided in this report.

## 3.0 Headline conclusions and recommendations

- ***Unsustainable trends persist*** (climate chage, polarisation of society and growing ethnic tensions, loss of critical natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity, increasing environmental damage in many fields, dependence on exhausting energy supplies, ongoing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, insufficient communication and education for empowering society, demographic change, etc.).

- These require a coherent, systematic and ***integrated response***, that combines initiatives in different policy domains and short term and long term perspectives.

- The current Action Programme on Sustainable Development 'Sustainable Action' (2003) is not such a response and is ***not a sustainable development strategy*** (SDS):
  - The focus is dominantly environmental – the social dimension and economic sustainability are missing.
  - It is a set of actions without a framing vision, a set of guiding principles and quantitative headline indicators.
  - As a result, activities led by different actors (government, business, civil society) are not linked.
  - It is the government's plan and lacks ownership in society or the business sector.
  - Integration, synergies and trade-offs between policies and goals are lacking.
  - Effective cooperation between government departments and levels is missing.





- The new Coalition Agreement provides a unique ***window of opportunity*** to develop a new SDS. The government should take the opportunity, in partnership with society and all relevant stakeholders to develop such a new SDS – it should not be just an internal government action plan.

- We recognise the ***urgent need for a sustainable development framework/ strategy*** to:
  - Balance objectives, seek synergies, negotiate trade-offs.
  - Coordinate processes.
  - Strengthen integration and coordination across the three P's (people, planet, prosperity).
  - Create a long-term SD vision and a solid platform for leadership.
  - Give long term perspective/framework to stimulate SD initiatives and investment.

- This will require ***leadership*** in all stakeholder groups. Within government, the Prime Minister needs to assume this role.

- As a first step, we recommend the government ***clearly commits in the policy programme*** it is currently formulating to initiate the development of an SDS – providing an ***overarching umbrella*** for existing and future policies, plans and actions.

- We recommend the strategy be developed as a ***process rather than being just a document***, and supported by a strong focus on ***communication***.

- We recommend that the Netherlands establishes a set of linked structures to manage and coordinate the development and implementation of a new SDS. There are many different possibilities to organise this but we recommend that at least the following options be explored:
  a) A ***coordinating body of both government and civil society representatives*** to manage and pull the sustainable development agenda together. This could be an SD Clearing House or ***SD Commission*** bringing together a broad mix of representatives from key government departments and stakeholder groups (from the business sector and civil society, including environmental, development cooperation, women's organisations etc). This body should be supported by a ***Secretariat*** housed in the Prime Minister's office – for day to day management.
  b) A ***consultative body of civil society*** to pull the sustainable development agenda together. This could be an SD Clearing House or ***SD Commission*** bringing together a broad mix of representatives from stakeholder groups (from the business sector and civil society, including environmental, development cooperation, women's organisations etc). This body should be supported by a ***Secretariat***– for its day to day work. On the ***government level***, there should be a ***coordinating body*** managing the implementation of the strategy throughout all sections

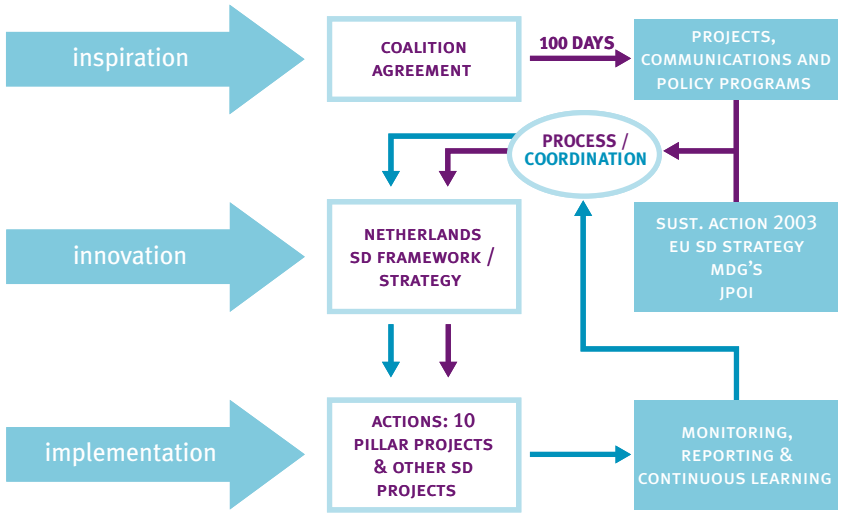
of government, with an administrative ***task force*** housed in the prime minister's office – for day to day management.

- We note that a National Commission will examine the Constitution. We suggest that consideration be given to embedding some ***rights regarding SD in the constitution***.

Figure 1 provides a rationale for a new SDS and indicates how it can build on the Coalition Agreement, with arrows indicating the continuity of a learning process.

*Figure 1*

**POTENTIAL MODEL FOR THE NETHERLANDS SD FRAMEWORK**




**Explanation of Figure**

Strong **inspiration** for the country to place its development on a sustainable path is given in the Coalition Agreement of the new government. Over its first 100 days, the government is planning discussions with society on the different windows and topics mentioned in the Agreement. After this, it will produce a more concrete policy programme with clear goals for the different topics, especially the 10 projects already mentioned in the document. This policy programme will guide the government for the next four years and should include a clear reference to developing a sustainable development strategy. There will also be projects in that package that will be especially designed in a sustainable way so the Cabinet can make its aims clear and show some results in this area.





But projects alone will not be sufficient. The time to identify them and secure genuine acceptance and ownership is very limited. They will lack the frame of a strategic vision of SD for the country that society as a whole subscribes to. The mechanisms to balance objectives (within and across the pillars - PPP) and to negotiate trade-offs are currently lacking, the coordination for those mechanisms is absent, and the integration between PPP, sectors/ministries and levels (international, national, provincial, local) is weak. To address these challenges to steer the country to a sustainable future requires a far more strategic approach – an SDS that promotes **innovation**.

However, the concrete projects, together with lessons from implementing the Action Programme on Sustainable Development 'Sustainable Action' (2003) and the EU SD strategy, and efforts to make progress on international commitments (e.g. the Millennium Development Goals [MDG], the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation [JPOI]) can provide a stimulus and motivation for an effective SDS process. The government's planned 10 'pillar' projects, together with other SD projects, specific policy orientations and actions that the strategy will identify, can be combined in a coordinated, integrated SDS that the government, society and business community, acting together, can own and **implement**.

The peers recommend that such a strategy should be developed through a best practice approach – building on experience from around the world about what works well.

Through **monitoring and transparent reporting**, feedback can enable the strategy to become a **continuing process of learning, doing and improvement**.

Our clear message is that an SDS must be a process, **not merely a document**. To become a reality, this approach requires **effective coordination**. The set of linked structures needed for this, should at least contain a **multi-stakeholder forum** for debate etc. in which business and civil society are represented Government alone cannot deliver sustainable development – it requires a genuine partnership. Coordination should clearly not mean heavy top-down control, but an organised process for sharing experiences and fostering innovations. A **Secretariat** will be needed to provide day-to-day management and coordination. This should ideally be staffed by personnel with a range of the necessary technical and communication skills. We suggest the Prime Minister plays a prominent role in this set of linked structures. If the SDS is managed by a line ministry (e.g. Environment), international experience shows that there is a strong likelihood that sectoral/ministerial barriers will inhibit real progress.

## 4.0 Overall remarks

### The time is now!

1. There is an urgent need to break a range of threatening ***unsustainable trends*** which have been confirmed by recent international assessments (e.g. Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Stern Report on Climate Change, UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment).

2. Given rising public awareness of SD issues, we recognise that there lies ahead a unique ***window of opportunity*** for the new coalition to engage in a process of developing a new sustainable development framework/strategy

3. This should be developed by government in partnership with society and all relevant stakeholders because ***government cannot deliver sustainable development alone*** – other actors have real roles and contributions to make (e.g. businesses invest, citizens make lifestyle decisions).

4. It should ***build on the Coalition Agreement*** and take into account the ***EU SD Strategy*** and the ***SD commitments at the global level***.

### Leadership

5. We are greatly encouraged that the new government under the ***leadership*** of the Prime Minister has given high priority to the SD agenda in the Coalition Agreement and the key challenge is to 'make it happen'

6. But we also recognise the need for leadership throughout all layers of government, across all sectors, in industry, in civil society and at the individual level. Within government, the ***Prime Minister needs to assume this role***, and we encourage him to continue his efforts. We recommend the Prime Minister invite 'leaders' from business and civil society to join him in carrying and driving the process of SD. This, we believe, will help to ***overcome sectoral/ministry barriers*** and to ***mobilise the citizens*** of the Netherlands to put their weight behind an SDS initiative.

### Building on what exists

7. We recognise that the starting point for the Netherlands Sustainable Development agenda is not "Point Zero". There is a need for the Netherlands to build on its long and ***distinguished record*** in sustainable development and environmental planning.

8. ***A lot of initiatives*** in the Netherlands in many sectors fit into the concept of SD even if not ***labelled*** as such – they can provide lessons and be built upon. Examples are the Transition Paths, policy for social inclusion, reduction of poverty, restructuring the healthcare system, as well as many regional and local initiatives.





### Making a commitment

9. We recognise that the government is currently formulating its policy programme and recommend that, in this, it clearly ***commits to initiate the development of an SDS***; and recommend that ***the policy programme*** includes an intention to operationalise the programme on the basis of an integrated (PPP) SD approach.

10. The strategy needs to be seen as a ***process rather than a document***.

11. Consider the possibility to incorporate sustainable development as an explicit feature of the ***Dutch Constitution***.

12. Many of the obvious ***challenges*** for SD (low hanging fruit) have been addressed already in the Netherlands. In order to deal with the less obvious and more difficult challenges (high hanging fruit), a commitment to a ***strategic approach*** is needed.

### Governance

13. A sustainable development strategy contributes to good governance by overcoming ***government fragmentation***, by enhancing policy integration, and thus improving government efficiency and effectiveness.

14. A strategy provides a ***framework for different societal actors*** to take their own initiatives in a responsible and progressive manner within a broader framework.

## 5.0 Process recommendations

### Vision

15. We recommend that the Netherlands clearly specifies the unsustainable conditions and trends that are to be addressed and develops a ***long term vision*** and ***principles*** for SD as a guide for framing an SDS.

16. A ***vision*** for sustainable development is not set in stone, but continues to evolve.

### Learning process

17. To be effective, an SDS should not be a one-off linear process ending with a document only. We recommend that it be designed as a cyclical, iterative, ***learning process*** for all, through discourse between government, the business community and society, enabling ***continuous improvement*** of outcomes.

18. To this end, the government must take the lead and should create a platform that encourages networking, partnerships and ***input from all stakeholders and society*** through dialogue and consultation with organisations and individuals at the local, regional and national level.

19. Government should also create a long-term reliable policy framework ***facilitating business and civil society SD initiatives*** at all levels.

### Strategy management

20. We recommend that the Netherlands establishes ***a set of linked structures*** to manage and coordinate the development and implementation of a new SDS. There are many different possibilities to organise this but we recommend that you explore at least the following options.
    a) A ***coordinating body of both government and civil society representatives*** to manage and pull the sustainable development agenda together. This could be an SD Clearing House or ***SD Commission*** bringing together a broad mix of representatives from key government departments and stakeholder groups (from the business sector and civil society, including environmental, development cooperation, women's organisations etc). This body should be supported by a ***Secretariat*** housed in the Prime Minister's office – for day to day management.
    b) A ***consultative body of civil society*** to pull the sustainable development agenda together. This could be an SD Clearing House or ***SD Commission*** bringing together a broad mix of representatives from stakeholder groups (from the business sector and civil society, including environmental, development cooperation, women's organisations etc). This body should be supported by a ***Secretariat***– for its day to day work. On the ***government level***, there should be a ***coordinating body*** managing the implementation of the strategy throughout all sections of government, with an administrative ***task force*** housed in the Prime Minister's office – for day to day management.

### Policy process

21. ***Re-design policy and decision-making processes*** so that decisions become more transparent and decision makers more accountable with respect to sustainability.

### Communication and education

22. Sustainable development should be a fundamental component of all ***education curricula*** (primary, secondary, tertiary).

23. We recommend that the Netherlands considers the potential use of the ***UN Decade for learning for SD*** to develop a more dynamic approach to communicating sustainable development as a concept.

24. We recommend that a ***communications strategy for SD*** be developed to support the SDS. Part of its role should be to ensure the SD concept is ***meaningful*** to everybody





## 6.0 Contents recommendations

### Focus

25. The strategy should be an ***umbrella*** for all issues of major relevance to sustainable development in the Netherlands, but should focus initially on a ***limited number of priority issues*** where the SD perspective provides added value. Such priority issues may be identified on the basis of significant synergies (or the probability of negotiating trade-offs where synergy is difficult) between social, economic, and environmental objectives, as well as their likely importance over a long-term perspective.

26. We recommend a strategy that is based on the identification of the ***main unsustainable trends***.

27. We recommend a SDS which provides for ***clear actions, targets and timelines***, either in the strategy framework or implementation plans.

28. The SDS should include harnessing the experience of the many existing ***local and regional initiatives*** for SD and revitalising Local Agenda 21 type initiatives to operationalise SD.

29. A future SDS will benefit greatly by ***integrating the domestic and international dimensions***, and by examining the clear links that exist between these - particularly for a great trading nation such as The Netherlands.

### Demonstrate progress

30. We recommend that the ***'demonstration' projects*** identified by the Coalition Agreement and by ministries are coordinated in a manner that reflects the broader perspective of Sustainable Development (people, planet, profit: the 3 P's).

### Embedding SD in government

31. The SDS should provide a means to purposefully introduce the broader ***SD approach*** into the ***core activities of all ministries***, for example by sustainability assessments.

### Addressing risks and conflicts

32. The SDS should ***respond to risks & opportunities*** identified in trend analysis

33. The SDS should articulate (rather than hide) conflicts (e.g. difficulties in balancing objectives for people, planet and prosperity), expanding the common ground amongst stakeholders. We recommend that the Dutch ***consensus culture*** be harnessed to reach work towards this aim.

### Roles and responsibilities

34. The SDS should identify ***roles and responsibilities*** amongst main stakeholder groups.

35. Consider the role of the Netherlands in furthering an SD agenda in the ***EU***, e.g. through reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, or internationally in trade negotiations.

## 7.0 Implementation and monitoring recommendations

### Experimentation and innovation

36. Use ***intelligent financial means/models*** as an instrument to drive SD, including risk- taking. New forms of tax and other economic incentives should be explored to change production and consumption to use less raw material and energy.

37. Provide ***support for innovative risk takers*** that aim for difficult but radical solutions to problems of sustainability and develop ***mechanisms for up-scaling and diffusion*** of innovations.

### Assessment and analysis

38. Carry out ***ex ante assessments*** of policies, plans and programme to ensure they are sustainable and consistent with the aims and goals of the SDS, as well as ***ex post*** evaluations of actions and policies to ensure outcomes are successful and meet goals and targets in the SDS.

39. Encourage development of ***self assessment tools*** for sustainability.

40. Develop new ways to fully ***utilise existing and emerging knowledge*** in decision-making to strengthen the basis for sustainability in policies in government and business.

41. ***Planning bureaus*** should provide ***joint/combined analysis*** to facilitate SD and assess progress and trade-offs among the three Ps.

### Monitoring

42. ***Monitoring of the SDS should be broad-based*** - covering the process of developing the strategy itself (e.g. adequacy of participation), and the impacts of implementing government policies, business activities, partnerships, and civil society actions, and ensuring synergy with international reporting obligations (e.g. to the EU and UN Commission for SD)

43. ***Reporting should focus*** on key issues that matter to SD and ***be transparent***. A useful model is the Global Reporting Initiative used by industry, but this would need to be translated to the specific needs of the public sector.



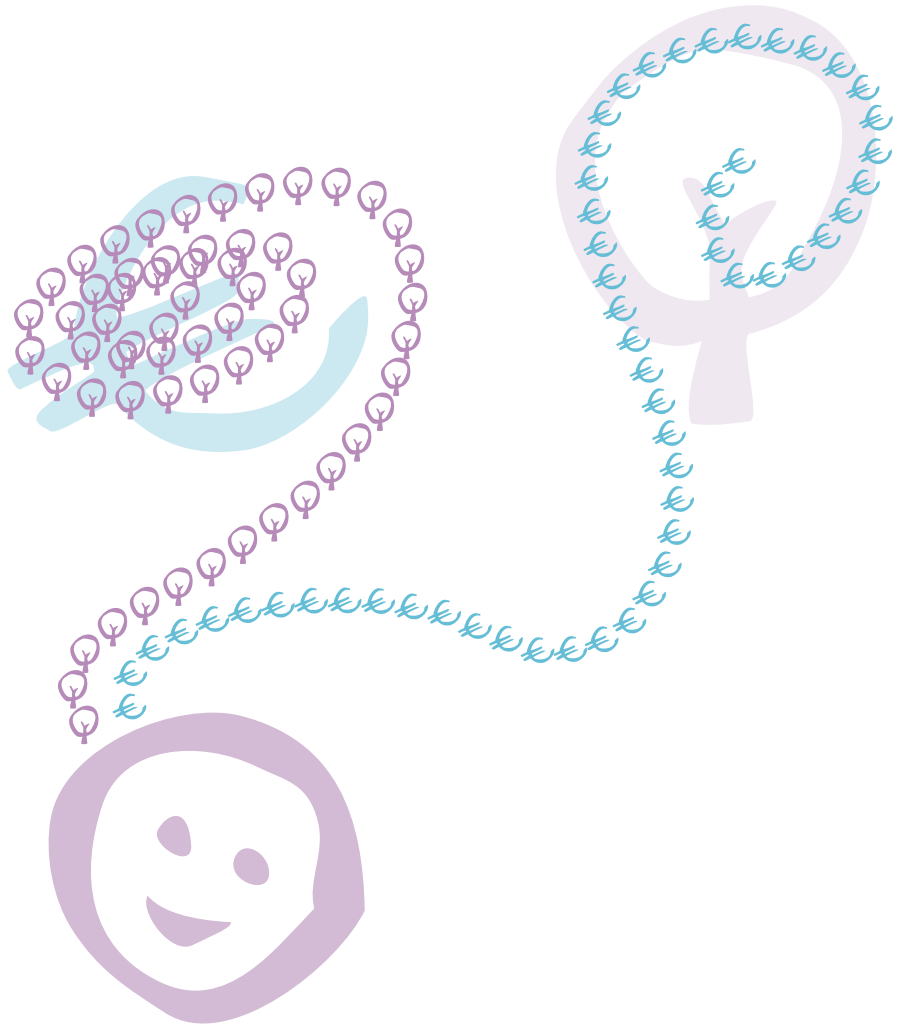


44. Ensure ***monitoring*** includes the impact of the Netherlands's policies and actions on and in other countries.

45. ***Parliament*** should be engaged in debating SD/SDS and monitoring the SDS.

### Indicators

46. It will be important to use ***indicators*** with different aims and characteristics and increasing levels of detail based on EU indicators characterised for the Netherlands
    - ***Headline indicators*** that resonate with people.
    - ***Policy support indicators*** that focus on the direction of change.
    - ***Monitoring indicators*** for planning & implementation processes.





Chapter 1

# Introduction to the peer review process and methodology

## 1.1 What is an National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) and why is it important?

The most well known definition of sustainable development is that provided in 'Our Common Future' – the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (more commonly called the Brundtland Commission after its Chairperson, Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway). It states that SD is *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* A snapshot of the Coalition Agreement of the new government of the Netherlands (see Box 3.3) captures the spirit of the Brundtland definition.

Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the international community, national and local governments, private sector organisations, NGOs, and others have struggled to find ways to operationalise sustainable development. Achieving this has remained rather elusive.

Sustainable development means treating the issues of environmental management, social challenges and economic development together, in the face of many difficult challenges. But how, for example, can environmental protection, poverty alleviation, and money-making objectives be integrated in practice – or trade-offs made if integration is impossible? How can long-term needs *really* be balanced with short-term imperatives, especially when change is so unpredictable? How can local demands be treated alongside broader national and global requirements? And how do you get a decision-making process 'with the maximum possible participation' (as called for by Agenda 21) that does not impose substantial costs in time or money?

In effect, social, environmental and economic issues of almost unprecedented complexity need to be tackled at several levels in ways that are not merely conceptually neat, but that also encourage significant behavioural and institutional change.

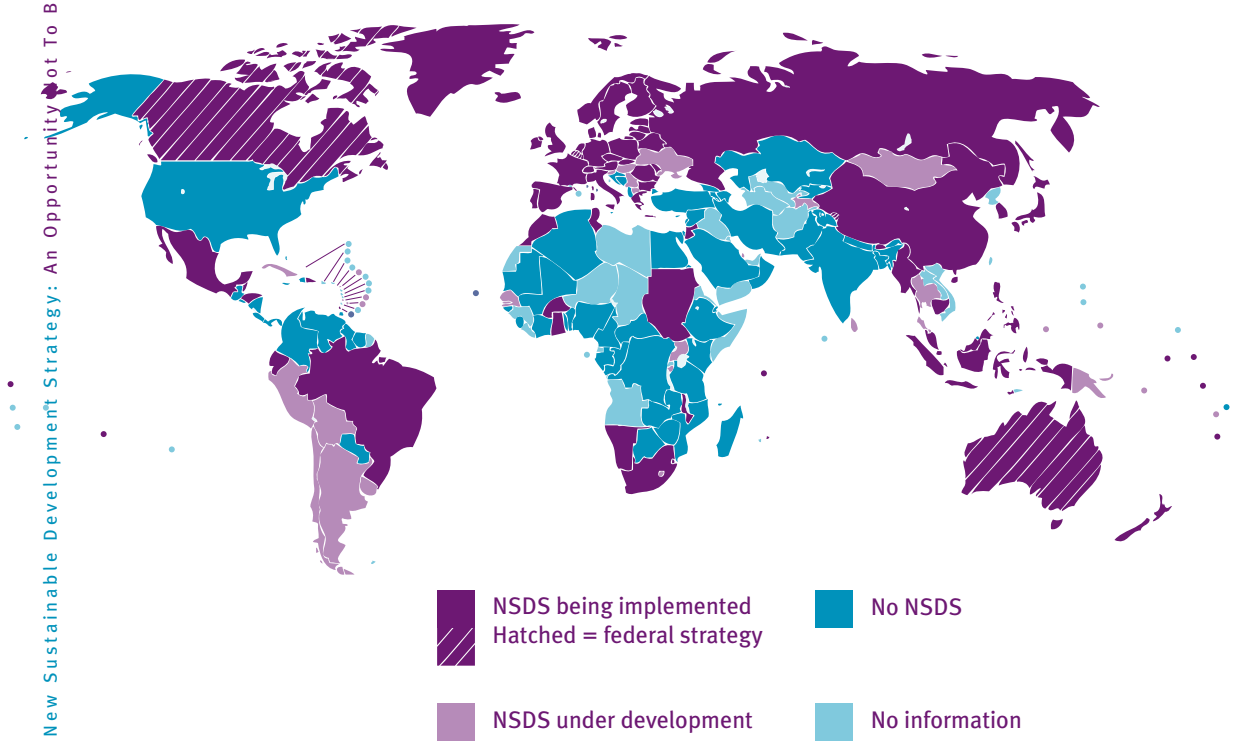
Moving towards sustainable development presents tremendous challenges. Important structural changes are needed to the ways societies manage their economic, social and environmental affairs. Different countries may settle for different solutions, but all will have to make hard choices. National strategies for sustainable development (NSDS) are about making and implementing such choices, in a realistic, effective and lasting way. The Netherlands needs such a strategy just as any other country does.

A key signal that should drive the development of a new NSDS is the unrelenting march of unsustainable and negative environmental, social and economic trends (elaborated in section 3.1), both in the Netherlands itself and internationally. There are complex, dynamic and difficult-to-grasp interactions between them which represent an enormous challenge to all countries and require a strategic response, both domestically and internationally. A major trading nation cannot ignore them. A new strategy with integrates both the national and international dimensions of SD is urgently needed.

Many countries also address additional pillars which are domestically important – most relating to what the UNCSD has called the 'institutional dimension'. For example, the French strategy includes 'culture' as a fourth dimension.

The key function of an SDS is to be a comprehensive and operational strategy, ***integrating objectives*** relating to all the core dimensions and, where such integration proves difficult or impossible, to provide mechanisms to negotiate trade-offs.

*Figure 1.1 NSDS: The global picture 2006*




*Source: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/nsds/nsds_Map2006.pdf*





The need to balance and meet three-pillar objectives for development, deliver commitments under international accords, and take the necessary actions needs to be driven by a broad set of processes (e.g. participation, communication, investment). For these to work in harmony and be effective requires good coordination. A sustainable development strategy is not just a document; rather it is the combination of these elements (see also Annex 1).

Internationally, there is already a strong commitment to develop NSDSs. At the World Summit on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, the UN called on all countries to develop an NSDS to implement Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992). Subsequently, at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in August-September 2002, governments again committed themselves to developing NSDSs, agreeing in the Plan of Implementation "to take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and begin their implementation by 2005" (Paragraph 145b). Many countries worldwide have now developed such a strategy (see Figure 1.1)

A government has to recognise it cannot deliver sustainable development alone. There are distinctions between what a government itself can and should do, and what the private sector and civil society can and should do. So sustainable development requires strong partnerships. The success of the process of developing an NSDS will depend on stakeholder participation from civil society organisations, business, labour, government departments, research institutions and professional associations, and individuals wishing to contribute to sustainable development.

A framework for an NSDS will need to be developed, but the idea behind such a strategy should not be to create a 'super institution' or a 'master plan'. More importantly, an NSDS will need to build on existing programmes and strategies. Like any other strategy, An NSDS will need to be tested, revisited, and regularly updated, for it to remain relevant and responsive to a changing national context.

An NSDS is not, and cannot be, all things to everyone, i.e. it is not the sum of all wishes and aspirations that span the economic, social and environmental spheres. Importantly, it is also not an extended environmental strategy. To make sure it can be implemented, it needs a long-term focus on a strategically selected cluster of issues that must be addressed now, if we want to avoid the serious negative long-term predictable consequences of the unsustainable trends. The challenge is to build a united effort to ensure implementation. A critical component of developing an NSDS must be the development of a set of high-level indicators to measure progress, and an awareness-raising process to foster a social partnership to monitor and report on progress.

## 1.2 Background to the peer review

In response to an invitation from the European Commission, in the autumn of 2006, the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) started preparations for a peer review of the Netherlands NSDS together with the Minisry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation. The RMNO was invited to manage the process as a project.

The 2006 EU Sustainable Development Strategy made a commitment to launch a voluntary mechanism to support mutual improvement and learning (i.e. peer review) to improve NSDS processes. As a follow up, the *European Commission* (DG Environment) issued an NSDS review guidebook, providing a step-by-step framework to structure and facilitate the exchange of experience and sharing

**BOX 1.1 PEER REVIEW OF FRENCH NSDS**

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, French President, Jacques Chirac, committed France to submit its National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSDS) to a 'peer review' process. Such a process is a systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a State by other States, with the ultimate goal to help the reviewed State to improve its policy-making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles.

In 2004-2005, the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated such a peer review process involving Belgium, Ghana, Mauritius and the UK as invited peer countries. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) was engaged to help develop a methodology and provide facilitation.

The approach sought to be light (non-judgemental), menu-driven (with options available to the reviewed country – depending on its needs and stage in the strategy cycle), and with a particular emphasis on shared learning amongst the peers – so as to be mutually beneficial. The French peer review successfully piloted the approach (a report is available at: www.nssd.net) and involved several steps:

- a technical meeting to develop a methodology for testing;
- interviews and preparation of a background report;
- a workshop involving representatives from peer countries;
- preparation of a final report and proposal for an improved methodology.

The methodology, the approach and results were presented at the CSD in April 2005.





of good practice (IIEP/SERI, 2005). The framework is participatory and draws heavily on an experimental approach tested during a peer review of the French NSDS 2004 - 2005 (Box 1.1).

The project to undertake a peer review of the Netherlands NSDS has been discussed on a regular basis with representatives of key Dutch ministries, chaired by the Ambassador for Sustainable Development. The RMNO established a steering Committee to oversee the process and provide advice. This is chaired by the Chair of RMNO and comprises experts from RMNO and other participating Dutch Councils (AER, VROMraad, RLG, RAWOO, SER) as well as experts from MNP and representatives of the EC, OECD, UNDESA and EEAC as observers (see Annex 6 for a list of members and observers).

RMNO engaged Dr Barry Dalal-Clayton of IIED to act as consultant and facilitator for the process. In addition, the secretariat of the Network of European Environmental and Sustainable Development Councils (EEAC, of which RMNO is a member) was invited to observe the process and provide reflection on the methodology used that hopefully will be of value to other EU states considering to undertake such a peer review.

## 1.3 Key steps in the peer review

The key steps involved:

**Identification of peers** Experts from three countries (Finland, Germany and South Africa) were selected (four per country representing government, business, civil society (NGO) and academia) (see Annex 5). National Councils for SD in Germany and Finland assisted with recommending possible individuals. The representative of the South African government was unable to attend.

**Background report and other materials** The background report was prepared largely as a desk exercise by a consultant (Hans van Zijst) engaged by RMNO, drawing from literature and websites, with some contributions from government officials and advisory councils through discussions. The report (available at: www.rmno.nl, together with a wide range of documents related to the NSDS and the peer review) served as the main source of information for the peers. It describes the development and content of the current strategy, what has happened since its launch, the parties involved in the process, and the issues that have been discussed (and how). This report does not itself evaluate the NSDS and related processes or their results.

Other materials were also made available, e.g. progress reports of the Action plan, information about subjects like energy transition and CSR, information on trends from planning bureaus and basic information such as the new Coalition Agreement.

**Scoping workshop** (1-2 February 2007) This brought together the peers and RMNO to agree on the methodology, discuss how to organise the main peer review workshop, and consider further information needed to augment the background report, and to meet a range of Dutch experts and actors to hear presentations and ask questions about the NSDS.

Following the approach previously used for the French NSDS, and recommendations in the EC manual for such peer reviews, it was agreed to focus on four key strategy components: *process, content, outcomes, and monitoring and indicators*. These components were also used as the structure for the focusing the main questions addressed during subsequent interviews and telephone conferences with key actors and during the main peer review workshop in April 2007, and also to frame the resulting recommendations made by the peer countries.

**Interviews and telephone conferences** In order to secure a fuller understanding of the processes, issues and challenges concerning SD and the NSDS itself, and to gather a range of perspectives from different key actors, a series of face-to-face interviews were conducted by the Chair of the peers (Pancho Ndebele) and the consultant/facilitator (Barry Dalal-Clayton) on 19-20 February 2007. Reports on these were circulated to all peers.

Subsequently, a series of telephone conferences were organised during 12-16 March 2007 in which different combinations of peers were able to explore NSDS issues and the process in respect of several key themes (NSDS process, rural areas/agriculture, water, energy) with experts/key actors and with several key individuals.

**Peer review workshop** (1-5 April 2007) During this week, the 11 peers (from three countries) as well as observer representatives from UN DESA, the EC, OECD and EEAC met with about 90 Dutch participants from government, the private sector, civil society, academia and youth (see Annex 8 for list of participants). The discussions with the Dutch colleagues were arranged in a mix of plenaries and parallel sessions (see Annex 7 for schedule).

Dutch participants engaged in dialogue with the peers on a set of key questions (based on the background report, other documents and issues arising from interviews and telephone conferences) and the peer countries shared their own experiences. A day was set aside for the peers to discuss their conclusions and agree their recommendations.

On the last day of the review workshop, the recommendations were presented to a group of high ranking civil servants to collect their reactions.

**Executive Summary** Before writing this final report, an Executive Summary containing the recommendations and a brief summary of the peer review was prepared and sent by the Chair of the peers to the Prime Minister and the







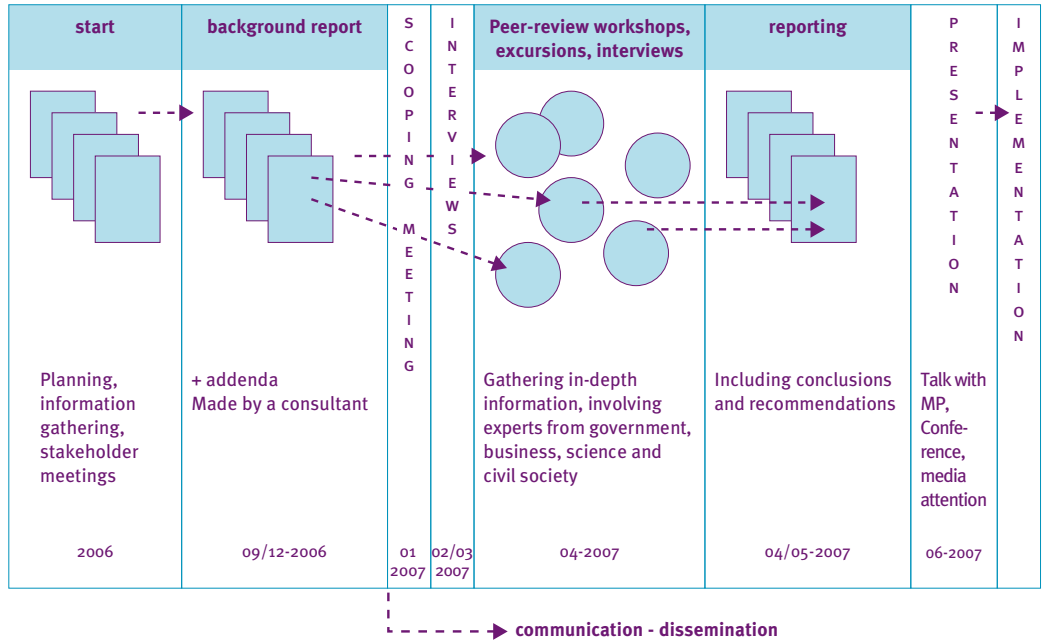
relevant ministers to help during the '100 days' period when the government's policy programme was being prepared.

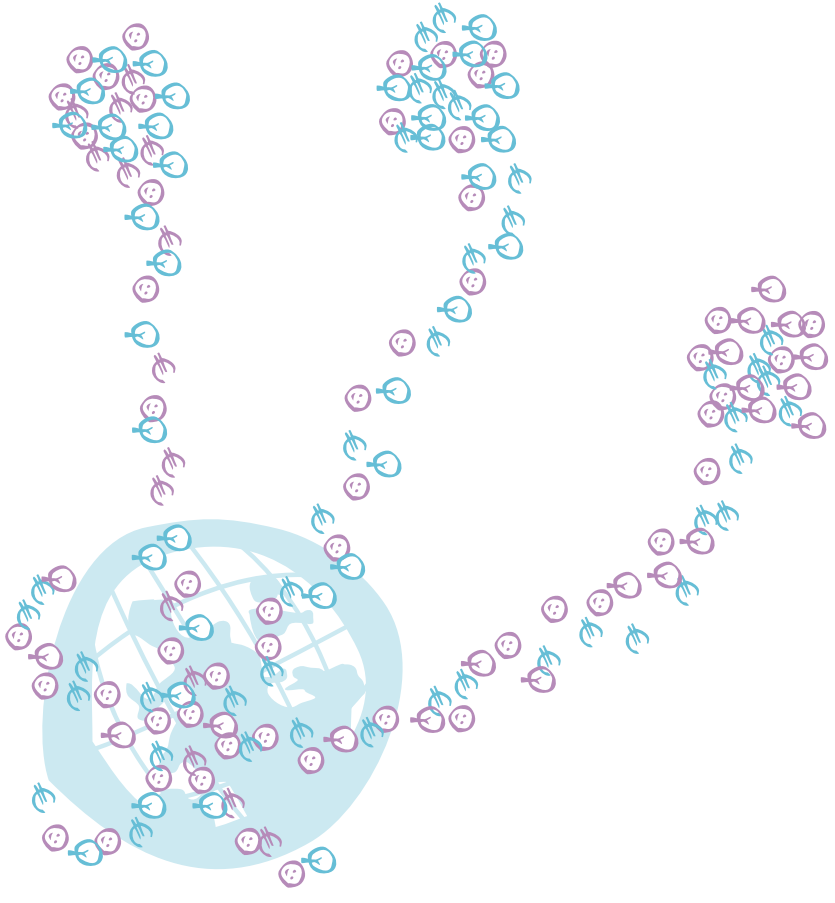
**Final report** A first draft was prepared after the peer review workshop by the consultant facilitator from IIED and a staff member from RMNO. The draft was then revised to incorporate comments, edits, suggestions and materials from the peers. A final draft was agreed upon by the end of May.

**Presentation to the Prime Minister** On the 21st of May 2007, the Chair of the peers, Pancho Ndebele, was invited by the Prime Minister, Mr Dr J.P. Balkenende to discuss the findings and recommendations made by the peers.

The peers will present their final report on 21st of June 2007 to the Dutch government. It is expected that the Dutch government will report on the review process and results to the EU.

*Figure 1.2 Steps in the Netherlands NSDS peer review project*





Chapter 2

# Observations on the action programme for sustainable development 2003, 'Sustainable action'

- The current Action Programme on Sustainable Development 'Sustainable Action' (2003) is not a coherent, systematic and integrated response to unsustainable trends and is ***not a sustainable development strategy*** (SDS) in the sense described in section 1.1:
  - The focus is dominantly environmental – the social dimension is missing;
  - It is a set of actions without a framing vision and set of guiding principles;
  - As a result, activities led by different actors (government, business, civil society) are not linked;
  - It is the government's plan and lacks ownership in society or the business sector;
  - Integration is lacking between goals;
- ***Effective cooperation*** between government departments and levels is missing.

As noted in the Background Report, the Action Programme on Sustainable Development 'Sustainable Action' (2003) was developed as a response to the Johannesburg Programme of Implement agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). Before that, the Netherlands worked with environmental policy plans that focused more on comprehensive and integrated approaches with the first National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP1) prepared as a response to the Brundtland report.

In 2001 an inter-departmental project team undertook very participative work to develop an NSDS. But the Cabinet that came into power in 2002 noted it only as a 'survey' and did not build upon it to develop it into a real SD strategy. The peers regret this missed opportunity for the Netherlands to be a frontrunner in the field of sustainable development.

The Peers are aware that the existing Sustainable Development Strategy of the Netherlands cannot be seen as a single entity. It also needs to be viewed in relation to other efforts. For example:

- The 2003 Action Plan builds on and is closely linked to the National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP4). The latter covered six fields (energy, mobility, agriculture, natural resources/biodiversity, water management, and construction, neighbourhoods and cities, all in relation to the environmental challenge) and introduced four *transitions*;

- The many initiatives on SD undertaken by municipalities and local levels (including past Local Agenda 21 efforts), and by the private sector (focused around CSR) and civil society organisations;

- The data gathering, monitoring and analysis efforts by a range of institutions (e.g. the periodic Sustainability Outlooks prepared the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, MNP; voluntary monitoring via NGOs).

The 2003 Action Programme links these and other projects such as the Learning for SD Programme and the sustainable procurement, but only on paper, not in practical terms. The phrase 'managing by labelling' was used by one of the participants in the review process. Existing projects were given the label 'sustainable', but no effort was made to make a difference to their actual contribution to sustainable development.

In the view of the peers, noting internationally agreed principles for NSDSs (UN and OECD – discussed in section 4.2), the Action Programme ***cannot be seen as a sustainable development strategy*** (SDS) for a number of reasons, as follows

The ***focus is dominantly environmental***. The programme carries forward the emphasis of the National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP4) but ***fails to address the social and economic dimension***. In many other countries SD is also perceived as a mainly environmental issue. This interpretation is greatly reinforced when governments assigns the leadership or coordination role for SD to environmental ministries (as in the Netherlands). Other ministries will often take the view that SD is something only for environmentalists. And environment ministries usually have limited ability to influence change in other ministries/sectors or to ensure coordination and cooperation to address SD effectively. Territorial and power boundaries between departments tend to be strongly defended, and silo mentalities persist. This must change if we are to make progress in moving towards SD. The peers feel that ***effective cooperation*** between government departments is missing.

The 2003 Action Programme is a set of actions ***without a framing vision and set of guiding principles***. It also lacks clear (preferably quantifiable), integrated goals and targets (Background report, p58). Also ***no specific budget*** was provided for its implementation. It was to be delivered within the regular operations of line ministries.





The Action Programme covers two dimensions - ***international and national – but with little linkage*** between them.

The International part of the Action Programme was written in three months by staff of Ministry of Foreign Affairs MFA, coordinated by TFDO and managed by Ambassador for SD (Background report, p29). There was no genuine external consultation or meaningful involvement of developing countries. It placed emphasis on international obligations (e.g. MDGs), public-private partnerships (arising from the WSSD agenda) and Africa. But the programme paid little attention the external dimensions / footprints of the national part of the programme (including in Dutch territories such as Aruba, Netherlands Antilles).

By comparison, more time was spent in developing the domestic section (the national programme). A project team was established and headed by a manager in the Ministry of Environment (five ministries collaborated) (Background report, p30). Civil society was invited to comment/discuss content at a main stakeholder meeting in April 04, but this cannot be taken to be genuine participation in developing and shaping the programme.

The 2003 Action Programme was developed as an ***internal government exercise***. It was written within government involving a small number of key individuals. In effect, it was a top-down exercise. There was limited consultation and information exchange between civil servants and interested stakeholders (Background report, p1). This is perhaps strange given that the culture of consensus-building is so deeply rooted in the country. The peers believe that the programme seriously ***failed to reflect of the actions of civil society*** and provided no real opportunities for collaboration. Indeed, responses to enquiries on the Action Programme made by several peers indicate that few Dutch citizens even know about the 2003 Action Programme.

***As a result it lacks ownership in society or the business sector***. The many activities in the country led by different actors (government, business, civil society) are not linked or coordinated to ensure they pull together in the same direction.

Until recently, the responsibility for driving SD within the government lay with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (for the international part) and the Junior-Minister for the Environment (for the national part). Certainly for the national part of the programme, this responsibility did not come with the authority to directly influence (interfere) with the different projects run by colleagues. There was ***no real leadership***.

Equally, there appears to have been ***little cooperation and coordination between government levels*** (national, regional, local) in developing the Action Programme. The peers note that 12 provincial sustainability coordinators meet regularly under Inter Provincial Council (IPO) (Background report, p36) and that many municipalities have programmes to stimulate SD. Local Agenda

21-type activities have been successful around the world in raising awareness about SD. But many of these in the Netherlands seem to have been abandoned when government funding ceased. The 2003 Action Programme did not build effectively on the experience and momentum of such local activities.

The Action Programme ***does not integrate*** the social, environmental and economic dimensions (expressed in the Netherlands as People, Planet and Profit, PPP) – such integration is the cornerstone of the concept of sustainable development.

So it is perhaps not surprising that SD (as both a concept and way of working) is only weakly embedded within government. For example, the peers note that SD is not regularly addressed by the Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) (Background Report, p17). The Inter-ministerial Committee of Departmental Coordinators for SD (CPO) and the Task Force for SD (TFDO) meet together when appropriate and five core ministry participate, but the ***social and economic dimensions are weakly represented*** (Background Report, p23). The problem is not helped by the fact that the key social domain ministries themselves appear not to be touched by SD as a driver.

It is important that the analyses which are presented to government and the public do not also reinforce the misconception that SD is mainly an environmental challenge. The latest ***Sustainability Outlook*** (due in the Spring of 2007) has a sustainability focus, but in reality it too continues to focus on environmental issues.

Many agencies and individuals readily absorb and use the language of SD – but ***changing behaviour*** is a more difficult task. The peers have noted that the last Sustainability Outlook reported that 70% of people want the government to resolve SD which they see mainly as a social dilemma rather than via further regulation (Background Report p62) – they are only likely to change behaviour if others do!

In 2001, representatives from developing countries undertook an assessment of SD in the Netherlands (20 workshops, 100 interviews, field trips), and focused their attention on the social-cultural aspects which they found were not included in the SD debate (Background Report, p60).

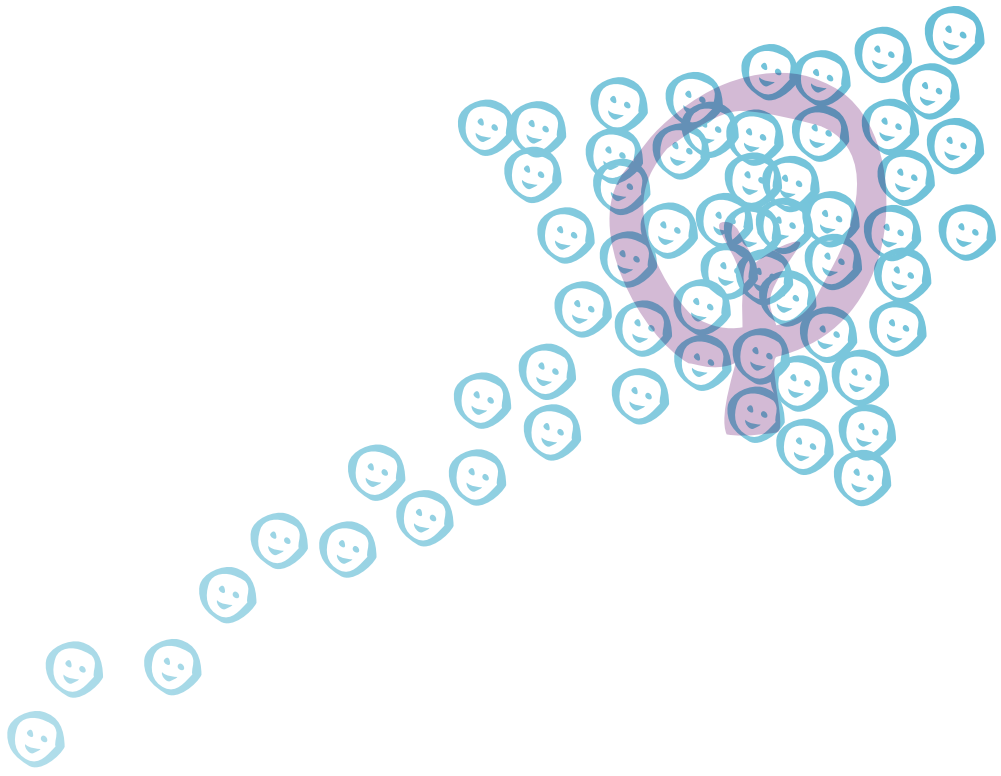
A recent study of a range of European SD strategies by the European Association of Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (Niestroy, 2005) praises the results in the environmental domain but also lists several shortcomings of the Dutch strategy:

- Lack of comprehensive SD strategy – broadening out to all dimensions has not succeeded, neither has the link to the international dimension.
- Quantitative (environmental) targets were strong in NEPP1-2, but not since then;
- Expert and stakeholder consultation was organised only on ad hoc basis





The experience of the 2003 Action Programme suggests several areas for improvement which the peers address in their recommendations and the following chapters.





Chapter 3

# Time for a new approach

## 3.1 Unsustainable trends persist

**RECOMMENDATION**

1 There is an urgent need to break a range of threatening ***unsustainable trends*** which have been confirmed by recent international assessments (e.g. Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Stern Report on Climate Change, UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment).

In recent years several international reports have confirmed unequivocally that key trends remain unsustainable – threatening the planet, economies and livelihoods, and social conditions and security. Examples include, polarisation of society and growing ethnic tensions, climate change, loss of critical natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity, increasing pollution, dependence on exhausting energy supplies, ongoing unsustainable consumption patterns, insufficient communication and education for empowering society, etc.).

One of the most prominent such reviews is the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) (2003) (Box 3.1). It provides lessons that are important domestically for the Netherlands as well as internationally in terms of its support to developing countries. The reports of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change assess scientific, technical and socio- economic information relevant for the understanding of climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. The IPCC recently published the draft of its Fourth Assessment Report “Climate Change 2007” - see: www.ipcc.ch). This concluded that it is 90% certain that humans are causing climate change and that a doubling of $CO_2$ concentrations (to 550ppm) will result in a 30C rise in temperature. This will have significant implications for the Netherlands, EU and internationally. Another recent but extremely influential report was the 2007 Stern Report (commissioned by the UK government) which suggests that global warming could shrink the global economy by 20%, and recommends that action taken now would cost just 1% of global gross domestic product.

Other international processes and reports place emphasis on continuing unsustainable social and economic trends. For example, the Millennium Development Goals highlight international commitment to address a range of mainly social challenges, particularly poverty (Box 3.2). In Europe, assessments of progress on delivering the so-called Lisbon strategy continue to highlight the

need to make progress on labour market reforms and raise concern about the long-term implications of Europe's ageing populations.

From the interviews and the documentation the peers got a good idea of what the experts felt were the key problems for The Netherlands: energy, water, spatial planning/land use, mobility, biodiversity, city neighbourhoods, even healthcare. The reports from planning bureaus show the problems perceived by citizens. Terrorism and old age provisions are top of the list (MNP survey 2006), with climate probably rising fast as an issue.

With the limited time and resources available to them, the peers do not feel competent to make judgements on specific unsustainable trends for the Netherlands. However, they do feel that special challenges for this country include polarisation of society and growing social and ethnic tensions, as well as the still growing pressure on the use of space and the rising sea level and floods due to climate change.

The peers urge the Dutch government to identify the key unsustainable trends they need or want to work on as part of developing a NSDS.

These global and national challenges cannot be tackled piecemeal. They require a coherent, systematic and integrated response at all levels (international, national and locally).

The Peers have concluded that the situation is favourable for a strategy, but vigorous action is needed to meet the challenges and realise the potential (see the peers' conclusions on the context for a SDS – nos. 25-35). Recommendations on basic requirements for the strategy follow in the next sections, i.e. commitment, stakeholder involvement and full use of existing work. Subsequent chapters elaborate on the detailed modalities of an SDS.

**BOX 3.1 MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT**

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) was a four-year, landmark, international study of the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and the options for responding to them. It was designed primarily to meet assessment needs of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Convention on Migratory Species. But it has proven to be of much wider use and interest as a comprehensive overview of how people benefit from ecosystem services, what changes are taking place and how they are likely to affect human well-being and poverty alleviation in future decades (see Box 3.6). More than 1,300 scientists from 95 countries were involved in four expert working groups preparing the global assessment,





and hundreds more continue to undertake more than 20 sub-global assessments. This approach is billed as a "multi-scale" assessment, consisting of interlinked assessments undertaken at local, watershed, national, regional and global scales. The findings are contained in the fifteen reports (available at: www.maweb.org/en/index.aspx).

A statement from the Board governing the MA process identified 10 key messages and conclusions that can be drawn from this assessment:

- Everyone in the world depends on nature and ecosystem services to provide the conditions for a decent, healthy, and secure life
- Humans have made unprecedented changes to ecosystems in recent decades to meet growing demands for food, fresh water, fibre, and energy.
- These changes have helped to improve the lives of billions, but at the same time they weakened nature's ability to deliver other key services such as purification of air and water, protection from disasters, and the provision of medicines.
- Among the outstanding problems identified by this assessment are the dire state of many of the world's fish stocks; the intense vulnerability of the 2 billion people living in dry regions to the loss of ecosystem services, including water supply; and the growing threat to ecosystems from climate change and nutrient pollution.
- Human activities have taken the planet to the edge of a massive wave of species extinctions, further threatening our own well-being.
- The loss of services derived from ecosystems is a significant barrier to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to reduce poverty, hunger, and disease.
- The pressures on ecosystems will increase globally in coming decades unless human attitudes and actions change.
- Measures to conserve natural resources are more likely to succeed if local communities are given ownership of them, share the benefits, and are involved in decisions.
- Even today's technology and knowledge can reduce considerably the human impact on ecosystems. They are unlikely to be deployed fully, however, until ecosystem services cease to be perceived as free and limitless, and their full value is taken into account. ›

- Better protection of natural assets will require coordinated efforts across all sections of governments, businesses, and international institutions. The productivity of ecosystems depends on policy choices on investment, trade, subsidy, taxation, and regulation, among others.

*Source: www.maweb.org/en/index.aspx*

BOX 3.2 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
Goal 4 Reduce child mortality
Goal 5 Improve maternal health
Goal 6 Combat HIV-AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development

*Source: UNGA (2001)*

## 3.2 Time to commit to a new SD strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS

2 Given rising public awareness of SD issues, we recognise that there lies ahead a unique ***window of opportunity*** for the new coalition to engage in a process of developing a new sustainable development framework/strategy.

3 This should be developed by government in partnership with society and all relevant stakeholders because ***government cannot deliver sustainable development alone*** – other actors have real roles and contributions to make (e.g. businesses invest, citizens make lifestyle decisions).

4 It should ***build on the Coalition Agreement*** and take into account the ***EU SD Strategy*** and the ***SD commitments at the global level***.

9 We recognise that the government is currently formulating its policy programme and recommend that, in this, it clearly ***commits to initiate the development of an SDS***; and recommend that ***the policy programme*** includes an intention to operationalise the programme on the basis of an integrated (PPP) SD approach.

12 Many of the obvious ***challenges*** for SD (low hanging fruit) have been addressed already in the Netherlands. In order to deal with the less obvious and more difficult challenges (high hanging fruit), a commitment to a ***strategic approach*** is needed.

As indicated in section 1.1, all nations have committed through UN agreements to develop an NSDS. Many countries have already developed such a strategy; some have revised these at least once. As already noted, the peers' view is that the 2003 Action Programme for Sustainable Development, even when viewed alongside other plans and programmes, does not constitute a genuine NSDS. The peers also believe that there is both an (urgent) need and a real benefit in developing a new NSDS for the Netherlands. Given the momentum provided by the new Coalition Agreement, we believe the time is both right and the opportunity ripe to make such a commitment.

The goodwill and inspiration that led to the new Coalition Agreement (Box 3.3) provides a unique window of opportunity to develop a new SDS as it refers to sustainability in all of the pillars. It will give a great boost to shaping a new strategy and will encourage all relevant actors to engage in discussing how to approach to a new NSDS process.

BOX 3.3 THE DUTCH COALITION AGREEMENT: A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

"We want to work together to create a society of growth, sustainability, respect and solidarity. A society where people look out for each other and justice is done to each person's potential and talent. And a society where government draws a clear line between what it can and cannot do, where a society's inner strength is drawn on as much as possible and where there is support for creativity and independent initiative.

We want to create a society where people know that they are enduringly bound together. We seek to give them the necessary confidence in each other and in the future. By investing in people and acting as their ally, in the realisation that we are stronger when we stand together. This is how we will build a better Netherlands".

*Source: Coalition Agreement between the Parliamentary Parties of the Christian Democratic Alliance, Labour Party and Christian Union, 7 February 2007*

The peers hope the Cabinet will take this unique opportunity to address the national and international problems in a sustainable way - this is the only way to tackle them successfully The peers strongly urge the government to include a commitment to developing a new SDS within its policy programme concluded at the end of 100 days of consultations. Following this, the details of how to best develop the strategy can be worked out.

It will also be important to ensure that a new strategy is developed so that it draws from and supports the goals of the EU SD Strategy and seeks ways to meet international commitments on SD such as those under various UN conventions to which The Netherlands is a signatory.

Many of the obvious challenges for SD (low hanging fruit) have been addressed already in the Netherlands. The peers certainly recognise that the country has taken important steps to carefully manage its environment and enhance the quality of life of its citizens. But further progress will involve much harder choices and commitments – as in other countries. It is for this reason that the peers recommend the government take steps to make a clear and dependable commitment to deal with the less obvious and more difficult challenges (high hanging fruit) – through a strategic approach.

**RECOMMENDATION**

11 Consider the possibility to incorporate sustainable development as an explicit feature of the ***Dutch Constitution***

The government might also wish to consider making such a commitment even stronger by enshrining sustainable development within the Constitution. Various countries have taken such a step (e.g. South Africa and Switzerland, Box 3.4) and found it makes it much easier to secure the interest and support of society as a whole to meeting the challenge of SD. Citizens are better able to hold their governments to account, and it provides a vehicle to carry the effort beyond the limited lifetimes (periods in office) of individual governments. In this way it helps overcome dramatic shifts in political interest and commitment which severely undermines the collective and long-term effort that is needed.





**BOX 3.4 CONSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AND SWITZERLAND**

### South Africa

South Africa's vision gives effect to the notion that sustainable development should be "an integration of governance, multiple voices, processes and action in decision-making towards a common goal within set parameters and common definition of policy choices for promoting a sustainable development agenda.

The national vision is informed by the Constitution - particularly by Section 24 which states:

> *"Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and to have the environment protected to the benefit of present and future generations through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation promote conservation and secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development"*

The vision is underpinned by a set of principles that guides the decisions and actions that need to be taken to achieve the vision.

### Switzerland

Underpinning the Sustainable Development Strategy 2002 is Switzerland's new Federal Constitution of 1999. Article 2 (2) elevates sustainable development to the status of a national goal.

> *"It promotes common welfare, sustainable development, inner cohesion, and cultural diversity of the country".*

The new Federal Constitution further imposes a binding requirement for sustainability action on all levels of government, as well as incorporating sustainable development into its foreign policy goals.

*Sources: http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/index.htm*
*http://www.admin.ch/ch/itl/rs/1/c101ENG.pdf*

## 3.3 The value of involving stakeholders

**RECOMMENDATION**

14 A strategy provides a ***framework for different societal actors*** to take their own initiatives in a responsible and progressive manner within a broader framework.

The government should take the opportunity to develop the new strategy in partnership with society and all relevant stakeholders. It should not be just another internal government action plan. Government cannot deliver sustainable development alone – other actors have real roles and contributions to make (e.g. businesses invest, citizens make lifestyle decisions) (see Annex 4).

There are many lessons from international experience that can be drawn upon (some key sources are cited in the references). It would be prudent not to rush into a particular model without taking stock of such experience and perhaps to organise a planning or scoping workshop to bring ideas together and discuss options. It will be key to ensure that a full range of Dutch stakeholders are represented in and contribute to this scoping process, since all will have roles to play and responsibilities to assume in respect of both strategy development and implementation.

CEO's of big businesses and NGO's in December 2006 signed a petition asking government to take a firm lead to address climate change. They indicated their readiness to participate and contribute to that effort. The peers feel the moment is right for the government to respond to this willingness and bring them fully 'on-board' the strategy process. As already stated, this should be a society process, not just a policy process.

During the peer review process, the peers talked to many people who were active in their own fields and wanted very much to be part of a broader SD process. They felt they could contribute with their knowledge and activities and, at the same time, they needed government to provide support so they could develop their ideas further. It frustrates them that the current Action Programme doesn't recognise this.

The bottom line is that whole society has to connect with this kind of policy-making or the results will not be meaningful or durable. Box 3.5 gives an example of a business sector taking its responsibility.





**BOX 3.5 COOPERATION OF EUROPEAN RETAILERS TO ENSURE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF SUPPLIERS**

The Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) is a joint project of European trade chains for implementing social quality control. It was launched in autumn 2004, under the management of the Brussels-based Foreign Trade Association (FTA) for the European import trade. BSCI has followed the approach piloted by the German import trade and developed an audit system based on the SA 8000 standard. This guarantees that all employees have minimum rights included in international standards. However, BSCI auditing does not include the management system requirements of SA 8000 which makes it easier for suppliers to implement. So, SA 8000 audits and BSCI audits are carried out by the same certification bodies. Companies can choose if the wish to proceed to the SA 8000 certification.

A BSCI audit starts with self-assessment by the manufacturing company. This aims to highlight any potential shortfalls in advance and rectify them before the real audit process. The latter involves an interview with the company management, close examination of all necessary documents, checks of premises and staff interviews. The first audit usually results in a correction plan, which is implemented before a re-audit. All approved audit results are registered in the BSCI databank. Besides following the progress of their own supplier, when selecting a new supplier, BSCI members can also check the databank to see whether or not this supplier has already been audited. Thus, double audits and unnecessary costs can be avoided.

The BSCI is the broadest business-driven platform for the improvement of social compliance in all supplier countries and for all consumer goods. Its membership comprises almost 80 retailers, industry and importing companies from 10 countries. Through pooling efforts and resources, the members are promoting a common monitoring and factory development system.

*Sources: www.bsci-eu.org*
*www.kesko.fi*

## 3.4 Building on what exists

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

7 We recognise that the starting point for the Netherlands Sustainable Development agenda is not "Point Zero". There is a need for the Netherlands to build on its long and ***distinguished record*** in sustainable development and environmental planning.

8 ***A lot of initiatives*** in the Netherlands in many sectors fit into the concept of SD even if not ***labelled*** as such – they can provide lessons and be built upon. Examples are the Transition Paths, policy for social inclusion, reduction of poverty, restructuring the healthcare system, as well as many regional and local initiatives.

International experience suggests that it will seldom be sensible to embark on an SDS process as an entirely new venture. There is likely to be much that already exists – in terms of analyses, initiatives, processes, lessons, institutional approaches, business and societal activities, etc. This is certainly the case in The Netherlands.

For example, in the past, the Netherlands has enjoyed an international reputation for its leadership in addressing environmental issues. The sequence of National Environmental Action Plans (NEPPs) have provided a model of a progressive and iterative approach that many countries have struggled to emulate. The NEPPs are also widely known and recognised within the country. Unfortunately they have remained dominantly environmental and have not been able to progress (as logic might have expected) to an SD focus. A start in this direction was made in 2001 by an inter-departmental project team which undertook work to develop an NSDS. As previously noted, it is unfortunate that this highly participative effort came to nothing when the then Cabinet decided not to endorse the work but just to note it as a 'survey'. Happily the political climate is different today as regards SD and it would be sensible to take stock of this earlier work and role forward those lessons and elements which would benefit a new SDS process.

Besides the NEPPs there were other successful initiatives, not necessarily within government that can be used to built upon.

The peers learned that a growing number of businesses in the Netherlands have found the concept of sustainable development to be useful and worthwhile to implement, arguably much more so than the public sector. Companies tend to find balancing the three Ps (people, planet, profit) - the core of the concept of sustainable development – a useful approach since they need





to take all aspects into account to make a profit, stay in business (because, e.g. there is still fish in the sea), and improve the quality of life on the workfloor and reputation with clients. An increasing number of Dutch companies are producing a sustainability report and a number of Dutch-based multinationals are to be found on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.

The government has the ambition that the value and benefit of pursuing CSR will become self-evident to companies and will help them to apply different approaches such as becoming knowledge centres, developing a CSR test framework and raising awareness about SD. The government tries to play an exemplary role itself by establishing sustainable procurement within government institutions.

Not to be forgotten are the many local initiatives (supported or even initiated by local councils) that have started with the Local Agenda 21 initiative (see also Recommendation 28). Some examples from the UK are given in Box 3.6. NGO's are contributing too by supporting local initiatives, keeping businesses focused on the SD track and getting/keeping the subject of SD on the political agenda of the different levels of government.

During the discussions with Dutch experts the dilemma of 'labelling' was raised. Some projects are resistant to adopting the label 'sustainable development'because they perceive it to carry a negative connotation. But others are not labelled as SD activities even though they could be seen as such. This seems to be the case especially in the social sector. An SD strategy explicitly addresses sustainable issues and provides a framework for communicating a difficult and sometimes abstract concept which can be initially off-putting for people. It can also provide a means to anchor sustainability principles in all policies.

**BOX 3.6 RESPONDING TO CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN OLDHAM, ENGLAND**

**Asian Womens' Project**

In Oldham, England, the *Opportunities for Women (OFW)* initiative, through its Asian Women's Project, has funded a fully equipped double-decker bus that provides information, guidance and English training to women within Oldham's Asian communities who are seeking to enter work. It includes a fully equipped crèche. This project was established following research into why the numbers of Asian women using the OFW Centre in Oldham town centre were low during the first year of its operation in 1991/2. The project bus targets women who have only been in the country for a short time as well as women who have raised their families in Oldham and perhaps have been born and educated in the UK.

›

One of the key objectives of the OFW Bus is to integrate Asian women into mainstream provision by actively encouraging them to take advantage of town centre facilities and to make it possible for them to attend courses at the OFW Centre by paying for transport and childcare. Through arranged group visits as part of their training programme, these clients are introduced to the Job Centre, the Libraries, the Volunteer shop etc. Throughout the 12 years this (and other) projects have been in operation, OFW has seen a huge increase in the numbers of Asian women using the town centre facilities. A key lesson is that integration takes time and involves a careful development of trust and the fostering of confidence. It cannot be forced. Currently, OFW has large groups of Asian women attending IT training in the OFW Centre with bilingual support and integrated job search activities.

**Fire service initiatives**

In the aftermath of riots in Oldham riots, Greater Manchester Fire Service sought to address the breakdown in communication, trust and confidence that existed between the various secular communities within the borough. Initially the brigade funded a single uniformed community cohesion outreach worker to develop a network of contacts within other organisations working in the various communities.

During this network development phase, contact was made with other national initiatives conducted by various fire brigades and a diverse range of other public sector and volunteer providers The aim was to raise their awareness of the fire service's unique position as a communicator within a disparate range of communities. It also resulted in a number of small scale initiatives involving socially excluded and hard to reach individuals, all of whom had exhibited patterns of anti-social behaviour, nuisance, educational non-attendance or mistrust of existing channels of support.

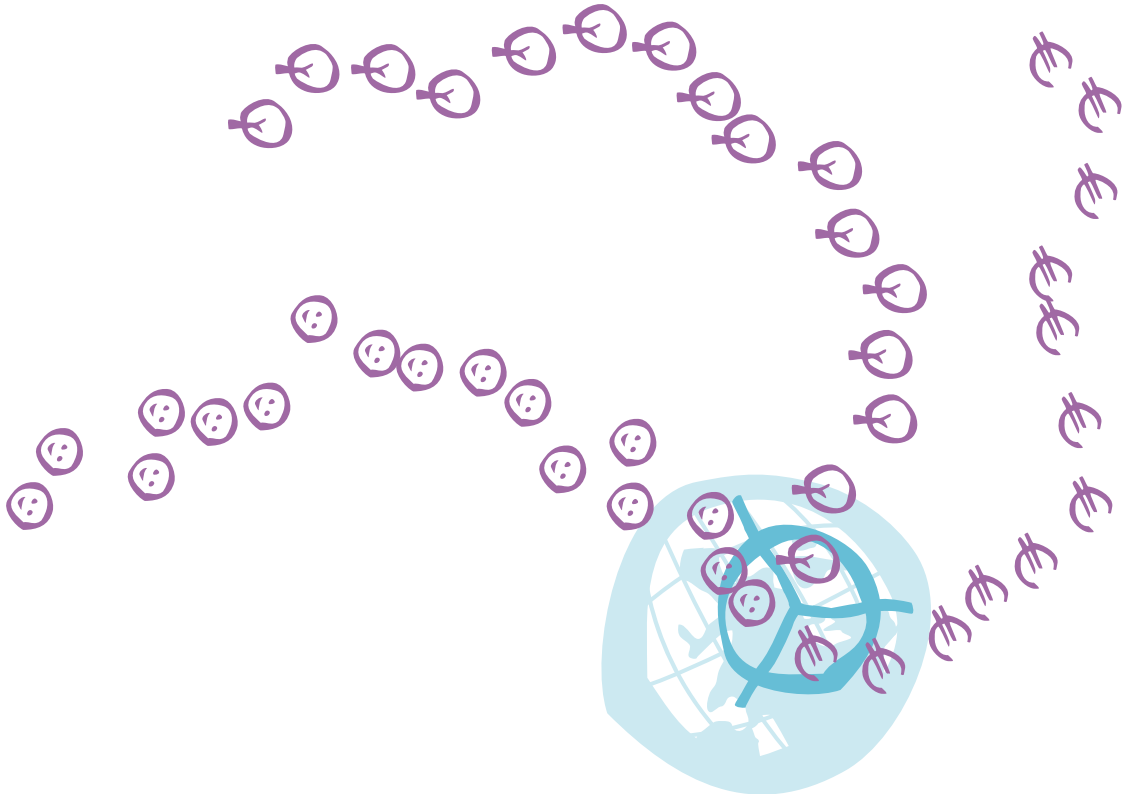
The most basic project is *Firefly* (Fire Service Intervention Responding through Education to direct the Future Lives of Young people). It is a spin-off of the provision offered by London Fire and Civil Defence Authority in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Re-offending rates during the six-months following attendance on this project were reduced by 85% and provided a cost benefit far in excess of the initial cost of provision. Firefly has the capacity to exceed this level of success, as it provides for a more diverse range of participants and tackles some of the most pertinent issues surrounding cohesion within and between communities. It also combines and provides for interaction between other tried and tested initiatives such as the Princes Trust and the Young Fire-fighters scheme.





Fire Service neutrality within these disparate communities provides the common thread for communication and facilitation of inter-organisational support, with referrals coming from those working within the disadvantaged areas, law enforcement liaison officers and members of the youth justice system. Local authorities need to maximise the role which the Fire Service can play in promoting social cohesion and ensure that it is involved in all initiatives otherwise a valuable tool in the challenge to improve cohesion remains under utilised.

*Source: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmodpm/45/4502.htm*



Chapter 4

# Process of developing the Netherlands NSDS

This chapter is about the HOW of developing a strategy. First the required steps are discussed and then the peers suggest a potential model for the Netherlands SD framework. The rest of the chapter is devoted mainly to strategy management (leadership, institutions and support structures) and communication and education about SD.

## 4.1 Model for a strategy process

**RECOMMENDATION**

10 The strategy needs to be seen as a ***process rather than a document.***

International experience suggests a range of steps that are likely to be required to initiate drive, manage and maintain such a process. Box 4.1 lists such steps (based on work by the OECD DAC). They appear as a sequence but, in practice, the order may need to differ. Furthermore, some steps may not be relevant or necessary, some might be combined, or other steps may be required (depending on domestic contexts/arrangements, strategy management and institutional structures in place, etc.), and many steps will overlap. Other steps will be required to implement the content of a strategy.

**BOX 4.1 ILLUSTRATIVE STEPS IN DEVELOPING AN NSDS**

a) Seek or improve high-level political commitment to the strategy.
b) Secure or confirm a mandate for the strategy.
c) Establish or strengthen a strategy coordinating structure within government, or and as a multi-stakeholder platform with government participation, taking decisions binding for government, supported by a secretariat – a national choice)
d) Establish or strengthen a multi-stakeholder forum (either as an independent National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) acting as an advisory, agenda-setting and outreach body; or as a multi-stakeholder platform with government participation, taking decisions binding for government, to coordinate the strategy).
e) Establish or improve the ground rules governing the strategy process: by establishing coordination structures on political and administrative levels; and also by applying leadership and intra-

governmental mechanisms of good governance to foster comprehensive results, including discussions with and taking into account suggestions of the NCSD. It should be clarified how:
- decisions will be made and agreed, and uncertainty dealt with.
- trade-offs will be negotiated and conflicts managed.

f) Identify the stakeholders and invite their participation, as appropriate, in different SDS structures (NCSD, stakeholder platform, round tables, workshops, etc.), and seek agreement on roles, responsibilities and division of tasks.
g) Ensure broad-based ownership by key ministries and agencies, civil society and the private sector.
h) Mobilise resources (skills, knowledge, management, legal and institutional support, finance).
i) Map out the strategy approach, taking stock of experience from existing strategies, plans, processes and mechanisms:
- Initial analysis of unsustainable trends
- Identify the issues covered, vision, goals in existing strategies, and responsibilities, and compare them to (i) and identify policy gaps.
- Identify mechanisms and processes used by existing strategies. Check whether they address the priorities derived from the trends, and if so, if they have been effective in doing so.
- Review achievements of these mechanisms in terms of effectiveness, synergies, clashes and gaps, and their outcomes.
- Determine the existence/extent of sectoral policy conflicts and inconsistencies, and the work necessary to resolve them.
- Identify what is required to improve synergies and plug gaps.

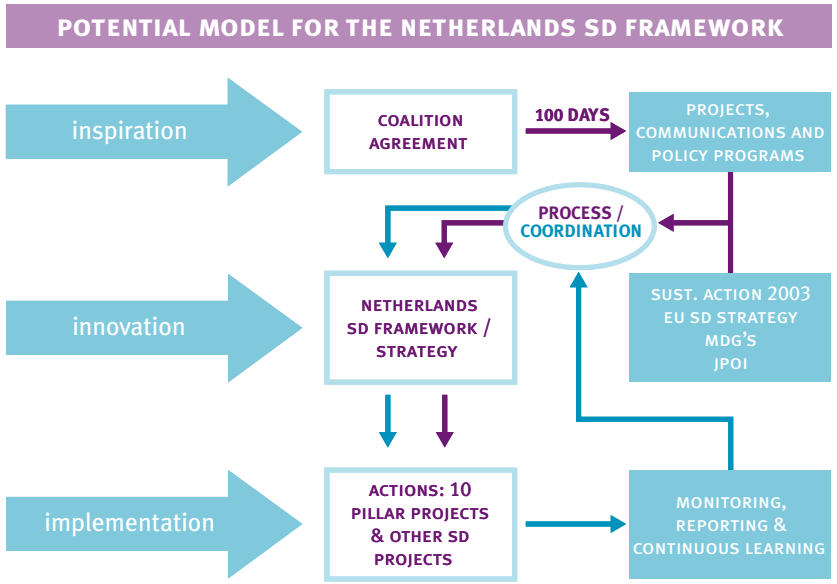
j) Identify what is working/not working in terms of institutional arrangements, legislation, rules/regulations and actions, etc. – at all levels (national to local).
k) From this, identify issues already covered, deficits/gaps and derive candidate policy priorities as key elements of the NSDS .
l) Develop a vision and goals for SD in the country – as a broad consensus amongst key stakeholders and society
m) Develop or improve coherence and coordination between strategy frameworks and polices at all levels from international to local; and between and within sectors.
n) Establish and promote a schedule or broad calendar for the strategy process – determine activities, responsibilities, capabilities and resources needed, and their timing.
o) Promote the strategy as a unified concept. Possibly publish a 'prospectus' for the strategy outlining all the above.
p) Establish or improve provisions for regular analysis, debate, communication, planning, implementation, monitoring and review; to ensure that all stakeholders are best able to play their part in the strategy (this might be through, or in collaboration with, an NCSD). These processes will involve establishing or improving:
- Mechanisms for analysing sustainability, stakeholders, scenarios, etc.
- Regular stakeholder fora and other means for participation (thematic meetings, internet chats, media debates, etc) – at national, decentralised and local levels - to reach and improve consensus on basic vision, goals, principles, system components, pilot activities, targets and responsibilities, and to review progress.
- Communication and information systems to ensure regular flows of information concerning both the strategy and sustainable development between stakeholders and between fora.
- Major decision-making arrangements, notably: structures and roles; handling global and local values and risk; means of delivering consensus and handling negotiations; and ways of linking those involved.
- Integrated sustainability assessments for all major government policies, plans and initiatives.
- Monitoring and accountability mechanisms to assess both strategy processes and their results. These will include: developing and reviewing sustainability indicators, baselines, standards and codes of practice; identifying and encouraging innovative processes to promote the culture of action-learning; independent monitoring; and feedback to decision-making.

*Source: Modified from OECD DAC (2001)*

The peers have noted what the Netherlands has already done in this field. They respect very much the ambition of this government to move forward and understand the concern that a strategy process will stop the momentum the government has developed and the results it seeks to achieve. With the model presented in Figure 4.1, the peers want to show that a strategy process need not have this effect. Short-term projects and long-term strategy processes, when integrated and synchronised, can help each other to progress. Projects are the life blood of a strategy process (they demonstrate what the strategy aims to achieve), but a strategy process is needed to bind such projects and different actions and initiatives together and make sure these all contribute to the processes of transition that are necessary to solve some of the complex problems we are facing.

Figure 4.1 provides a rational for a new SDS as a cyclical, learning process and suggests how it can build on the Coalition Agreement.

*Figure 4.1*




**Note to Figure 4.1**

Strong **inspiration** for the country to place its development on a sustainable path is given in the Coalition Agreement of the new government. Over its first 100 days, the government is planning discussions with society on the different windows and topics mentioned in the Agreement. After this, it will produce a more concrete policy programme with clear goals for the different topics, especially the 10 projects already mentioned in the document. This policy programme will guide the government for the next four years and should include a clear reference to developing a sustainable development strategy. There will also be projects in that package that will be especially designed in a sustainable way so the Cabinet can make its aims clear and show some results in this area.

But projects alone will not be sufficient. The time to identify them and secure genuine acceptance and ownership is very limited. They cannot fully provide the frame of a strategic vision of SD for the country that society as a whole subscribes to. The mechanisms to balance objectives (within and across the pillars - PPP) and to negotiate trade-offs are currently lacking, the coordination for those mechanisms is absent, and the integration between PPP, sectors/ ministries and levels (international, national, provincial, local) is weak. To address these challenges to steer the country to a sustainable future requires a far more strategic approach – an SDS that promotes **innovation**.





However, the concrete projects, together with lessons from implementing the Action Programme on Sustainable Development 'Sustainable Action' (2003) and the EU SD strategy, and efforts to make progress on international commitments (e.g. the Millennium Development Goals [MDG], the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation [JPOI]) can provide a stimulus and motivation for an effective SDS process. The government's planned 10 'pillar' projects, together with other SD projects, specific policy orientations and actions that the strategy will identify, can be combined in a coordinated, integrated SDS that the government, society and business community, acting together, can own and **implement**. The peers recommend that such a strategy should be developed through a *best practice approach* – building on experience from around the world about what works well.

Through **monitoring and transparent reporting**, feedback can enable the strategy to become a **continuing process of learning, doing and improvement.**

The peer's clear message is that an SDS must be a **process, not merely a document**.

## 4.2 Vision and principles

RECOMMENDATIONS

15 We recommend that the Netherlands clearly specifies the unsustainable conditions and trends that are to be addressed and develops a ***long term vision*** and ***principles*** for SD as a guide for framing an SDS.

16 A ***vision*** for sustainable development is not set in stone but continues to evolve.

National visions for sustainable development have been developed by an increasing number of countries. These bring together different groups of society, including those of different political parties, to agree common development objectives. Examples from developing countries include Ghana, Pakistan, Tanzania and Thailand (Box 4.2). Their advantage is the opportunity they present for many stakeholders to take a forward view on national development and work towards broad, shared objectives for their country's future. Their success depends very much on the degree to which stakeholders participate, the durability of the vision between successive political administrations, its widespread promotion amongst those who make key

decisions, and its transferability to standard developmental and administrative procedures.

BOX 4.2 NATIONAL VISIONS: SOME EXAMPLES

**Luxembourg** is developing a vision for SD, based on discussions in the administrative coordination body (CIDD *Commission interdéparte-mental de développement durable*) and with civil society. The results will be commented upon by the National Council for SD and the final version will be approved by the Cabinet. The long-term vision and its quality objectives will then be concretised by deriving policy objec-tives for the medium-term which, in turn, will be operationalised by policy measures. However, details on the latter will not be available before the summer break.

The **German** strategy formulates a "Leitbild" (guiding principles) rather than an global and long-term vision. Following an integrated approach, it comprises four elements: intergeneration equity, quality of life, social cohesion and international responsibility. Challenges and political perspectives are outlined that lie across the three dimensions of sustainability. The same applies to concrete visions in the sense of goals and principles within selected priority fields of action.

In the **UK**, the 1999 SD strategy set out a vision of simultaneously delivering economic, social and environmental outcomes as measured by a series of headline indicators. The 2005 strategy buolds on this and sets out a strategic framework with a 'common purpose – "to pursue SD in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment; and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal wellbeing. This will be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment, and use resources and energy as efficiently as possible". A set of shared UK principles are included to achieve this purpose: living within environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly. The UK'S sustainable Development Commission has also set out a vision for sustainable regeneration, based on a review of existing literature, policy developments and initiatives. It argues for a new approach to regeneration which not only considers social and economic inequalities within society, but also environmental inequali-ties and the link between quality of the local environment and poverty.

**Ghana's Vision 2020** gave a strategic direction for national develop-ment over 25 years from 1996 to 2020. Its main goal was to transform the country from a poor, low-income country into a prosperous middle-income country within a generation. Its goals of Ghana-Vision 2020 were expected to be accomplished through a series of medium-term development plans.

**Pakistan's 2010 Programme and the 25-Year Perspective Plan** were developed in the pursuit of defining a long-term vision for the country's development. The goals were to achieve economic growth through technological development and sustained human develop-ment. The Planning Commission of the federal government was the main coordinating body with inputs from, and implementation through, other sectoral ministries and departments. A government coordinated committee organised a consultative process for both initiatives, which included representatives from the civil society and public sector.

**Tanzania's Vision 2025** sets targets to achieve a nation characterised by a high quality of life for all citizens; peace, stability and unity; good governance; a well-educated and learning society; and a diversi-fied economy capable of producing sustainable growth and shared benefits. Implementation is to be through short- and medium-term strategies such as the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Medium Term Plan.

**Thailand's national vision** was developed over 18 months as part of a participatory process, involving 50,000 people, to prepare the Ninth Economic and Social Development Plan. A draft vision emerged from a first round of consultations in the People's Forum on Development Priorities. This was then subjected to research-based analysis of inter-nal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. A revised draft was amended further by the People's Forum, opera-tional elements related to institutional improvements were added, and the vision finalised.

The Coalition Agreement of the Netherland provides a political vision for the direction in which the parties will seek to take the country (Box 4.3). As one of the first steps in developing a new NSDS, we would recommend to take this coalition vision as a starting point to develop a vision for sustainable development which enjoys consensus (as far as possible) and buy-in amongst civil society and the business community as well as government on the key vision elements. A process to consult on this vision and seek consensus will need to be designed as part of the initial steps of developing an SDS. But it is not necessary to wait for the process of developing such a vision and principles in place be completed before taking any action – the feedback loops in Figure 4.1 suggest that there will be much already in place that can be built on and taken further.

**BOX 4.3 POLITICAL VISION OF THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT OF THE NETHERLANDS**

*"We want to work together to create confidence in the future. We will tackle this mission on the basis of a clear vision of the direction our country should be headed in. The Netherlands needs:*

- *An active role internationally and in Europe, so that it remains a significant and constructive partner;*
- *An innovative, competitive and enterprising economy to safeguard prosperity in an increasingly competitive world;*
- *A sustainable environment to make the world better than we found it;*
- *Social cohesion, because every person counts and everyone is needed;*
- *Safety, stability and respect, the basis for mutual trust;*
- *A decisive government that stands by its citizens and binds them together, and a public sector dedicated to serving them".*

The goals provide the six policy pillars of the new government policy.

Recommendation 15 refers to the need to develop principles. The EU recommendations (2006) are of course important to the Dutch government. Besides that two important types of principles have been developed:

- Principles for developing a sustainable development strategy (e.g. OECD, see Annex 2);
- Principles for sustainable development *per se* (e.g. the Bellagio principles, see Annex 3).

Both types of principles provide elements for a framework to monitor an SDS: the first for monitoring the strategy process; the second for monitoring strategy outcomes/impacts.

*(a) The OECD DAC strategy principles*
In 1999-2002, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) engaged in a process with developing countries to identify best practice in developing sustainable development strategies. The strategies which worked best shared many common features which were translated into a set of principles (these are listed in Annex 2) which have also been incorporated in UN guidance on SDS (see Annex 1).

Many of these DAC principles represent good, common-sense development practice and many are already being implemented at the project level. But putting these principles into practice in strategic planning and policy processes is more of a challenge. A cautionary note is indicated by the fact that many existing and past strategic planning processes, such as NEPPs in The Netherlands, have not had a lasting impact in terms of moving countries towards





sustainable development. Beyond the general problems of implementing such a strategy, this is because they were not focused on the full set of key principles.

*(b) The Bellagio sustainable development principles*
The so-called Bellagio principles (Annex 3) provide a set of general principles on sustainable development. They also offer useful guidance to develop the strategy.

## 4.3 Learning process

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

17 To be effective, an SDS should not be a one-off linear process ending with a document only. We recommend that it be designed as a cyclical, iterative, ***learning process*** for all, through discourse between government, the business community and society, enabling ***continuous improvement*** of outcomes.

18 To this end, the government must take the lead and should create a platform that encourages networking, partnerships and ***input from all stakeholders and society*** through dialogue and consultation with organisations and individuals at the local, regional and national level.

19 Government should also create a long-term reliable policy framework ***facilitating business and civil society SD initiatives*** at all levels.

NSDS processes are complex. They need a long-term effort and action by many stakeholders. These are some of the reasons why they need to be approached as a learning process.

The model in Figure 4.1 (see paragraph 4.1) above illustrates how a new SDS for The Netherlands could be established and maintained as a learning process.

The Coalition Agreement (February 2007) rightly notes that, *"the public, civil society organisations and different tiers of government must work together on building confidence and respect and fostering growth and development".*

However, during peer review sessions with Dutch colleagues, the peers noted a widespread concern about unsustainable trends in The Netherlands and heard about many activities that aim to address them. But many of these efforts appear piecemeal or do not take full advantage of possible synergies between

them. As a result, they do not promote innovative thinking and learning beyond the groups that are deeply involved in the individual activities.

The peers also noted some resistance to the sustainability concept based on past experiences in certain sectors (notably the water sector). Overcoming this resistance is crucial in order to take full benefit of the experiences and activities underway in the sector, and to expand these experiences to a broader sustainability agenda.

During several peer review sessions, there were discussions about whether a strategy should be 'a top down or bottom up process'. The peers feel a strategy requires a mix of approach - both top down AND bottom up. The government needs commitment from all sectors (across government) and should aim for an iterative process where it captures and builds on existing experience in society and the private sector.

## 4.4 Strategy management

An effective strategy is dependent on real leadership and on good operational management of a significant number of steps and processes (as suggested in Box 4.1),

**Recommendations**

5 We are greatly encouraged that the new government under the ***leadership*** of the Prime Minister has given high priority to the SD agenda in the Coalition Agreement and the key challenge is to 'make it happen'.

6 But we also recognise the need for leadership throughout all layers of government, across all sectors, in industry, in civil society and at the individual level. Within government, the ***Prime Minister needs to assume this role***, and we encourage him to continue his efforts. We recommend the Prime Minister invite 'leaders' from business and civil society to join him in carrying and driving the process of SD. This, we believe, will help to ***overcome sectoral/ministry barriers*** and to ***mobilise the citizens*** of the Netherlands to put their weight behind an SDS initiative

13 A sustainable development strategy contributes to good governance by overcoming ***government fragmentation***, by enhancing policy integration, and thus improving government efficiency and effectiveness.





20 We recommend that the Netherlands establishes ***a set of linked structures*** to manage and coordinate the development and implementation of a new SDS. There are many different possibilities to organise this but we recommend that you explore at least the following options.

a) A ***coordinating body of both government and civil society representatives*** to manage and pull the sustainable development agenda together. This could be an SD Clearing House or ***SD Commission*** bringing together a broad mix of representatives from key government departments and stakeholder groups (from the business sector and civil society, including environmental, development cooperation, women's organisations etc). This body should be supported by a ***Secretariat*** housed in the Prime Minister's office – for day to day management.

b) A ***consultative body of civil society*** to pull the sustainable development agenda together. This could be an SD Clearing House or ***SD Commission*** bringing together a broad mix of representatives from stakeholder groups (from the business sector and civil society, including environmental, development cooperation, women's organisations etc). This body should be supported by a ***Secretariat***– for its day to day work.

On the ***government level***, there should be a ***coordinating body*** managing the implementation of the strategy throughout all sections of government, with an administrative ***task force*** housed in the Prime Minister's office – for day to day management.

### 4.4.1 Leadership

Throughout the peer review process, there was a strong consensus amongst Dutch participants that the Prime Minister should play a national leadership role to:

- ***Promote*** the urgent need to address sustainable development across government and in society at large;
- ***Encourage and ensure*** that all government departments pull together and work collectively, inter-sectorally and in harmony to;
- ***Work with leaders in society and the business sector*** to find ways for these stakeholders and the government to work together at all levels (national, provincial and local) on the challenge of developing an SDS.

Given the urgent need to address a series of unsustainable trends (see Chapter 3) and to build a coalition of consensus between the major groups as defined by Agenda 21, the peers strongly urge the ***Prime Minister to play a leading role*** in both promoting sustainable development as a guiding philosophy for all, and establishing and delivering the most effective SDS

process. No other leader (except for the Queen perhaps) has the overall binding and, to some extent, integrative power and radiance that the PM has.

To take the lead is not a mere symbolic action to demonstrate political profile and coherence or to strengthen public awareness. It also gives authority to set political goals, end controversies and come to political decisions. As experience in other countries such as Germany shows, there is a need for direct political involvement of the Prime Minister's office and a clear decision-making process at the top level.

Given that sustainable development can only be realised as a partnership effort by government, civil society and the business sector working together, leadership is needed across all sectors, in industry, in civil society and at the individual level.

The typical roles that key actors can play are described in Annex 4. In Box 4.4 three examples of leadership roles and organisational solutions from Scandinavia.

BOX 4.4 A LEADERSHIP ROLE ON NSDS

In **Finland** the Prime Minister (PM) has been the chairperson of the National Commission for Sustainable Development and key members of the Government have been members in addition to representatives of business and civil society. This role of the PM has meant that the SD has been recognised as an important activity, particularly throughout the administration. Different ministries and other actors have thus been forced to deal with issues and themes that cross sector boundaries and to debate trade-offs. The drawback of a close link to the central administration is that statements and initiatives emerging from the Commission are the results of cross sectoral negotiations and compromises and are therefore incremental. However, the existence of a recognised body for SD under government leadership provides impetus to more innovative work on SD in organisations and research communities.

In **Norway** the National Agenda 21 (national action plan for SD) is led by the office of the PM and a special committee chaired by the Ministry of Finance (and consisting of deputy ministers from key ministries). The Ministry of Finance has the dual responsibility of coordinating central government activities and of drawing up a framework for efficient resource use in the country.

In 2005 **Sweden** formed the Ministry of Sustainable Development through a merger of three departments: Energy, Environment and Planning and Housing. Apart from mandates covering these areas, this new ministry also has responsibility for coordinating government work on SD. In 2006 the budget statement from the Ministry of Finance stated that 'SD is an overall objective of government policy' and that the Government 'aspires to make the idea of the green welfare state a reality. Sweden has announced an oil-free economy by the year 2020.

*Source (of the last two examples): Swanson and Pinter, 2006*





### 4.4.2 Organisational structures

To become a reality, an NSDS requires effective coordination. The particular structural model to best manage and coordinate the development and implementation of a new SDS is a matter for the Dutch government to reflect upon and will be guided by the specific experiences in the Dutch political culture, particularly the experience with the "polder model", the role of agencies and the involvement of stakeholders in government decision-making.

BOX 4.5 KEY TASKS IN COORDINATING AN NSDS PROCESS

**Securing cooperation (providing inspiration)**
- Organising political leadership throughout government, civil society and the business sector;
- Networking between societal and political actors;
- Advising government and agenda setting;
- Commenting on political documents;
- Initiating and fostering communication.

**Organisational leadership within government (policy innovation)**
- Overseeing the development and the coherence of the government action plans to implement the overall strategy;
- Identification of gaps and the need for further political steps;
- Managing the implementation of the strategy, and providing political oversight;
- Ensuring an arbitration mechanism in the case of diverging departmental interests.

**Administration (implementation)**
- Managing the above processes on a day-to-day basis;
- Organising and implementing communication;
- Installing a monitoring procedure to measure implementation and success, analyse results and suggest policy responses.

Against this background, it is crucial to decide how the functions listed in Box 4.5 are to be fulfilled, i.e. by a single body or by several institutions, and in what manner state responsibilities will be distinguished from the need for a platform for the cooperation of state and societal actors.

There is no generally applicable "best practice" for organising and managing an NSDS. But after comparing a variety of international experiences, and considering how this can best be made useful for The Netherlands, the peers have suggested two possible options for a set of linked structures that might be considered (recommendations 20a and 20b). Both recommendations are based on practical experience in Europe: 20a from Finland and the Czech Republic; 20b from other European countries including the UK, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Scandinavia and a number of new member states. Experience shows that both models can be functional, depending on the national institutions and political culture.

### Recommendation 20a

This model envisages two main bodies.

- a ***Coordinating body of both government and civil society representatives*** would allow the strategy development and implementation to be directly coordinated by a multi-stakeholder body in which government is an equal partner with the private sector and civil society. This model recognises in full that government alone cannot deliver sustainable development – it requires a genuine partnership with the private sector and civil society. Both the tasks of strategy leadership and securing cooperation should be covered by this body.
- a ***Secretariat*** for the day to day coordination. The peers recommend that such a Secretariat be housed in or at least be responsible to the Office of the Prime Minister. The staff of this secretariat should be a dedicated and skilled group of people. It has been suggested that the Secretariat could comprise civil servants seconded from the main ministries, and individuals from civil society organisations and the business community, with a range of the necessary technical and communication skills. It will require an adequate budget to service the SDS process.

### Recommendation 20b

This recommendation provides for government to maintain direct responsibility for policy- and decision-making and for coordinating implementation. It thus acknowledges that a government has a mandate to govern and it could be deemed undemocratic to cede part of its responsibilities to an unelected body. Operationalising recommendation 20b involves coordination on three levels:

- a policy-level ***Coordinating body*** e.g. in the form of a "Green Cabinet" or another governmental steering group with the highest level mandate. It would provide political guidance, integrate sustainability into cabinet discourses and represent government activities on the political level. It could be headed by the Prime minister or by another cabinet member who would need a clear mandate for effective interactions with other departments, commissions, advisory boards, etc.
- ***an Administrative Coordination entity*** for day to day management and coordination within government. The peers suggest this be a dedicated and skilled group of people in a ***task force*** located within the Prime Ministers office to which all line ministries report regarding their contributions to the NSDS. It has been suggested that, since the Prime Minister's office is small, the task force might be strengthened by civil servants seconded from the main ministries, with a range of the necessary technical and communication skills. It will require an adequate budget to service the SDS process.
- a ***Consultative body***– possibly an independent National Commission for Sustainable Development (NCSD). This would bring together a broad mix of individuals representing the major (stakeholder) groups, including science, NGOs, consumers, trade unions and business.. The functions of such a body have been defined differently in different European countries but tend to include internal, innovation-oriented debates on SD issues (reaching consensus where possible but not necessarily), providing advice (either at its own initiative and/or when requested by government), communicating SD and promoting SD awareness by networking with civil society and "snowball communication". This body would need a small but skilled ***secretariat*** (supported by public funds but not part of the administration) to support its tasks.

The image of a coordinating body or a consultative body (e.g. a NCSD) to act also as a ***SD 'clearing house'*** was raised during the review week. The peers like the idea of such a body that functions as a forum for ideas and best practices and links parties active 'on the ground' with those engaged in decision-making. This would also provide the opportunity for collecting, exchanging and up-scaling successful grassroots ideas, adding a bottom-up element to the top-down policy process.

## 4.4.3 A platform for dialogue, debate and policy formation

Whatever approach is adopted, the peers urge the government to organize a continuous dialogue between government and other societal actors and make sure that this dialogue (and the outcomes from it) are central to developing and implementating the strategy. Indeed a consistent suggestion during the extensive interviews, discussions and debate undertaken by the peers was that some form of ***multi-stakeholder forum for debate about SD issues*** should be established.

In over 80 countries, such forums have been established as National Councils/ Commissions for Sustainable Development (NCSDs) and operate as multi-stakeholder, participatory, advisory bodies (some examples are given in Box 4.6). Many have been used as ad hoc think tanks for government, as and when issues arise, although others play more routine roles in development planning. They have the potential to play a facilitating role in developing strategies for sustainable development as well as implementation.

BOX 4.6 NATIONAL FORUMS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN AND BEYOND EUROPE

**(A) Examples from Europe**

Most Sustainable Development Councils in Europe are officially established bodies with political independence and an advisory, initiative-taking and outreach mandate. They have the tasks to:

- stimulate informed debate, identify gaps and initiate the search for solutions; assist in the preparation and/or monitoring and evaluation of national SD strategies;
- contribute to national and EU progress reviews;
- increase the involvement of civil society and
- better link different policies and policy levels.

*(see EU SDS, June 2006, paragraph 43)*

In ***Germany***, the Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) is an official advisory body, operating with political independence. Its members derive from a wide range of societal actors. The Council provides political leadership by:

- Networking social and political actors;
- Advising government;
- Commenting on political documents;
- Proposing issues for the SD agenda;
- Initiating and fostering communication on SD by projects, conferences etc.

The FORUM Sustainable ***Austria*** is an independent multi-stakeholder council composed of societal actors and scientists, with the task to guide the implementation and development process of the Austrian Sustainability Strategy by:

- Providing expertise and knowledge to authorities and social partners, as well as to media, multipliers and the public;
- Requesting the political stakeholders to engage in (public) dialogue and to implement sustainable development;
- Identifying relevant topics, analyses and preparation for social debate.

In ***Belgium***, the Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD) is an official advisory body, established by law and composed of representatives of the major social groups and government representatives as observers. It operates with political independence and advises the Federal Government on draft sustainable development plans and other policy proposals. The law also established the interdepartmental Commission for SD and other coordination bodies.





In ***Catalonia***, the institutional structure for SD is threefold: an inter-departmental coordination commission (CCDS), an (expert) advisory council for SD (CADS) and a societal council for SD (CSDS).

In ***Finland***, the National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD) co-ordinates, promotes and evaluates the implementation of SD, and acts as a political multi-stakeholder forum for discussion on international and national SD issues and best practices. It is composed of Ministers, Parliamentarians, and societal actors.

The National Sustainable Development Commission in ***France*** (CNDD) is an independent body, composed of three groups of civil society organisations plus local governments and scientists. It is asked to help shape the government's policy in favour of SD and, in this capacity, it takes part in defining, monitoring and assessing the NSDS.

The Sustainable Development Council (Comhar) in ***Ireland*** is also a non-statutory organisation, but with an official mandate for encouraging SD across the Irish economy and society, and for advising government on policies which support and promote SD. It has an independent status and is composed of pre-dominantly societal actors and a few government members, with one exception from the local level and agencies.

In ***Portugal***, the National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS) is an independent advisory body to the government members in charge of the environment and SD. It also networks societal actors and fosters communication on environment and SD.

The role of the **UK's** independent Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has been widened from a role as advisor and facilitator for societal dialogue and involvement to also act as a "watchdog" for sustainable development, reporting on progress in implementing the UK NSDS (2005), focusing in depth on particular issues. The SDC will work with the House of Commons' Environmental Audit Committee and the National Audit Office. These additional tasks include:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of the Accountability Framework (the combined scrutiny activity of all organisation involved in SD assessment/monitoring);
- Monitoring SD policy-making and proofing (risk impact assessments, public service agreements, spending reviews, budget and pre-budget reports, etc.);
- Departmental scrutiny (SD action plans);
- Thematic in-depth reviews;

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- On-going, cross-governmental performance appraisal (indicators, Framework for SD on the Government Estate, sustainable procurement, etc.).
- State of the nation progress reports.

**(B) Non-European examples**

In ***Ghana***, the National Committee on Sustainable Development (NCSD) is an all-embracing forum with representatives from government, NGOs, the private sector and civil society to address sustainable development.

The ***Philippines*** Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) was created in 1992 by Executive Order in order to chart environment and sustainable development (SD) initiatives in the country. The PCSD is headed by the Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) as Chairperson, and the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as Vice-Chairperson. The members of the committees are representatives from the national government agencies and their counterpart from the civil society, NGOs, people's organizations, business and labour sector. There are also local SD councils and committees in various regions of the country.

The PCSD has undertaken several concrete steps in pursuit of SD. The PCSD is mandated to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Philippines Agenda 21 by providing the coordinating and monitoring mechanisms for its implementation. PCSD is also authorized to mobilize coordinating bodies, including the Regional Development Councils and the local councils for sustainable development for this purpose.

## 4.5 Policy process

**RECOMMENDATION**

21 ***Re-design policy and decision-making processes*** so that decisions become more transparent and decision makers more accountable with respect to sustainability.

Whatever a leadership team or SD forum/commission may conclude or advise, final responsibility for those actions which the government must take rests with the legitimate (elected) decision-makers. Here, the real power lines are the policy- and decision-making processes within different levels of government. Similarly, business and civil society organisations have their own structures and processes for taking decisions and acting on them.
The concept of sustainable development needs to be incorporated into the policy and decision making process to have the necessary impact.

It is essential to the success of any SD strategy that

- SD is a guiding principle from the start of policy- and decision-making processes;
- There is a readiness to reshape processes and alter past decisions to exploit potential SD synergies;
- Policy coherence be demanded and enforced from the highest levels;
- The balancing of trade offs is done as soon as possible in any policy-making process.

As one participant in the review week said (referring to Al Gore), people in decision-making positions should 'ask inconvenient questions' about the material that is presented to them.
Civil servants and people in companies and societal institutions need instruments to help them with this (e.g. SD assessment tools). The multi-stakeholder forum or SD Commission can assume the task to identify these. This is really about a change of culture within government, companies and many civil society organisations. It should become a normal part of work and not be felt as something extra, a hurdle to be taken.

The peers are of the view that an NSDS has to tackle this crucial point.

A recently published study of examples of NSDS good practice (OECD, October 2006) argues that the NSDS is most effective if it is closely linked to existing government planning, reporting and budgeting processes. The study also concludes that this is still a challenge for countries all over the world.

## 4.6 Communication and education

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

22 Sustainable development should be a fundamental component of all ***education curricula*** (primary, secondary, tertiary).

23 We recommend that the Netherlands considers the potential use of the ***UN Decade for learning for SD*** to develop a more dynamic approach to communicating sustainable development as a concept.

24 We recommend that a ***communications strategy for SD*** be developed to support the SDS. Part of its role should be to ensure the SD concept is ***meaningful*** to everybody.

### 4.6.1 Communication

An SDS involves a long-term process of change. Capacity to manage this process is required at the individual, institutional and systemic levels. To be effective, a strategy needs to be participatory and interactive. Representatives of government, civil society and the private sector need to be kept up-to-date on progress and problems, and correct course when needed. These tasks depend critically on awareness, trust, coordination and mechanisms for dialogue. Conversely, misunderstanding and unrealistic expectations make a coordinated approach to sustainable development very difficult.

In a world where all initiatives have to compete for attention, the strategy needs to be presented as an attractive initiative with clear opportunities and clear limits, to excite relevant stakeholder input and to ensure public support for its implementation. The youth delegation stressed this point particularly during the review workshop and suggested that innovative (unorthodox) ways of communication are required to involve youth in the NSDS process.

Effective communication is the principal vehicle for the above tasks. It is no wonder that it has been called the 'lifeblood' of a strategy. Indeed, without clear two-way communication, engaging all key stakeholders, a strategy will not succeed because cooperation and collaboration - which depend on it – are compromised.

A ***communications information strategy and system*** will influence the purpose and objectives of the SDS, who is involved, what gets discussed, and what actions are taken. Its philosophy, rationale, methods, style and reach are, therefore, critical considerations.





There are two aspects of a communication strategy - each needs specific attention:

- Communication on the process of developing and implementing the strategy itself – to promote the SDS process, keep stakeholders informed of how the strategy is being developed, how and when organisations and institutions can get involved, progress and new developments, etc.,
- Communications about sustainable development – to raise awareness about the concept, SD challenges and ways to respond to these.

Together communication on these two aspects make up the communication and information strategy and system.

There are some particular challenges in communicating sustainable development issues. Some of the means to overcome these difficulties and effectively put across sustainable development messages are suggested in Box 4.7.

**BOX 4.7 HOW CAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BE COMMUNICATED SUCCESSFULLY?**

- By recognising that it is ***specific issues that interest people***, rather than the whole of the SD agenda: 'If you replaced all the various eco-labels with one saying 'certified sustainable' it might on the surface be simpler and more rigorous, but a lot of enthusiasm would collapse' (Corporate social responsibility consultant).
- In other words, breaking SD down into ***manageable pieces that make sense to people in their context***. Not forbidding the words 'sustainable development' but adding the message that 'this idea/ initiative contributes to sustainable development'.
- By using opportunities to ***demonstrate links between the issues that matter to people*** – for example, trade terms and environment, fuel use and flooding through climate change.
- ***By presenting the positive side, not just the negative***. Too often, problems are presented, implying that SD is about what you ***cannot*** do. In contrast, SD communications should emphasise opportunities, ideas and innovations that excite people about the future, and show what roles people can play in it.
- This will often mean ***focusing on the doable and immediate*** – recycling and local environmental clean-ups – and adding messages on the broader, longer-term context for these activities.
- It will also mean ***illustrating options for the future that interest people***: for example, low-energy housing and transport, community action to remove homelessness, farmers' markets that strengthen rural economies and provide healthier food.
- By ***using good communications practice***: asking people what concerns them, and what they can do, and not just telling them

what to do; spinning stories about what has worked, and not just presenting abstract 'recommendations'; using straightforward language rather than jargon; knowing the audiences and their concerns and not just the subject and its complexities. This approach works for the 'specialists', too.

- By ***opening up workshops and conferences to other stakeholders*** who will be comfortable with the above, and not feel obliged to talk about SD among 'insiders' only. SD does not need 'dumbing down' to do this: it needs 'opening up'.

*Principal source:* ***Green Futures*** *No 30 (2001), Forum for the Future, London*

The communication and information strategy and system will help to ensure regular, two-way flows of information concerning both the strategy process itself and sustainable development, and effective dialogue between stakeholders and between fora. This, in turn, will help build the necessary national consensus, create transparency and facilitate public participation in the elaboration and implementation of the SDS. Communication should be an on-going task through successive cycles of the strategy process. Effective communication will promote wider participation – horizontally, by linking different sectors, and vertically, by bringing local to global, and global to local. This would require:

- putting in place, within the Secretariat, appropriate information, education and communication staff with a broad range of skills and a clear mandate;
- identifying, through an initial scoping exercise, the precise information and communications needs of the Secretariat itself, and of the key participants;
- preparation of a promotional strategy about the SDS;
- commissioning a sectoral paper on the current state of information, education and communication to provide baseline information for the preparation of an communication and information strategy and action plan;
- after a multi-stakeholder **consultation** process, preparing a longer-term communication and information strategy and action plan that addresses the communications needs of each stage in the SDS process.

### 4.6.2 Education

The peers believe that steps need to be taken to promote and develop continuing education about sustainable development at all levels. A key capability is to develop skills to identify, frame and structure problems so as to be able to derive and initiate problem-solving strategies and processes.

Following a recommendation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the General Assembly of the United Nations decided on December 20th 2002 to proclaim a World Decade for "Education for Sustainable Development" and mandated UNESCO as the "lead agency" to coordinate it. It is intended to anchor the notion of sustainability not only in formal education, but also to develop and to bring together activities in all societal sectors to root the urgency of sustainable development in public awareness and to foster political action. The German Action Plan in the framework of the UN Decade is described in Box 4.8.



**BOX 4.8 IMPLEMENTING THE WORLD DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR SD IN GERMANY**

The German UNESCO Commission decided on a far-reaching national action plan in July 2003 ("*Hamburger Erklärung*"). Everyone with responsibility at national, regional and local level and in all sectors of society was requested to participate in establishing a national action plan for the UN Decade. A unanimous vote of the German Parliament backed the decentralized approach and the claim to play an international leading role in the implementation of the Decade. It demanded that UNESCO fulfill its role in the international coordination in a more active and visible manner. A German National Committee was established as a central steering and decision-making body. It consists of 30 experts from all political layers and societal sectors and is supported by a secretariat. In the framework of the German EU Presidency, a conference was held on May 24- 25 2007 to discuss the European contribution to the UN Decade.

The following activities have been initiated:

- Dedicating every year of the Decade to a specific issue, e.g. cultural diversity in 2007, energy in 2009;
- Presenting an Action Programme in January 2005 which deals with focusing and developing activities and transfering best practises, networking, public awareness raising and international cooperation;
- Complementing the Action Programme with a Catalogue for Implementation containing all obligations voluntarily undertaken by societal and political actors, e.g. establishment of an internet platform by the Federal Ministry of Education, developing school and university curricula, NGO activities;
- Round tables, working groups and events to develop SD education further;
- Recognising projects officially as "UN Decade projects" (355 up to 2007) so that they can use the official log for two years;
- Awarding prizes to local authorities as "towns of the UN Decade".

*Source: www.dekade-org*
*www.bne-portal.de*

The peers are aware of the Dutch programme "Learning for Sustainable Development" which tries to operationalise and practice the concept of learning on three levels (the individual, the organisation and learning society).

The individual level focuses on formal education where the programme seeks to embed SD structurally in all levels, including the curricula of vocational training for teachers. This overarching dynamic approach to communicating sustainable development as a concept should be followed consistently. International contacts within the UN Decade could be very helpful to exchange best practices, to learn from differing national perspectives and to encourage the role of UNESCO.

This ambition is shared by the peers. Education about SD will enable people to make choices and judgements in a SD-focused way. Eventually such an approach should become part of everyone's 'toolkit'. The peers urge the government to make SD education part of all core curricula and/or exam programme. But awareness-raising and education about SD should not be confined just to educational establishments – it can be promoted in society in other ways, as the example from Germany in Box 4.9 shows.

For the Netherlands to work on complex problems in an SD way, and perhaps even to develop and implement a NSDS, it is crucial that key individuals (e.g. government decision-makers and agency officials) are able to consider trade-offs and make decisions based on a consideration of SD implications. The peers would like to encourage the Netherlands to continue and strengthen SD training for these and other key-groups.

BOX 4.9 THE **UNSER LAND** INITIATIVE, GERMANY

Education does not only happen in schools. The UNSER LAND initiative in the München area of Germany is a success story in establishing sustainable production and consumption patterns on a regional base. It illustrates how awareness building and the activation of civil society can happen while providing them with high quality regional food and energy. The UNSER LAND initiators claim that their "products carry the message of sustainability to the consumer".

The initiative started in 1994 when the parish of a small village in the district of Fürstenfeldbruck decided to physically implement what Christians call responsibility for creation. Then it was called BRUCKER LAND. The overall goal was to give the civil society a choice to shape their living environment. It was intended to build a stable and affordable supply with a "basket of regionally controllable sustainable goods". And to establish an urban-rural-network in the region of München to build capacities and raise awareness for that sustainability basket.





When the initiative started it was part of the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) process in the district of Fürstenfeldbruck. This process was funded by the Ministry for Regional Development and Environ-mental Affairs and supported and facilitated by professionals. The LA21 process was designed to run on two municipal levels. While five working groups developed a set of overall guidelines and 21 projects to be carried out on district level, most of the 23 municipalities and towns in the district ran their own LA21 processes. BRUCKER LAND was one of the projects that was driven by the work group "nutrition".

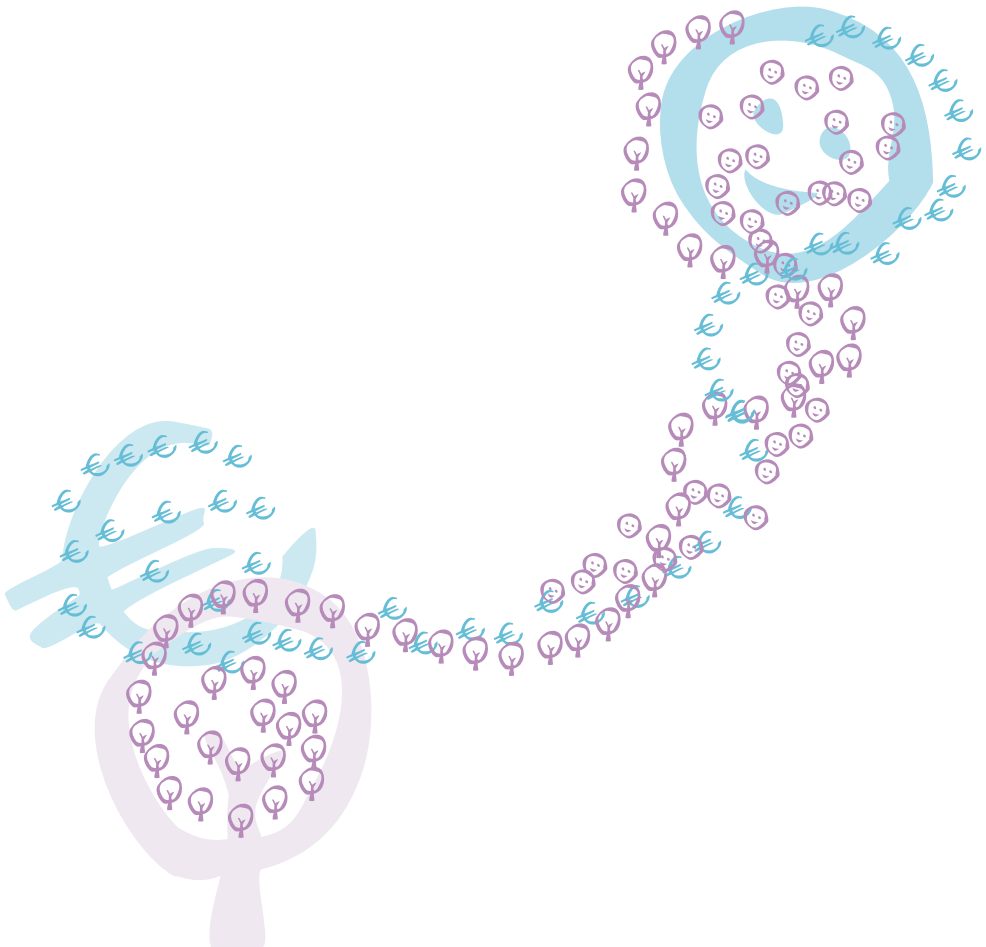
After eight years, the five working groups had jointly developed guidelines and a comprehensive control system for about 40 products: bread, flour, eggs, noodles, milk, cheese, honey, etc. By then BRUCKER LAND decided to export the success model to eight neighbouring districts. The solidarity communities in the nine rural districts around München joined under the umbrella of the UN-SER LAND association.

The guiding principle of UNSER LAND is to build a system of base nutrition alongside sustainability rules:

- *Economy*: Products must be "sellable", i. e. have high quality and appropriate price. Producers and their partners must find consensus on the definition of "fair" prices along the entire production-consumption-path.
- *Ecology*: Production methods must prevent damage form nature as far as possible. For every product, that means different requirements. Amongst these are banning pesticides, using bio-fuels for tractors, minimization of transport and energy consumption, and active contributions to nature protection.
- *Social*: Work should be split between as many workers as possible. Partners build social relationships between interest groups or regional position (e. g. city-rural exchange of culture). Regional partners feel responsible for worldwide development and cooperate with partners in fair trade organizations.

Today, consumers in the München area can buy regional food from a basket of more than 50 products in more than 500 supermarkets. Food is produced alongside well defined criteria. On packages and with a continuous PR campaign the products carry the message: "It is possible to produce high quality food while preserving nature. And it is up to you, the consumer, to make a decision in your supermarket to help shaping your living area".

*For further information contact peer reviewer Ludwig Karg (L.Karg@INEM.org).*





Chapter 5

# Strategy content

Based on international experience and considering the existing Action Programme for SD and materials about SD available for the Netherlands, the peers believe that a new SD strategy for the Netherlands should:

- Have a clear focus;
- Establish ways to demonstrate progress towards SD;
- Embed SD both in government and society;
- Address risks and conflicts; and
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.

This chapter addresses these points and also looks into local, regional and (inter)national dimensions

## 5.1 Focus

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

25 The strategy should be an ***umbrella*** for all issues of major relevance to sustainable development in the Netherlands, but should focus initially on a limited number of priority issues where the SD perspective provides added value. Such priority issues may be identified on the basis of significant synergies (or the probability of negotiating trade-offs where synergy is difficult) between social, economic, and environmental objectives, as well as their likely importance over a long-term perspective.

26 We recommend a strategy that is based on the identification of the ***main unsustainable trends***.

27 We recommend a SDS which provides for ***clear actions, targets and timelines***, either in the strategy framework or implementation plans.

During the peer review, participants pointed to a range of issues which are key to sustainable development in The Netherlands. Most of these are already addressed in different ways in a range of existing strategic policy and planning documents and include the six pillars of the Coalition Agreement and the six transitions set out in the 2003 Action Programme (four from NEPP4): energy, mobility, agriculture, natural resources/biodiversity, water management, and construction, neighbourhoods and cities. Some issues were identified to be weak or missing, e.g. the social dimension, long-term economic sustainability,

biodiversity conservation and the international impacts of Dutch domestic policy.

A new SDS will, therefore, need to revisit these existing priorities, verify them by comparison against unsustainable trends and through debate with key stakeholders, ensure that important major issues are not missing, and confirm the most effective and achievable ways to address them. Experience in other countries shows that the mere addition of a broad range of issues weakens the concept of SD and makes it arbitrary.

It is both logical and necessary (from both an urgency and management perspective) to focus initially on the most pressing issues and to demonstrate progress in responding to them. But it is also important that the SDS process identifies the broad range of short-, medium- and long-term issues that need to be dealt with – and provides an '***umbrella***' for them.

**BOX 5.1 THE CANADIAN CESD EXPECTATIONS FOR DEPARTMENTAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

Canada is a federal country. Whilst some provinces and territories have developed SDSs, there is no national or federal SD strategy. Rather individual federal government departments are required to develop deparmental SD strategies. The Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) has set out expectations in this regard:

- Departments and agencies should clearly indicate the role played by their sustainable development strategy and how the strategy fits with other plans and strategies within the organization.
- The sustainable development strategies should contain a smaller number of significant and essential goals and objectives. These goals and objectives should be written in plain language and clearly express the long-term results that departments and agencies are trying to achieve.
- Targets and actions should be clearly linked to the goals and objectives.
- Targets should be clear, understandable, and measurable.
- Performance reporting should be strengthened.
- Departments and agencies should evaluate their 2001 (second) strategies and highlight the changes between their 2001 and 2003 strategies.
- Goals and objectives related to horizontal issues should be more consistent and better managed across strategies.

*Source: http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/c200303sds.html*





As already stated in Chapter 3, the peers recommend that the primary focus is placed on identifying and understanding the key unsustainable trends and that a major effort is required through the SDS to tackle these. It will be both unacceptable and irresponsible to argue or assume that existing policies, actions and institutional arrangements are adequate. As shown in section 3.1, a range of unsustainable trends persist unchecked – indicating that our current structures have not made a real difference – 'Business as usual' is not the answer.

The peers recommend that the SDS provides for ***clear actions, targets and timelines***, either in the strategy framework or implementation plans. Many governments set targets as a key part of their SD strategies. In Canada, the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) set out what is expected of government departments in setting targets to guide monitoring of their departmental SD strategies (Box 5.1). Examples of SDS targets and timelines set in some of the peer countries are shown in Box 5.2.

Gender mainstreaming should be an integral part the strategy process, seeking gender equity as far as possible (e.g. equal opportunities for women and men to participate) The gender dimension should be considered as an issue.

**BOX 5.2 EXAMPLES OF SDS TARGETS SET IN PEER COUNTRIES**

**Finland**

The SD strategy document aims to provide the overall vision and framework. Itf contains very few concrete targets or timelines. These are set in more specific plans and programmes and only referred to in the strategy document. More concrete targets have been set by the Government in separate decisions of principle and in policy statements concerning, for example, work towards sustainable production and consumption, innovations, the protection of freshwater bodies and the Baltic Sea (stricter objectives to reduce pollution load by 2015), employment (reduction of unemployment) and management of forest resources (with economic, social and ecological targets). The Commission on SD is thus not a decision-making body. Rather it develops SD strategies (including progress reports and monitoring) and thematic strategies (e.g. for SD education).

**Germany**

The priority fields of action contain many quantified assessments and perspectives, partly accompanied by quantified goals. Most of the 21 headline indicators contain quantified targets. Their interpretation has to take into account that they often cut across the three dimensions of SD (e.g. decoupling indicators) and need to be informed by the national accounting systems. ›

Selected headline indicators:

- Energy productivity and resource productivity related to economic growth: both doubling by 2020;
- Increase in land use for housing and transport: reduction in daily growth to 30 ha in 2020;
- Intensity of passenger (1) and goods (2) transport: reduction to (1) 90% by 2010, and 80% by 2020; (2) to 98% by 2010 and 95% by 2020, compared with 1999;
- Increase in R&D public and private spending to 3% of GDP in 2010;
- First year student quota: 40% in 2010;
- Average earnings of women as % of men's: 85% in 2015 (West German Länder);
- Foreign school-leavers not gaining the first secondary school-leaving certificate: decline (not quantified and without timeline).

*Source: The Indicator Report of 2006, edited in April 2007, available at www.destatis.de/download/e/ugr/Internet_engl_Nachhaltigkeit.pdf*

## 5.2 Demonstrate progress

**RECOMMENDATION**

30 We recommend that the ***'demonstration' projects*** identified by the Coalition Agreement and by ministries are coordinated in a manner that reflects the broader perspective of Sustainable Development (people, planet, profit: the 3 P's).

Transparency and the maintenance of credibility require that there are mechanisms for monitoring progress and for demonstrating the advantages of specific actions. One way of doing this is through carefully executed and monitored demonstration projects that can be a source of inspiration and show that agreed objectives are realistic.

## 5.3 Embedding SD in government and society

The success of the NSDS will depend on the extent to which SD becomes part of everyday activities of government, the private sector and civil society at all levels. The more local work to address SD in cities such as Rotterdam (Box 5.5) exemplifies such 'take-up'. The government has a special responsible role to demonstrate that SD can indeed be embedded in its activities.





**RECOMMENDATION**

31 The SDS should provide a means to purposefully introduce the broader ***SD approach*** into the ***core activities of all ministries***, for example by sustainability assessments.

Paragraph 4.5 already covered the need for incorporating the concept of SD into the policy and decision making process.
A range of tools have emerged that aim to assess sustainability, e.g. strategic impact analysis, sustainability assessment or sustainability impact assessment. Some examples are shown in Box 6.3.

## 5.4 Addressing risks and conflicts

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

32 The SDS should ***respond to risks & opportunities*** identified in trend analysis.

33 The SDS should articulate (rather than hide) conflicts (e.g. difficulties in balancing objectives for people, planet and prosperity), expanding the common ground amongst stakeholders. We recommend that the Dutch ***consensus culture*** be harnessed to reach work towards this aim.

Tackling problems and trends in a sustainable way means that choices have to be made and making choices hurts. The peers observed tensions and potential conflicts during the interviews. It is evident that a NSDS will need processes for dealing with inevitable trade-offs. The Dutch consensus culture needs to develop ways to deal with conflicts instead of hiding them behind a compromise. Mention was made of asking inconvenient questions with the Prime minister in a leadership role. Science (especially tertiary institutions) can play an important role in this regard. They can provide 'safe spaces' for societal deliberation and a broader approach to consensus seeking.

## 5.5 Roles and responsibilities

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

34 The SDS should identify ***roles and responsibilities*** amongst main stakeholder groups.

35 Consider the role of the Netherlands in furthering an SD agenda in the ***EU***, e.g. through reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, or internationally in trade negotiations.

A variety of key actors (including all 'major groups' as recognised by the UNCSD) will need to be engaged in the SDS process:

- Politicians and leaders;
- Public authorities;
  - Central government;
  - Sub-national authorities;
  - Resource boards/agencies;
  - Education institutions;
- The private sector (businesses);
- Civil society;
  - Civil society organisations, e.g. NGOs, trade unions, consumer organisations, development agencies and initiatives, religious groups, youth associations, women's organisations, science bodies;
  - The public.

Each of these stakeholder groups will be able play rather different but complimentary roles. Typical roles are discussed in Annex 4.

As was mentioned more than once in the review sessions, it is very important to make everybody's role and responsibility in the NSDS process very clear.

Recommendation 35 concerns the influence of the Netherlands. Following the review sessions, the peers feel that the Netherlands can make better use of its powers and influence in the EU and in world trade relations.

Another example in this regard was mentioned in the peer review session on agriculture. The challenge here is balancing rural development (defined in spatial terms with a strong social emphasis) with agricultural development (defined in sectoral terms with a strong economic emphasis). This transition process calls for integrated programmes At present, the farmer (agriculture, market) is the entry point for policy-making. But it was felt that regional development would be a better entry point from a sustainable development point of view. The questions arose as to whether the Common Agricultural





Policy (CAP) and other funding instruments were the main reason for this imbalance, or whether the CAP leaves enough room for manoeuvre. The peers urge the Dutch government to use its influence to change funding and regulatory instruments in the EU if they are not helping in developing the Dutch rural regions in a sustainable way.

## 5.6 Local, regional and (inter)national dimensions

**RECOMMENDATION**

28 The SDS should include harnessing the experience of the many existing ***local and regional initiatives*** for SD and revitalising Local Agenda 21 type initiatives to operationalise SD.

In many countries, a wide array of actions are being taken at local levels to address SD concerns. These are important to demonstrate progress to citizens where they live and in terms of local issues that matter in their lives. One of the more prominent approaches is the Local Agenda 21 (LA21)(Box 5.3). In some cases, the LA21 movement focused initially on environmental concerns, but has since broadened to address SD.

**BOX 5.3 LOCAL AGENDA 21**

The Local Agenda 21 (LA21) concept was formulated and launched by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in 1991 as a framework for local governments worldwide to implement the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992.

Following UNCED, local governments, national and international LGOs, and international and UN organisations began experimenting with implementing the LA21 concept. Some local governments, often supported by national municipal associations, developed LA21 planning approaches appropriate to their circumstances.

At their best, Local Agenda 21initiatives:

- Are grounded in a broad inclusive process of consultation, coordinated by a local authority, and drawing in all key stakeholders; sure that environmental concerns, from the very localised to the global, enter the mainstream of urban planning and management;
- Provide an efficient and equitable means of identifying common goals, reconciling conflicting interests and creating working

partnerships between government agencies, private enterprises and civil society groups;

According to ICLEI (2002), LA21 processes had expanded worldwide: 6416 local authorities in 113 countries had either made a formal commitment to LA21 or were actively undertaking the process; and national campaigns were underway in 18 countries accounting for 2640 processes.

The most successful LA21s provide a source of inspiration for strategic planning for sustainable development, not only at the local level, but also at the national and international levels, where the establishment of associations of local authorities has helped to provide a collective voice and influence. They have helped to create new and better ways of managing local environments, and engaged a wide range of stakeholders in the process. There is also much to learn from the less successful examples, which illustrate some of the key obstacles to local sustainable development planning – including the dangers of staying at the margins of urban planning (and initiating a few minor projects but steering well clear of the major policy issues) or of underestimating the resistance to new ways of doing things (and going through the motions, without really changing the standard operating procedures of local government).

*Several assessments can be found at www.iclei.org.*

In The Netherlands, LA21 was promoted through a subsidy system in the mid-1990s allowing municipalities to "think globally whilst acting locally". But the programme was withdrawn and most of the 140 participating municipalities (roughly 25% in 1998) abandoned or downsized their local project. This is regrettable. The peers recommend that a new SDS should capture the experience of the many existing local initiatives for SD (many municipalities have more recently started new SD projects) and revitalise Local Agenda 21 type initiatives to operationalise SD. During the review week, the concept of an SD clearing house was suggested to collect, share and upscale local best practice. This task could be performed by a SD Commission or SD consultative body but it could also be a separate (but linked) institution.

In 2002, during the Local Government Session at the World Summit on SD in Johannesburg, , local government leaders from around the world, as well as representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-HABITAT and the World Health Organization (WHO), joined ICLEI in launching Local Action 21 as the next phase of Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Local Action 21 will support local governments' ongoing efforts in response to Agenda 21, the Rio Conventions, the *Habitat Agenda* and the *Millennium Declaration*. It is a mandate to local authorities worldwide to move from agenda to action and ensure an accelerated implementation of sustainable development. Local Action 21 will strengthen the LA21 movement of local governments to create sustainable communities and cities while protecting global common goods.

In the German state of Bavaria, a voluntary pact between the State government and industry has enabled cooperation to protect the environment. This example of regional cooperation is shown in Box 5.4.

**BOX 5.4 STRATEGIC ALLIANCES BETWEEN STATE, BUSINESSES AND SOCIETY IN BAVARIA**

Sustainability needs to be a joint effort of State as well as businesses and civil society. It is the declared belief of the Bavarian State Government and Bavarian Industry that natural basic living conditions can be better protected through voluntary and reliable cooperation between State and Industry than through laws and regulations alone. The emphasis is placed not only on the remediation of environmental damage, but also on deliberate avoidance of future pollution.
The Environmental Pact of Bavaria has become a model approach in environmental protection. It is based on the principles of voluntary commitment, direct responsibility and cooperation. The goals of the Pact are to enhance innovation and environmentally compatible economic growth under the guiding principle of sustainability. The Environmental Pact:

- expresses the responsibility of the State and Industry to maintain the natural basic living conditions through preventive action and independent of the legal requirements in force;
- creates scope for the implementation of effective measures, because it relies on the experience and innovative drive of companies;
- implements the principle of eco-efficiency by focusing on tailor made strategies along economic lines;
- makes a decisive contribution to a trusting atmosphere between the Bavarian State government and the companies and organisations of the Bavarian business community;
- acts as a driving force for new approaches, methods and topics directed towards the sustainable development of Germany.

*Source: www.stmugv.bayern.de/umwelt/wirtschaft/umweltpakt/doc/umpakt_en.pdf*

Other German Länder such as Saxonia have followed Bavaria and also implementing similar pacts or alliances between State and economies.

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Bavarian Industry has a declared goal to consistently enhance corporate environmental protection. Environmental management systems will play a major role in this context. Recently, the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection published a B.A.U.M. survey on the outreach and benefits of such systems in Bavaria. Copies can be obtained from www.izu.bayern.de/download/pdf/beschaeftigte_ums.pdf and www.izu.bayern.de/download/pdf/wirkungen_ums.pdf.

The peers were impressed by the efforts of cities like Delft and the province of NoordBrabant and especially by the ambitions of Rotterdam through local projects and its Energy and Climate Programme (Box 5.5).

BOX 5.5 ROTTERDAM: LOCAL PROJECTS AND AN ENERGY AND CLIMATE PROGRAMME

The 'City Vision Rotterdam 2030' sets the primary focus on a strong economy and an attractive city for living. In order to realise these ambitions, it was acknowledged that a new direction needed to be found. Significant effort will be required in the areas of environment, energy and health to strengthen the city's position nationally as well as internationally.

The framework of the RAL (Rotterdam's approach to air quality) targets a clean city vehicle fleet (consisting of 1600 vehicles), prohibiting polluting lorries from entering the inner city (environmental zoning), dealing with pollution from shipping (shore power) and stimulating the use of bicycles. The 2006 Rotterdam Energy Programme and the *ROM-Rijnmond/R3* programme give Rotterdam a head start in the management of energy and climate concerns. Examples of projects that have already been implemented include:

- Utilisation of industrial excess heat for residences (*Warmtebedrijf* - Heat Division);
- The large-scale approach to energy-saving measures in, for example, the restructuring neighbourhoods in Rotterdam South (*Pact op Zuid* - South Accord);
- The energy savings in street lighting;
- Bio-ethanol filling stations;
- The 'sustainable dance club' and the energy innovations on the site of the former RDM (Rotterdam Drydock Company).

In the next few years, Rotterdam has the ambition to develop into a $CO_2$-free city and a first-rate energy port: "*the world capital of $CO_2$-free energy*". It wants to cut its climatic footprint in half. The ambition of the **Energy and Climate Programme** is to achieve energy-neutral developed surroundings, where residences and buildings combined, on balance have an adequate supply of sustainable energy, through a drastic reduction of energy consumption for heating, cooling and equipment.

*Source: Rotterdam Energy & Climate Programme, the world capital of CO2-free energy, March 2007*





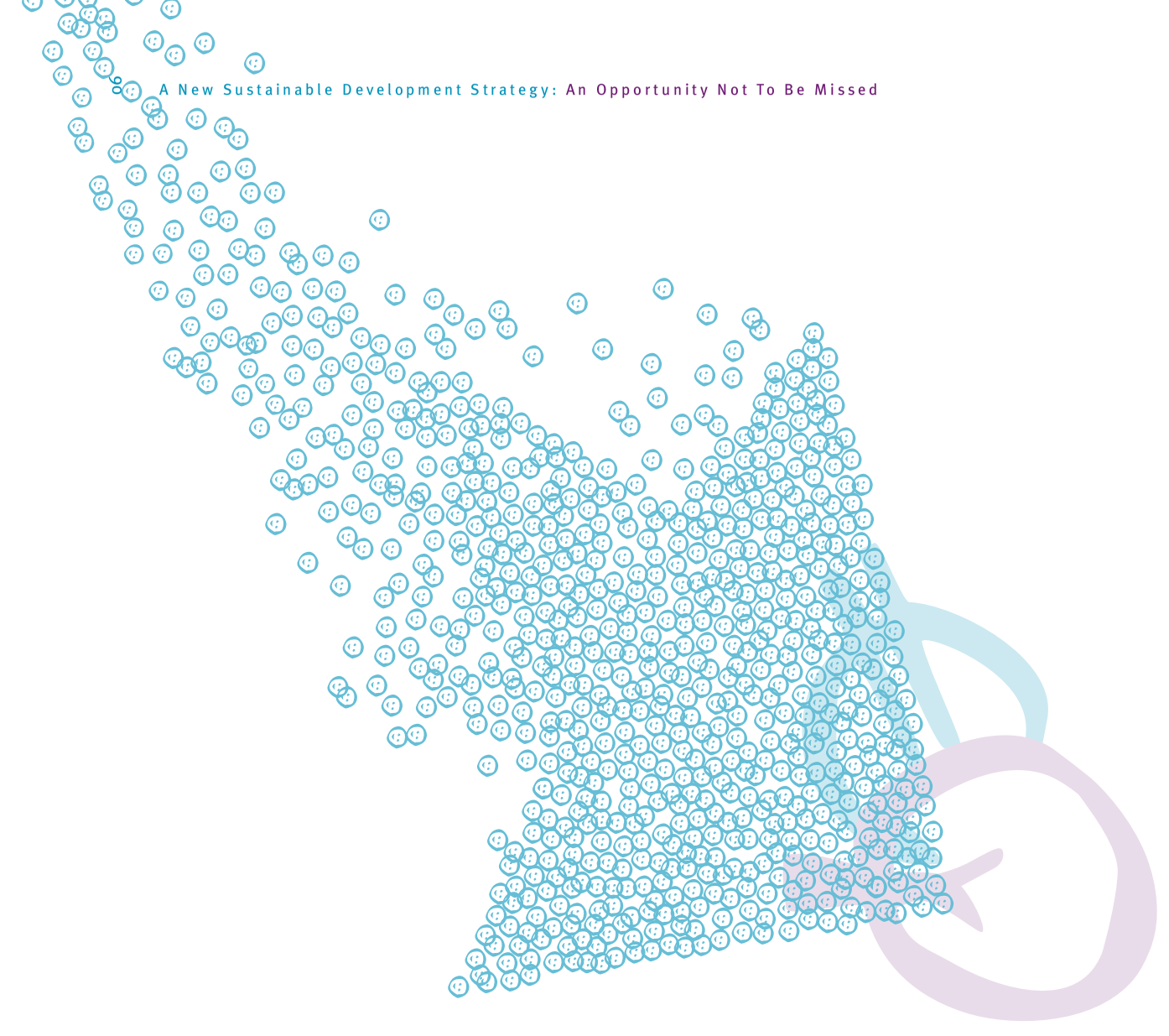
RECOMMENDATION

29 A future SDS will benefit greatly by ***integrating the domestic and international dimensions***, and by examining the clear links that exist between these - particularly for a great trading nation such as The Netherlands.

The policies of developed countries have great influence on the economies and environments of developing countries. For example, their positions in WTO, IMF and World Bank negotiations heavily influence the development conditions of developing countries. More directly, the demand for hardwoods and soya products in the North has had a massive impact on the way that tropical forests in some countries are (unsustainably) exploited and this, in turn, has caused severe environmental (and social) problems. So assessing the social and ecological 'footprint' of the balance of policies and actions in an SDS (both domestically and internationally) is important.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development sought to promote partnerships to foster sustainable development – between governments, the private sector and civil society organisations, and between North and South. The policies of official development cooperation agencies now emphasise the need to recognise the domestic priorities and sustainable development strategies of developing countries as the basis for assistance. An SDS provides a mechanism to focus and organise partnerships between actors (both within and between countries) to drive sustainable development.

During the review process, it was suggested that better use could be made of the Netherlands' position as a trading and investment nation. The Netherlands is one of the largest exporters and investors and also a big consumer and importing nation. The peers agree that more attention could be paid to the sustainability aspects of trade and investments.



Chapter 6

# Implementation and outcomes of strategy

In this chapter, we provide some context to the peers' recommendations on experimentation and innovation, assessment and analysis, monitoring and indicators.

## 6.1 Experimentation and innovation

RECOMMENDATIONS

36 Use ***intelligent financial means/models*** as an instrument to drive SD, including risk-taking. New forms of tax and other economic incentives should be explored to change production and consumption to use less raw material and energy.

37 Provide ***support for innovative risk takers*** that aim for difficult but radical solutions to problems of sustainability and develop ***mechanisms for up-scaling and diffusion*** of innovations.

A key feature of an NSDS should be that it encourages actors to explore new solutions and provide incentives for experimentation. This means developing policy instruments and other interventions that fulfil these objectives. Further development of existing financing mechanisms as well as reassessments of taxation are warranted. Specific encouragement of venture capital approaches may also contribute to significant progress in the field of SD (recommendation 37). Box 6.1 gives two examples, one each from public and business sector.

BOX 6.1 SUPPORTING INNOVATION

### Finland's Innovation Fund

In Finland, the Innovation Fund (SITRA) is an independent public fund under the supervision of the Finnish Parliament. It promotes the welfare of Finnish society and its responsibilities are stipulated in law. SITRA promotes stable and balanced development in Finland, the qualitative and quantitative growth of the economy and Finland's international competitiveness and co-operation. Its operations are governed by a vision of a successful and skilled Finland. SITRA's operations have been focused into fixed-period programmes (each comprising various projects and measures): health care, food and nutrition,

environment, Russia and India. The programmes utilise a wide array of methods, including studies, strategy processes, innovative experiments, business development and corporate funding. The methods used vary from programme to programme. SITRA has a special mandate to provide funds for businesses with future orientation.
*source: http://www.sitra.fi/en/News/FrontPageLeftNews/sitra.htm*

The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES) has also had promoted several programmes specifically devoted to different aspects sustainable development - from climate to health care. TEKES has the specific objective to support both research and development leading to and supporting commercial innovations.

**Economic Incentives , an approach from New Zealand**
In New Zealand, *the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development* is working with economic incentives in different areas.

"Because they facilitate least cost solutions, economic incentives are a key component of any business-friendly route to sustainable development. They present a great opportunity for a country that needs to improve its rate of economic growth, while achieving its broader environmental and social goals at the same time.

For some business sectors, economic incentives are not a new idea. The introduction of tradable fishing rights almost twenty years ago put a brake on over-fishing, restored stocks to sustainable levels and increased fishermen's profits. Tradable rights can be an effective model for dealing with issues such as water allocation, waste reduction, and cleaning up urban air.

In certain other cases, such as tackling road congestion or climate change, a system of charging those who cause the problem may be more appropriate. With charging systems, sizeable revenues can be raised, and it is important that these are recycled back through the economy.

Recycling these revenues would lead to tax reductions, or in the case of transport charges, to new investments in the transport network. In such cases, well-designed incentives will ensure most businesses and individuals are better off than they were before.

Both types of economic incentive can provide lasting value to business by:
- discouraging excessive resource use and waste generation
- stimulating cost-saving innovation; and
- in many cases, creating sustainable business opportunities





Properly designed, economic incentives reward sustainable practices, and prevent unsustainable businesses from undercutting those who take a more responsible approach. Disciplined frameworks, that assist business in applying innovation and forward thinking improvements, can provide improved cost structures and margins. This positions a business to deal more effectively with external, and often increasingly volatile, factors that are cost drivers."

*Source: http://www.nzbcsd.org.nz/economicincentives/Incentives-for-SD.pdf*

## 6.2 Assessment and analysis

**RECOMMENDATION**

38 Carry out ***ex ante assessments*** of policies, plans and programme to ensure they are sustainable and consistent with the aims and goals of the SDS, as well as ***ex post*** evaluations of actions and policies to ensure outcomes are successful and meet goals and targets in the SDS.

A range of tools have emerged that aim to assess sustainability, e.g. strategic impact analysis, sustainability assessment or sustainability impact assessment. Some examples are shown in Box 6.2. They can have both a generic and particular meaning:
- A generic focus on *analyzing and evaluating progress toward sustainable development*, from overall trend to specific action and everything in between. It is concerned with policy learning and understanding of what these changes add up to and where they are leading. Sustainability assessment, seen in its broader sense, covers a broad 'tent' of thinking and practice, including *ex-ante* and *ex-post* approaches that apply across all forms and levels of decision-making and drawing from a menu of concepts, methods and diagnostic tools.
- Sustainability assessment is particularly valuable when used as a mainstream tool to proactively *assess the impact of proposed actions*, including unintended side effects. As a decision tool, sustainability appraisal provides a means of specific input and a potential vehicle for effecting longer term policy change (as well as informing the wider discourse on critical issues). This ex ante approach typically will be undertaken through existing processes such as impact assessment or planning. It can be defined as any process that provides for (a) some form of *integrative analysis* of the economic, environmental and social aspects

of development actions, and (b) an evaluation of their effects with regard to agreed aims, principles or criteria of sustainable development.

BOX 6.2 SOME EXAMPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT APPROACHES

**European Commission**
The EC's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) procedure adopts a 'dual approach'. All Commission initiatives proposed for inclusion in the Annual Policy Strategy or the Commission Legislative and Work Programme and requiring some regulatory measure for their implementation (thus including not only regulations and directives, but also white papers, expenditure programmes and negotiating guidelines for the international agreements) must undergo a 'preliminary impact assessment. Moreover, a selected number of proposals with large expected impact are subjected to a more in-depth analysis called 'extended impact assessment'. EEAC's working group on Governance has reviewed the way that IA is being applied to EC policies and advises on how to make the IA Guidelines and practice more effective (EEAC wg Governance, 2006).

**Australia**
In South Australia, the Office of Sustainability works with the other offices and agencies to ensure that advice to Cabinet includes sustainability considerations and enables an integrated assessment of all issues. It uses sustainability assessment as a process "to enable policy makers to integrate their decision making on projects, plans, policies and programs so that they are consistent with sustainability principles".

**The UK**
Sustainability appraisal of land use and spatial plans is required under the Planning Act. Integrated policy appraisal (IPA) is also used as an umbrella methodology that flexibly brings together a number of impact assessment and appraisal tools (including regulatory impact assessment which has been extended to take account of policy as well as regulatory proposals) in support of sustainable development.

The peers are aware of the ground-breaking provincial-level sustainability assessments undertaken in The Netherlands by Telos (see http://spitswww.uvt.nl/telos/). Following its initial development in Brabant Province, it was shaped much more by provincial government and stakeholder views when used in the other provinces. The method, stocks, requirements and indicators (defined for Brabant) were presented to a selected group of stakeholders (mostly provincial civil servants, as well as generalists and specialists), and sub-groups for each





capital then examined these in detail. This approach, and the lessons learned from problems in implementation and an international review in 2005, have much to offer to operationalising the SDS.

RECOMMENDATION

39 Encourage development of ***self assessment tools*** for sustainability.

In addition to government, all actors need ways to position themselves in relation to SD. Therefore there is a need for flexible and reliable self assessment tools. A wide range of such tools are becoming available. Box 6.3 provides some illustrative examples.

BOX 6.3 EXAMPLES OF SELF ASSESSMENT TOOLS

**Cities**
The City of Melbourne has developed a TBL (triple bottom line) toolkit in collaboration with ICLEI-A/NZ and the local government sector which includes tools for reporting, planning and policy, and decision-making. Amongst these is a complex ***sustainability assessment*** questionnaire used to measure the city's corporate performance. This includes mandatory questions, process guidelines, issues to consider, underlined words explained in a glossary. The questionnaire is organised as a matrix listing the city's key sustainability aims against which scores are required for impacts, their magnitude, and likelihood of occurrence. The scores for each of these (for particular aims) are multiplied and, if the product exceeds a trigger threshold, then the impacts must be described (following prompt questions).
*Source:* ***www.iclei.org/anz/tbl***

**Campuses**
Many universities are taking up the challenge of championing the sustainability issue by undertaking campus sustainability assessments. For example, the Washington-based Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF) has developed a qualitative sustainability assessment questionnaire (SAQ) to help universities and colleges assess the extent to which they are sustainable. It aims to:

- Raise consciousness and encourage debate about what sustainability means to higher education practically and philosophically;
- Give a snapshot of the state of sustainability on the campus:
- Promote discussion on next steps.

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The SAQ is intended to be used in a 3-4 hour exercise on the campus with a group of about 10 representatives including staff, students, faculty and administrators. It covers a range of dimensions including: curriculum, research and scholarship, operations, faculty and staff development and rewards, community outreach and service, students opportunities, and institutional mission, structure and planning. Indicators of sustainability are included for each dimension.

*Source: www.ulsf.org/programs saq/html*

### Citizens and communities

The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is developing the concept of sustainability auditing to provide 'measuring rods' for individuals and for existing villages and communities to compare their current status with ideal goals for ecological, social, and spiritual sustainability. GEN has developed a ***community sustainability assessment*** checklist which is expected to take about 3 hours to complete (as an individual) or several sessions if done by a group. The tool is seen as a learning instrument – pointing out actions that aspiring individuals and communities can take to become more sustainable. It is intended that the CSA be repeated periodically to monitor progress.

*Source: www.gaia.org*

In Europe, ICLEI (an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organizations) has produced a range of tools that help strengthening the expertise and capacity of their members in their efforts to achieve local sustainability with respect to the themes ICLEI is working on. For example:

- ***ecoBUDGET - Manage your Natural Resources:*** "As we can manage an artificial resource - money - in terms of budget, why shouldn't we do the same with natural resources?" This question is the basis of ecoBUDGET, an Environmental Management System especially for local governments, to help plan, monitor, and report the consumption of natural resources within the municipal territory. With ecoBUDGET, local governments present tangible achievements of their sustainability oriented policies to the public. ICLEI's ecoBUDGET Agency offers advice to local authorities for all phases of the ecoBUDGET cycle, according to local needs and requirements.
- ***STATUS - Set Local Sustainability Targets and Measure your Progress***: This tool gives local governments from across Europe the opportunity to self-assess their own progress with sustainable development by inputting their own target values against a package of local sustainability indicators. These indicators have been selected from a number of European and national data sources, and have been specifically adapted to be relevant at the local level. The indicators are also designed to be usable by local authorities at different stages of sustainability implementation. Every local authority can set its own target values related specifically to its local context and can enter relevant baseline data against these.

*Source: www.iclei-europe.org*





**RECOMMENDATION**

40 Develop new ways to fully ***utilise existing and emerging knowledge*** in decision-making to strengthen the basis for sustainability in policies in government and business.

Complex issues need other, more combined knowledge. Existing knowledge has to be brought together from different fields and new questions have to be answered by interdisciplinary research. Many innovations are 'born' on the interfaces between disciplines. Funding and other incentives should be used to stimulate interdisciplinary research as well as a flexibility regarding application rules and time frames (interdisciplinary research often needs more time than monodisciplinary research).

At the same time decision-makers must join forces with science and knowledge institutions early on in their work. (It seems business is doing a better job of it than government).

**RECOMMENDATION**

41 ***Planning bureaus*** should provide ***joint/combined analysis*** to facilitate SD and assess progress and trade-offs among the three Ps.

The Netherlands has established a set of very experienced and highly reputable planning bureaus which undertake excellent work in their particular sectors – environmental, social and economic. It is, of course, vital that their work continues. But the challenge of sustainable development requires the integration of analysis. Approaches such as sustainability appraisal/assessment can help to achieve such integration. The individual research and planning agencies appear to be slow to recognise the need to address sustainability. Some agencies do not deal with sustainability at all. Whilst others have started to do so, it is very partial. For example, the MNP produces the periodic

***Sustainability Outlooks*** – these are impressive reviews (the latest is due in the Spring of 2007). The title suggests that the focus is on sustainable development. But in reality, the review deals dominantly with environmental issues.

The peers believe it would serve the country well if the planning bureaus and related agencies combined their expertise to provide periodic joint analyses that address the spectrum of sustainable development challenges in a comprehensive and integrated way, and produced genuine sustainability reviews to support the development and continuous improvement of the SDS.

## 6.3 Monitoring

RECOMMENDATION

42 ***Monitoring of the SDS should be broad-based*** - covering the process of developing the strategy itself (e.g. adequacy of participation), and the impacts of implementing government policies, business activities, partnerships, and civil society actions, and ensuring synergy with international reporting obligations (e.g. to the EU and UN Commission for SD).

It is critical to know that a strategy for sustainable development has been successful and is on the right path. Yet, not only do strategies have multiple objectives, they also include activities that will change over time and so will social, economic and environmental conditions. This presents a considerable challenge for monitoring and evaluation, but one that must be met, since the whole point of a strategic approach is to learn and adapt. The central monitoring and evaluation requirement is, therefore, to track systematically the key variables and processes over time and space and see how they change as a result of strategy activities). To do this requires: measuring and analysing sustainability; monitoring implementation of the strategy; evaluating the results of the strategy; and reporting and dissemination of the findings (Box 6.4).

BOX 6.4 RATIONALE FOR STRATEGY MONITORING

***Measuring and analysing sustainability*** is necessary to determine the state of the society, the economy and the environment, the main strengths and weaknesses, the issues for the strategy to address, and underlying factors – in an integrated way and with perspectives over the short-, medium- and long-term. The most productive way to approach this is to undertake an indicator-based sustainability assessment, supplemented by spatial analysis and possibly other contributing measurements and analyses. The indicators chosen for the assessment need continued monitoring to identify trends, detect (and, if possible, anticipate) change, and track progress.

***Monitoring implementation of the strategy*** is necessary to ensure standard management oversight and accountability. Regular monitoring is needed of the following factors to assure that strategy activities are proceeding well:

- *inputs* in terms of financial, physical and human resources applied to the strategy and its related activities;
- *process quality* in terms of how strategy principles are satisfied (e.g. people-centred, participation, integration, commitment generation);
- *outputs* in terms of the generation of strategy products (goods, services and capacities) by agencies involved in the strategy;
- *outcomes* in terms of access to, use of, and satisfaction with strategy products (which are not necessarily under the control of agencies involved in the strategy);
- the *performance of individual strategy actors* in implementing the strategy, in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of their service provision and management.

***Evaluating the results of the strategy*** is necessary to correlate actions with specific changes in human and environmental conditions, test the strategic hypotheses (choice of priority issues, analysis of underlying factors, prescription of actions), assure accountability, capture lessons, and develop capacity through learning.

***Reporting and dissemination*** of the above findings is necessary to feed back key messages to key stakeholder groups, and thus enable them to continuously improve their behaviour, the strategy itself and its component activities.

*Source: Dalal-Clayton and Bass, 2002*

RECOMMENDATIONS

43 ***Reporting should focus*** on key issues that matter to SD and be transparent. A useful model is the Global Reporting Initiative used by industry, but this would need to be translated to the specific needs of the public sector.

44 Ensure ***monitoring*** includes the impact of the Netherlands's policies and actions on and in other countries.

Reporting has to review the state of progress towards sustainability as well as the process and/or delivery of the SD strategy. It covers the attainment of political goals, the implementation of envisaged measures and has to measure quantitatively and assess qualitatively the status of environmental, economic and social development (see also section 5.1, recommendation 27). Sustainability reports have to be published regularly: e.g. every year (e.g. UK) or every two years (e.g. Germany). They are an important instrument for public political debate about sustainable development and the respective policies in the countries. Indicator reports can provide good material on the changing context, some of which may be attributable to the strategy (see chapter 6.4). From 2007, the EU will present a bi-annual report about the implementation of the new EU SD in the member countries. .

A prominent example in The Netherlands is the Sustainability Outlook, produced by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (so far one Outlook was published in 2004 another will be published in June 2007). These are important sources of information for public debate.

Clearly, such state of play overviews provide valuable indications of the effectiveness of NSDS policies and actions, but it is unclear how they have actually been used as guides or incorporated into different monitoring approaches.

Some European examples of governmental reporting on progress with the NSDS are provided in Box 6.5.

**BOX 6.5 SD PROGRESS REPORTING IN GERMANY, THE UK AND FINLAND**

In **Germany** reporting is done in two ways: Every two years a report of the 21 headline indicators is published. As from the 2006 report (published in April 2007), it is prepared by the Federal Statistical Office in its independent capacity and is politically agreed upon by government. A general progress report covering the implementation of the strategy and developing it further was also to be delivered every two years. But from 2008 it will be published every four years because working on the reports cost too much time and energy (which can better be applied to implementation and development of the strategy and the policies themselves).

*Source: www.dialog-nachhaltigkeit.de*

Annual reports have been prepared by the **UK** government reporting progress towards sustainable development. These reports were instituted as part of the implementation package for the 1999 UK Sustainable Development Strategy "A Better Quality of Life". Annual reports were produced in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 (there was no report in 2005 when a new NSDS was launched). The annual reports were produced by the Sustainable Development Unit in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The process involved the use of questionnaires (sent to all government departments and agencies) and data collection, followed by assembling the information into the report. Information on progress against indicators was gathered from a range of sources and published in a separate report. For the 2003 annual report (published 2004), the process took about five months. It involved 6 full-time policy officials and two part-time communication/information officers, as well as requested contributions from government departments across policy areas.

The last annual report (DEFRA 2004) discussed key developments during 2003 as well as providing a stock-take and review of government action and progress since publication of the 1999 strategy. It reports on:

- actions taken at international, European, national and devolved administration levels, to mainstream sustainable development into the policy-making process and day-to-day operational activities;
- progress against impact indicators; towards achieving a sustainable economy; on sustainable communities; on managing the environment and resources; and on international cooperation and development.

*Source: www.sustainable-development.gov.uk*

In **Finland**, indicators are developed by a network of expert organisations ensuring the quality and regular updating of the information. Stakeholders are active in specifying and developing SD indicators that are used also in guiding sector policies. Ad hoc indicators are employed for specific issues on the agenda of the SD Commission. A key role of these indicators is to communicate with and among stakeholders.

In the ***Netherlands*** itself, the 2003 Sustainable Development Action Programme is an overview compiling existing policies (and those to come) rather than providing an overarching SD strategy (see more about the Action Programme in Chapter 2). The Action Programme commits the government to send Parliament an annual report on progress. The preparation of the 2005 report was prepared through processes involving the inter-ministerial groups of VROM and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs took the lead in 'combining' the national and international components (the two ministries have alternated in leading the final process). Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the work was headed by the Special Ambassador for SD. Different

ministries provided information and a series of meetings was organised with line ministries and NGOs. The report was able to draw from a national debate on progress held on 29 November 2005 between ministers and representatives from invited organisations. The draft report was reviewed by ministers who suggested additional information to be added.

The Global Reporting Initiative, used by industry, is a useful model for reporting (Box 6.6), but would need adaptation to make it applicable to the public sector.

**BOX 6.6 THE GLOBAL REPORTING INITIATIVE**

Global reporting initiative (GRI) provides a worldwide framework of sustainability reporting for companies and other organisations. Development of GRI started 1997 as a part of the activities of the US non-profit organisation CERES. It's idea is to gather a broad range of operators: companies, research, NGO's etc. to agree upon a common framework for sustainability reporting.

The GRI vision is that reporting on economic, environmental, and social performance by all organizations becomes as routine and comparable as financial reporting. GRI accomplishes this vision by developing, continually improving, and building capacity around the use of its Sustainability Reporting Framework.

The reporting framework provides guidance on how organizations can disclose their sustainability performance. The Guidelines are the foundation of the framework and it is supported by more detailed protocols and sector supplements. The guidelines give both general instructions (reporting principles and guidance) and a detailed list of issues and indicators, which should be reported (standard disclosure).

The third generation guidelines (G3) published in 2006 puts a stronger emphasis than earlier to the methods of defining the report content. The key words are materiality, stakeholder inclusiveness, sustainability context and completeness. The reporting organisation should be able to justify that what it reports is relevant to its stakeholders, to the success of the organisation and to sustainability in general. G3 also introduced clear reporting levels, which have different demands. With the earlier guidelines, by only partly following them, the reporters could make obscure claims.

GRI is by far the most successful common scheme for sustainability reporting. Around 1000 organisations globally use the guidelines in their reporting. The main criticism towards GRI includes that it is so complicated that it leads to non-informative reports, and that some of the indicators are so vaguely described that the comparability is severely hampered.

In 2005 a pilot version was published of a sector supplement for public agencies to be used as a sustainable reporting guidance tool by all types of public agencies.

*Source: http://www.globalreporting.org/Home*

External audits are sometimes undertaken by bodies which have no direct responsibility for either developing or implementing the strategy. Such auditing can be undertaken by bodies (organisations, consultants) either from within the country or from other countries. A good example of the latter is Austria (Box 6.7).

**BOX 6.7 EXTERNAL AUDIT OF AUSTRIAN NSDS**

In May 2005, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW) appointed an inter-disciplinary group of independent experts from Germany and Austria to evaluate the implementation and impact of the Austrian NSDS (adopted in April 2002).

This focused on institutions established for implementation, and tools and implementation activities, but not the strategy itself and the policy goals it defines. The requirement to undertake such an assessment was set out in the strategy with the aim to improve the strategy's impacts and institutional effectiveness. Four evaluation criteria were used: efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and appropriateness. The experts were guided by a Steering Committee and an expert group within the BMLFUW.

The evaluation was structured as a participatory process to gather an 'internal' perspective through workshops with representatives from selected implementation measures, and experts from the provincial (*Länder*) governments involved, and LA21 processes.

Various methods were used, e.g.:

- document analysis (e.g. work programmes, progress reports, indicator reports) and standardised questionnaires addressed to project managers of the more than 200 activities under the Sustainable Development Strategy (to evaluate institutions and tools);

›

- Questionnaires sent to the officers in charge of strategy implementation projects;
- More than 30 on-site interviews with members of different ministries involved in the implementation process;
- deeper analysis (through a second survey and workshop with project managers) on specific strategy mechanisms and instruments (like a Steering Process Committee, Inter-ministerial Committee for a Sustainable Austria, Advisory Forum for a Sustainable Austria, working groups on planning and implementing key measures, interfaces with decentralised sustainability strategies and Local Agenda (LA) 21 processes, support measures data base, the working programme, progress report, indicator report, monitoring mechanisms and internet platform).
- Comparisons with institutional arrangements and innovations in other OECD member states served as benchmarks for the evaluation of the strategy process.

The Steering Group discussed the final evaluation report which includes a series of recommendations to improve the management and further implementation of the sustainable development strategy. It was submitted to BMLFUW and members of the Committee for the Sustainable Development Strategy (the main body overseeing the strategy process) in December 2005. The recommendations were further discussed in 2006 with the various institutions to assist in strengthening the strategy process.

In ***Canada***, external audits of Departmental SD strategies (there is no national-level or federal SD strategy) are carried out, as a statutory requirement, by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD), located within the Office of the Auditor General (OAG). The CESD is an agent of Parliament and independent of the government and thus external to the strategies' 'owners'. It is mandated to provide parliamentarians with objective, independent analysis and recommendations on the federal government's efforts to protect the environment and foster sustainable development. The CESD submits an annual report on audit findings and associated recommendations to parliament each autumn (see also Box 5.1 on CESD).

Most countries prepare progress reports for major UN conferences, notably the 2002 WSSD and the 2005 Millennium Summit, as well as national progress reports to the CSD. The 2005 UN Summit saw a very large number of national reports on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).





RECOMMENDATION

45 ***Parliament*** should be engaged in debating SD/SDS and monitoring the SDS

Active participation of parliaments is necessary for three reasons: parliamentary control and monitoring, integrating SD in all political fields and enhancing public awareness. Here international parliamentary cooperation forms an important element.

Most parliaments operate standing committees for assessing the performance of government departments, and several now have such committees focused on environment and/or sustainable development.

Parliament faces the same problems as governments when dealing with SD: Can the SD committee take a leading role in the Parliament? How to debate cross-cutting issues without interfering in the competence of other parliamentary commissions, without duplicating debates and without institutional overstretch? Whether the parliamentary SD committee can act as a driving force depends largely on the national political system. National approaches and experiences differ considerably. Box 6.8 describes parliamentary SD monitoring in Germany.

BOX 6.8 PARLIAMENTARY SD MONITORING IN GERMANY

The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development was appointed on 30 January 2004 by the German *Bundestag*. The coalition treaty between the main political parties (Social Democrats and Christian Democrats – which form the current government) included a stated intention to reconstitute the Advisory Council for the new parliamentary period. A new Parliamentary Council on SD was reconstituted on 2 June 2006, with 20 full members (compared to eight in the last legislative period), providing more potential for debate and negotiation.

It is intended to lend a parliamentary dimension to the national strategy on sustainability. It plays a role in developing goals, measures and instruments and defining them in concrete terms, presents recommendations on medium- and long-term planning, enters into dialogue with other parliaments, particularly in the European Union, and underpins the discussion within society on the subject of sustainable development. The Council is to present a report on its work at least once every two years. ›

The Council meets approximately twice per month. It commented on the Federal Government's 2004 progress report on the SD strategy as part of a broader consultation but it has not monitored the strategy as such. It initiated two plenary debates. It has issued opinions on the SD strategy and made some recommendations to government but has no direct power to force change. Its main activities to date include hearings about cross-cutting issues which are documented and put on the Plenary agenda and about adequate forms of sustainability impact assessment to avoid institutional overstretch. Orientation towards more general future perspectives (e.g. demographic change and its consequences for all aspects of SDS predominate. International contacts and exchange are also a key activity of the Council.

There is a common ground of commitment to SD. Actual political controversies are not excluded but reflected in dissenting votes. There is no explicit political backing by the leadership of the parliamentary factions. But as participating in the SD Council is a way for younger politicians to make their mark in politics, SD can secure a more prominent place on the political agenda.

## 6.4 Indicators

**RECOMMENDATION**

46 It will be important to use ***indicators*** with different aims and characteristics and increasing levels of detail based on EU indicators characterised for the Netherlands
- ***Headline indicators*** that resonate with people;
- ***Policy support indicators*** that focus on the direction of change;
- ***Monitoring indicators*** for planning & implementation processes.

Indicators are indispensable for monitoring and reporting. They play a double role: they both measure and communicate the successes and failures of fighting unsustainable trends and promoting sustainable approaches to development. Their main role is to monitor the actual state of SD. They show where we are on the road to SD, what progress has been made towards achieving set goals and where further action is needed. The use of indicators is consistent with international best practice. The development of sustainability indicators (those that reflect the integrated nature of sustainable development) has been promoted by international organisations, e.g. CSD, OECD, EEA





and Eurostat. Countries should participate continuously in their further development.

Much attention has been devoted to seeking a small set – or even a single indicator – that show the integration of the three dimensions of SD (the three P's). But this is proving to be a difficult challenge, especially given that the 'currency' or 'language' of indicators for the three dimensions cannot readily be merged. Economic indicators are either expressed in monetary terms or as rates (growth, inflation, etc.) and environmental indicators in physical units (e.g. hectares of forest lost, numbers of species, concentration of pollutants). Social indicators are related to both real life situations (such as unemployment or poverty rates) and human values (influenced by culture, morals, religion, etc.). So it is no surprise that the indicators used in the Netherlands are similarly compartmentalised and that critics have called for more integrated indicators. It is a real challenge.

Most countries have developed sustainable development indicator (SDI) sets to help them measure progress towards sustainable development, some as part of their SDS process, others independently. There are numerous existing indicator frameworks and sets, varying in their sophistication and coverage. Some set hard and quantitative targets, while others are more general goals. Some of the more commonly used frameworks are
- pressure-state-response (PSR), limited mostly to environmental issues;
- linked human/ecosystem well-being frameworks;
- issue- or theme-based frameworks; and
- capital-accounting based frameworks, centred on the economic and environmental pillars of SD.

Examples of international indicator sets and initiatives include the UNCSD SDI initiative, the MDG indicators, and the UN System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounts. In Europe, the Structural Indicators, the EUSDS indicators, and the EEA environmental indicators are most prominent. A global compendium of (669 !) indicator initiatives is provided at www.iisd.org/measure.

To track progress towards SD, indicators are needed at three levels. At a *first level*, for communicating progress per se, indicators are required that indicate whether progress is heading in the right direction (towards or away from sustainability). Experience suggests that the indicators that are likely to be more useful and effective (usable) for this purpose are those that are readily understandable and resonate with the general public (ie they have a strong potential to communicate progress). They can include a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures as well as measures of institutional and cultural changes.

A *second level* of policy support indicators is intended to support decision-makers. It contains a larger number of indicators, providing more detailed – but

still highly aggregated – information. The level of detail must be sufficient to identify priorities for policy intervention, without getting lost in details.

A *third level* comprises a plethora of monitoring indicators and data sets. These mainly all exist but, where needed, additional information must be gathered for sustainability policy purposes - mostly on the interaction of the 3P dimensions (i.e. on synergies and trade-offs, reflecting the complexity of operationalising integrated, inter-departmental sustainability policies). They are mostly used by administrations and agencies for drafting and monitoring detailed implementation plans.

For the first two levels, considerable effort needs to be made to engage in broad multi-stakeholder debate (through forums/organisations but also by direct engagement with the public) to seek consensus on meaningful indicators that enjoy common support. Where suggestions are submitted, there needs to be a transparent and timely response from government to indicate how these have been incorporated or not used, and why. There is also a need to explore how the indicators eventually will be used and also to create forums and processes for debating the interpretation of the indicators. A national commission on SD can act as such a forum, but the indicators will also need to be examined in different contexts, thus bringing them closer to the third level and detailed operational monitoring .

Inevitably a lot of indicators can be generated, and this can give rise to overload and confusion. Some countries have found it useful to identify a small set of priority (headline) indicators to signal the broad directions of change. For example, in Germany, a small set of such headline indicators concentrate on the main political features and their communication.

In other countries a larger set of more specific core indicators is used for a detailed monitoring process. Both functions have to complement one another. In the UK. the SD strategy contains 20 framework indicators (Box 6.9). These can include a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures as well as measures of institutional and cultural changes. An additional 48 indicators in the SD strategy highlight additional priorities relevant to the UK Government Strategy and fall into one or more of the four priority areas: sustainable development; climate change and energy; protecting natural resources and enhancing the environment; and creating sustainable communities and a fairer world.







BOX 6.9 UK SD STRATEGY FRAMEWORK INDICATORS

| INDICATOR | | CHANGE SINCE | | DIRECTION IN LATEST YEAR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1990 | 1999 | |
| Greenhouse gas emissions | | √ | ~ | ~ |
| Resource use | | √ | ~ | X |
| Waste | | | ~ | ~ |
| Birdlife populations | Farmland | X | ~ | ~ |
| | Woodland | ~ | ~ | ~ |
| | Coastal | ~ | ~ | ~ |
| Fish stocks | | | | |
| Ecological impacts of air pollution | Acidity | | √ | ~ |
| | Nitrogen | | X | ~ |
| River quality | Biological | √ | √ | ~ |
| | Chemical | √ | √ | ~ |
| Economic growth | | √ | √ | √ |
| Active community participation | | | √ | ~ |
| Crime | Vehicle | √ | √ | √ |
| | Burglary | √ | √ | √ |
| | Robbery | X | X | X |
| Employment | | ~ | √ | ~ |
| Workless households | | √ | √ | ~ |
| Childhood poverty | | √ | √ | √ |
| Pensioner poverty | | √ | √ | √ |
| Education | | √ | √ | ~ |
| Health inequality | Infant mortality | X | X | √ |
| | Life expectancy | X | ~ | X |
| Mobility | Walking/cycling | X | X | ~ |
| | Public transport | X | ~ | ~ |
| Social justice | | | | |
| Environmental equality | | | | |
| Wellbeing | | | | |

*Key*
*√ = Clear improvement*
*~ = Little or no change*
*X = Clear deterioration*
*= Insufficient or no comparable data*

*Source: http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/progress/national/framework.htm*

In 2006 a Dutch initiative ***'Index for a Sustainable Society'*** (ISS) was launched which shows at a glance to what extent society in The Netherlands (and in 149 other countries) is sustainable. The results of the ISS 2006 enable everybody – individuals, companies, organizations and politicians – to direct their ambitions towards a sustainable society. It will be updated every two years. Box 6.10 describes the indicators used in ISS.

BOX 6.10 THE DESIGN OF THE ISS 2006

The framework of the Index for a Sustainable Society consists of five categories, each built up from several indicators.

1 **Personal Development**
Healthy Life
Sufficient Food
Sufficient to Drink
Safe Sanitation
Education Opportunities
Gender Equality

2 **Clean Environment**
Air Quality
Surface Water Quality
Land Quality

3 **Well-balanced Society**
Good Governance
Unemployment
Population Growth
Income Distribution
Public Debt

4 **Sustainable Use of Resources**
Waste Recycling
Use of Renewable Water Resources
Consumption of Renewable Energy

5 **Sustainable World**
Forest Area
Preservation of Biodiversity
Emission of Greenhouse Gases
Ecological Footprint
International Cooperation





This framework is likely to be developed further during the coming years, building on the experience in this application.
Only existing data from public sources (e.g. scientific institutes, international organizations) are used to calculate the values of the indicators. From the individual indicators, the values of the categories are calculated, to produce an overall value of the ISS for each country.

*Source: www.nederlandduurzaam.nl*

At the European level, Eurostat is developing a **"pyramid"** system with three levels of indicators: 12 headline indicators (Box 6.11), 45 to monitor the main political goals; and about 100 additional indicators to provide insight on the need for action on specific issues. National indicators should be harmonised with the EU indicator system being developed - this will be part of the first SD report in autumn 2007. The peers consider this to be an important point to guide the further development of national reports.
Using indicators places a heavy demand for data, and all existing sources need to be mobilised and marshalled to input and share information.

BOX 6.11 HEADLINE INDICATORS USED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

In 2005, the EC presented a list of indicators for monitoring the implementation of the political priorities which were agreed at the Gothenburg and Barcelona European Councils or which relate to the commitments entered into by the EU at the WSSD (CEC 2005a). They take the form of a hierarchical framework of 12 headline indicators (corresponding to the main sustainable development themes identified at European and international level), 45 core policy indicators (corresponding to the key objectives of each theme) and 98 analytical indicators (corresponding to measures implementing the key objectives).

*Source: http://66.102.9.104/search?q=cache:JyXrElZxM88J:ec.europa.eu/sustainable/docs/sec2005_0161_en.pdf+eu+12+headline+indicators+sustainable+development&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=uk&ie=UTF-8* ›

| EU HEADLINE SD INDICATORS | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Theme** | **Headline indicator** | |
| Economic development | 1 | Growth rate of GDP per capita |
| Poverty & social exclusion | 2 | At risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers |
| Ageing society | 3 | Current and projected old-age dependency ratio |
| Public health | 4 | Healthy life years at birth by gender |
| Climate change and energy | 5 | Total greenhouse gas emissions |
| | 6 | Gross inland energy consumption by fuel |
| Production and consumption patterns | 7 | Total material consumption & GDP at constant prices |
| | | |
| Management of natural resources | 8 | Biodiversity index |
| | 9 | Fish catches outside safe biological limits |
| Transport | 10 | Vehicle-km & GDP at constant price |
| Good governance | 11 | Level of citizens' confidence in EU institutions |
| Global partnership | 12 | Official development assistance (ODA) as % of Gross National Income |

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**The following websites can be helpful to start searching for more information.**

Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment has a usefull page with links to many other relevant websites,
**www.vrom.nl (www.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=10753)**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **www.minbuza.nl**

A dedicated strategies website can be found on **www.nssd.net**.
This site provides summary information and contact details (including websites wherever possible) for institutions, organisations, agencies and networks known to be actively involved in the field of National Sustainable Development Strategies



# List of abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AER | Dutch Energy Council |
| BSCI | Business Social Compliance Initiative |
| CAP | Common Agricultural Policy |
| CBO | Community-Based Organisation |
| CDF | Comprehensive Development Frameworks |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CESD | Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development (Canada) |
| CIDD | Commission Interdépartemental de Développement Durable (Luxembourg) |
| CNADS | National Commission on Sustainable Development (Portugal) |
| CNDD | National Commission on Sustainable Development (France) |
| Comhar | Sustainable Development Council (Ireland) |
| CPB | Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (The Netherlands) |
| CPO | Inter-ministerial Committee of Departmental Coordinators for SD (The Netherlands) |
| CSA | Community Sustainability Assessment |
| CSD | Commission on Sustainable Development |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee (OECD) |
| DEFRA | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK) |
| DENR | Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Philippine) |
| EC | European Commission |
| EEA | European Environment Agency |
| EEAC | Network of European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils |
| EU | European Union |
| EUSDS | Sustainable Development Strategy of the European Union |
| FNCSD | National Commission on Sustainable Development (Finland) |
| FRDO-CFDD | Belgium Federal Council for Sustainable Development |
| FTA | Foreign Trade Association |
| GRI | Global Reporting Initiative |
| ICLEI | International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives |
| IIA | Integrated Impact Assessment |
| IIED | International Institute for Environment and Development |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund, |
| IPA | Integrated Policy Appraisal |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| IPO | Inter Provincial Council (The Netherlands) |
| ISS | Index for a Sustainable Society |
| JPOI | Johannesburg Plan of Implementation |
| LA21 | Local Agenda 21 |
| LGO | Local Government |
| MA | Millennium Ecosystem Assessment |

| | |
|---|---|
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MNP | Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency |
| NCSD | National Council for Sustainable Development |
| NEAP | National Environmental Action Plan |
| NEDA | National Economic and Development Authority |
| NEPP | National Environmental Policy Plan (1st 1989, 2nd 1993, 3rd 1998 and 4th 2001) (The Netherlands) |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organisation |
| NSDS | National Sustainable Development Strategy |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OFW | Opportunities For Women |
| PCDS | Philippines Council for Sustainable Development |
| PM | Prime Minister |
| PPP | People, Planet, Profit |
| PRS | Poverty Reduction Strategy |
| PSR | Pressure-State-Response |
| RAWOO | Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council |
| RLG | Council for the Rural Area (The Netherlands) |
| RMNO | Dutch Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature & the Environment |
| RNE | German Council for Sustainable Development |
| SAQ | Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) |
| SD | Sustainable Development |
| SDI | Sustainable Development Indicator |
| SDS | Sustainable Development Strategy |
| SER | Social Economic Council (The Netherlands) |
| SITRA | Finnish Innovation Fund |
| TBL | Triple Bottom Line |
| TEKES | Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation |
| TFDO | Inter ministerial coordinating body for SD (The Netherlands) |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCED | United Nations Conference on Environment and Development |
| UNCSD | United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development |
| UNDESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNGA | United Nations General Assembly |
| UN-HABITAT | United Nations Human Settlements Programme |
| VROM | Netherlands Ministry of Environment |
| VROMraad | Netherlands Council of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |
| WSSD | World Summit on Sustainable Development |
| WTO | World Trade Organisation |



Annex 1

# Background and key challenges for national strategies for sustainable development

## A1.1 International commitments to NSDS

In June 19992, Agenda 21 called for all countries to develop national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs) (UNCED, 1992). These were intended to translate the ideas and commitments of the UN Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro into concrete policies and actions. Agenda 21 recognised that key decisions are needed at the national level, and should be made by governments and other stakeholders together. It believed that the huge agenda inherent in sustainable development needed an orderly approach – a 'strategy'.

In 1997, the UN Special Session (Rio+5) reviewed progress five years after the Earth Summit. Delegates were concerned about continued environmental deterioration, and social and economic marginalisation. There had been success stories, but they were fragmented, or they had caused other problems. Sustainable development as a mainstream process of societal transformation remained elusive. Strategic policy and institutional changes were still required. The Rio+5 assessment led governments to set a target of 2002 for *introducing* national sustainable development strategies.

In 2000, at the Millennium UN summit, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed by world leaders include one to 'integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and to reverse the loss of environmental resources' (UNGA 2001, Goal 7, target 9)". NSDS processes offer an effective mechanism to achieving this particular goal and, conversely, an NSDS needs to find ways to address the different MDG goals and targets.

In preparing for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the OECD DAC engaged in an international learning programme on NSDS experience with a range of developing countries. This resulted in the adoption of policy guidance on NSDS (OECD DAC 2001, and the subsequent production of a resource book capturing good practice lessons (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002).

In November 2001, a UN International Forum on National Strategies for Sustainable Development was held in Ghana in preparation for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The participants elaborated guidance on the process of developing and implementing NSDSs. This guidance drew heavily on the OECD Guidance and was presented in January 2002 to

PrepCom2 for the WSSD (UN DESA 2002b). It emphasises multi-stakeholder processes, continuous learning and improvement, and effective mechanisms for co-ordinating strategic planning.

In August-September 2002, at the Johannesburg WSSD, governments again committed themselves to *developing* NSDSs, agreeing in the Plan of Implementation "to take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and begin their implementation by 2005" (Paragraph 145b).

Within Europe, most countries have now developed an NSDS or equivalent, and some countries have progressed to their second or third iterations (e.g. the UK). Overarching is the revised EU SD strategy agreed in June 2006 by the Council of the EU. Its key objectives cover: environmental protection, social equity and cohesion, and economic prosperity (reflecting the three pillars) and meeting international responsibilities. The EU strategy commits member states to complete (at least) their first NSDS by June 2007. It also invites member states to conduct voluntary peer reviews in two rounds during 2006 and 2007.

## A1.2 Learning from NSDS experience at the national level

There have been some valuable lessons from earlier approaches to develop sustainable development strategies during the 1980s and also during the 1990s. However the main success of these pioneering strategies has not been in their implementation, but rather in their role in improving awareness of sustainable development issues amongst a wide range of stakeholders; in developing sustainable development pilot projects; in setting up environmental authorities where these were missing; and in co-coordinating/integrating authorities and forums concerned with sustainable development.

It is now generally accepted that an NSDS should improve the integration of social and environmental objectives into key economic development processes. Simultaneously, an NSDS should be a set of locally driven, continuing processes responding to global commitments. The logic behind the NSDS approach is illustrated in Figure A1.1.

Establishing a stand-alone strategic planning process would rarely be recommended. The main source of learning for a strategy is the review and evaluation of past strategies. Here the peer review process is particularly valuable. Past experience even suggests that, in circumstances of continuing and increasing change, effective strategies require systematic and iterative processes of learning and doing. The more progressive sustainable development strategies introduced in some countries since the mid 1990s do not have discrete beginnings or ends. 'Strategy' is increasingly being used to imply an iterative, learning and continuous improvement framework or system to develop and achieve a shared vision, rather than one-off exercises







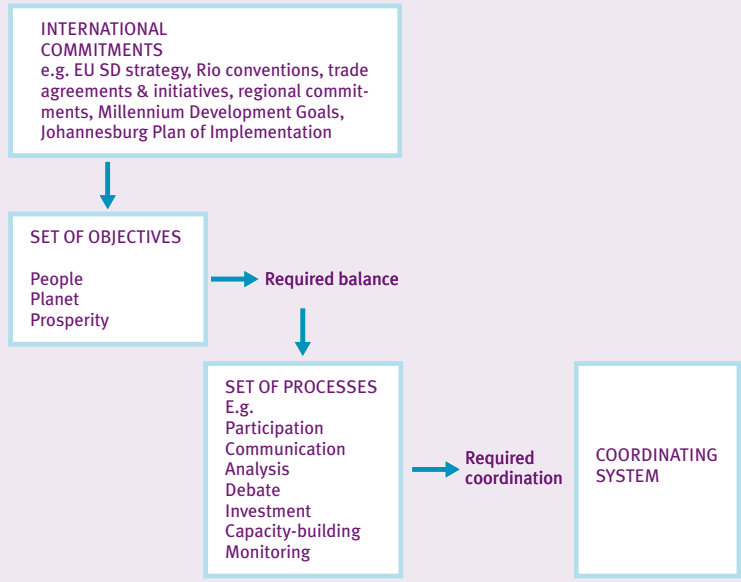
(see Figure A1.2). However, this does not mean that a strategy should exclude quantified targets and timeframes.

## A1.3 Common guidelines for a learning system

To steer the development of such a system, UNDESA has proposed a set of guideline principles for NSDS that can be summarised as (UN DESA 2001a,b):

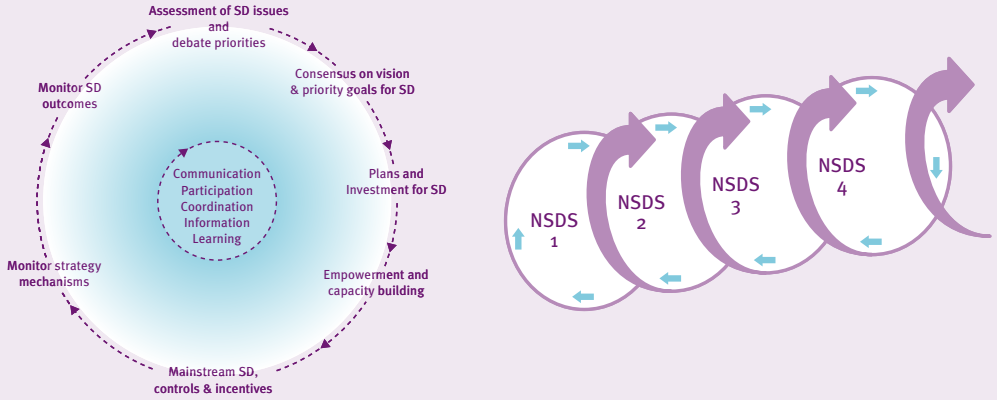
- Integration of economic, social and environmental objectives responding to global commitments;
- Coordination and balance between sector and thematic strategies and decentralised levels, and across generations;
- Broad participation, effective partnerships, transparency and accountability;
- Country ownership, shared vision with a clear timeframe on which stakeholders agree, 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;
- Linkage with budget and investment processes;
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation.

*Figure A1.1 Rationale for a systematic approach to sustainable development strategies*




*Note: This figure might suggest that a sustainable development strategy involves a linear sequence of steps. In practice, strategies need to follow a cyclical, continuous improvement approach with monitoring and evaluation of the processes and outcomes; enabling, renewed debate on key issues and needs; review of the national development vision; and adjustment of actions.*

*Figure A1.2 The continuous improvement approach to sustainable development strategies*




*Note: The left figure might suggests that the overall process involves a rigid sequence of steps. However, in practice, these are on-going and necessarily overlap (as in the right figure). Key features of the central tasks are stakeholder identification, strengthening capacity, collaboration and outreach.*

These guidelines and characteristics are closely related to SDS principles developed by the OECD DAC (2001) –. They provided the baseline for the peer review methodology piloted in France and suggested in the EC manual for peer review, as well as the approach followed in The Netherlands. It enables key questions to be asked concerning how far a country has progressed in terms of satisfying each principle.

Putting an NSDS into operation would, in many cases, consist of using promising, existing processes as entry points, and strengthening them in terms of the key guideline principles listed above. Effective NSDSs are demand-driven processes combining bottom-up to top-down actions.

The challenges of providing effective management of this combination of principles are now more clearly seen to be about institutional change – about generating awareness, reaching consensus on values, building commitment, creating an environment with the right incentives, working on shared tasks – and doing so at a pace with which stakeholders can cope. The means to do this are participation, analysis, debate, experimentation, prioritisation, transparency, monitoring, accountability and review. All countries will have some elements of these systems within existing strategic planning mechanisms. The challenge is to find them, bring them together in an integrated system and strengthen them in a coordinated and coherent manner.

An NSDS can best be seen as a set of co-coordinated mechanisms and processes to implement the above principles and help society work towards sustainable development – but not as 'master plans' which will get out of





date. This will help improve convergence between existing policies, strategies and plans, avoid duplication, confusion and straining capacity and resources. The guidance on NSDS provided by the OECD DAC (2001) and UN (UNDESA 2002b) provide a timely and effective way forward at national to local levels. They offer a 'fitness for sustainable development' diagnostic and a 'gap analysis' to identify processes and mechanisms that are missing. Because national strategies are now understood as being based on "what works" from government, civil society and private sector sources, they should be able to spur countries on to real institutional change by clarifying the issue as one of 'identify and scale up' rather than 'start again'.

## A1.4 The challenge of multiple strategies

Most developed and developing countries now have some form of national strategy for sustainable development (NSDS) in place or in progress. UN DESA provides an annual map of the state of play based on national reports to the Commission for Sustainable Development. (Figure 1.1 in chapter 1) shows the most recent edition). Many strategies tend not to address the whole scope of sustainable development, but focus only on environmental or (increasingly) poverty issues.

Reviewing the state of play also reveals that even the largest countries today are facing a form of 'policy inflation' through the sequential performance of multiple strategy exercises. In brief, these include:

***For poverty alleviation***. Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) are the predominant approach, initially promoted by the World Bank (as part of requirements for securing debt relief). Many bilateral development agencies have accorded Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs) a central place in their support to developing countries.

***For environmental conservation***. The global Conventions that resulted from the 1992 Earth Summit each demand some form of national response. The predominant frameworks include National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans under the Convention on Biological Diversity, National Communications under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, National Action Plans under the Convention to Combat Desertification and National Forest Programmes to implement the Proposals for Action by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Forests. In some countries, frameworks that were developed in the 1980s and early 1990s – National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs) and National Conservation Strategies – are still in operation.

***For an integrated approach to sustainable development***. Three recognised frameworks are predominant and one 'organic' option has emerged in practice:

- At local level, *Local Agenda 21s* have been developed in thousands of local districts or municipalities, as means to put Agenda 21 into action. Some of these have led to significant innovation and changed behaviour.

- The national-level equivalent is the *National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS)*.
- In 1999, the World Bank introduced the concept of the *Comprehensive Development Frameworks (CDF)* as means to ensure integrated development. But this approach has now been largely subsumed under the international focus on poverty reduction strategies.
- Other integrated approaches to sustainable development have developed more organically, most notably the evolution of those environmental strategies (for example, Pakistan) which have progressively had to deal with social and economic issues during implementation, or through the evolution of national development plans, which have had to face up to pressing social and environmental concerns (as in Thailand).

Experience in many countries indicates that there continue to be a number of common challenges to national strategies. But the transition to sustainable development clearly requires a coordinated, structured (i.e. strategic) response that deals with priorities, that can manage complexity and uncertainties, and that encourages innovation.

Any NSDS should be developed with a perspective on general progress with SD over the past 20 years. In this regard, **three key observations** can be made:
- The pace, scale and depth of progress towards SD has been inadequate;
- the underlying causes of un-sustainability remain un-addressed, even if some symptoms have been tackled;
- the majority of people (whether in government, business or as individuals) do not yet 'feel the burn' to act (although the recent shift towards a greater sense of urgency on the need to address climate change may presage a sea change – let us hope so).

### A1.5 Key components for reviewing and learning about an NSDS: process, content, outcomes, and monitoring

The continuous cycle shown in Figure A1.1 implies an iterative process in which lessons learned from developing and then implementing an NSDS, gathered particularly through continuous monitoring and evaluation, are fed back into strategy review and revision. This perspective suggests four key components that can be used as a framework for reviewing and learning about a strategy: process, content, outcomes, and monitoring. Chapters 3 – 6 are concerned, in turn, with each of these components, providing the findings resulting from the peer review workshop and the peers' conclusions and recommendations.

*Source: This chapter draws from a synthesis of experience and lessons on good practice with NSDS (see Dalal-Clayton et al., 2002)*





## Key principles for sustainable development strategies

These are principles towards which strategies should aspire. They are all important and no order of priority is implied. They do not represent a checklist of criteria to be met but encompass a set of desirable processes and outcomes which also allow for local differences.

1 **People-centred**. An effective strategy requires a people-centred approach, ensuring long-term beneficial impacts on disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as the poor.

2 **Consensus on long-term vision**. Strategic planning frameworks are more likely to be successful when they have a long-term vision with a clear timeframe upon which stakeholders agree. At the same time, they need to include ways of dealing with short- and medium-term necessities and change. The vision needs to have the commitment of all political parties so that an incoming government will not view a particular strategy as representing only the views or policies of its predecessor.

3 **Comprehensive and integrated**. Strategies should seek to integrate, where possible, economic, social and environmental objectives. But where integration cannot be achieved, trade offs need to be negotiated. The entitlements and possible needs of future generations must be factored into this process.

4 **Targeted with clear budgetary priorities**. The strategy needs to be fully integrated into the budget mechanism to ensure that plans have the financial resources to achieve their objectives, and do not only represent 'wish lists'. Conversely, the formulation of budgets must be informed by a clear identification of priorities. Capacity constraints and time limitations will have an impact on the extent to which the intended outcomes are achieved. Targets need to be challenging - but realistic in relation to these constraints.

5 **Based on comprehensive and reliable analysis**. Priorities need to be based on a comprehensive analysis of the present situation and of forecasted trends and risks, examining links between local, national and global challenges. The external pressures on a country - those resulting from globalisation, for example, or the impacts of climate change - need to be included in this analysis. Such analysis depends on credible and reliable information on changing environmental, social and economic conditions, pressures and responses, and their correlations with strategy objectives

and indicators. Local capacities for analysis and existing information should be fully used, and different perceptions among stakeholders should be reflected.

6 **Incorporate monitoring, learning and improvement**. Monitoring and evaluation need to be based on clear indicators and built into strategies to steer processes, track progress, distil and capture lessons, and signal when a change of direction is necessary.

7 **Country-led and nationally-owned**. Past strategies have often resulted from external pressure and development agency requirements. It is essential that countries take the lead and initiative in developing their own strategies if they are to be enduring.

8 **High-level government commitment and influential lead institutions**. Such commitment – on a long-term basis - is essential if policy and institutional changes are to occur, financial resources are to be committed and for there to be clear responsibility for implementation.

9 **Building on existing mechanism and strategies**. A strategy for sustainable development should not be thought of as a new planning mechanism but instead build on what already exists in the country, thus enabling convergence, complementarity and coherence between different planning frameworks and policies. This requires good management to ensure co-ordination of mechanisms and processes, and to identify and resolve potential conflicts. The latter may require an independent and neutral third party to act as a facilitator. The roles, responsibilities and relationships between the different key participants in strategy processes must be clarified early on.

10 **Effective participation**. Broad participation helps to open up debate to new ideas and sources of information; expose issues that need to be addressed; enable problems, needs and preferences to be expressed; identify the capabilities required to address them; and develop a consensus on the need for action that leads to better implementation. Central government must be involved (providing leadership, shaping incentive structures and allocating financial resources) but multi-stakeholder processes are also required involving decentralised authorities, the private sector and civil society, as well as marginalized groups. This requires good communication and information mechanisms with a premium on transparency and accountability.

11 **Link national and local levels**. Strategies should be two-way iterative processes within and between national and decentralised levels. The main strategic principles and directions should be set at the central level (here, economic, fiscal and trade policy, legislative changes, international affairs and external relations, etc., are key responsibilities). But detailed planning, implementation and monitoring would be undertaken at a decentralised level, with appropriate transfer of resources and authority.

12 **Develop and build on existing capacity**. At the outset of a strategy process, it is important to assess the political, institutional, human, scientific and financial capacity of potential state, market and civil society participants. Where needed, provision should be made to develop the necessary capacity as part of the strategy process. A strategy should optimise local skills and capacity both within and outside government.

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**NOTES**

***Principle 1***

a) Particular attention must be paid to youth to ensure nurturing of long-term attitudinal changes in society – educational reform is central to this process.
b) While many past strategies have been about development, they have often had mixed effects on different groups.

***Principle 8***

a) It is crucial that the lead institutions are truly representative and reflect the many publics in the country, to ensure national buy-in. There is a tendency to assume that NGOs, CBOs and market-oriented interest groups from the private sector and industry represent civil society. More care is needed to ensure the inclusion also of organisations/leaders drawn from academic, religious, political, cultural and grass-roots levels.

To the above list of principles endorsed by the OECD-DAC, can be added:

***Principle 13***
***Incorporate effective conflict and negotiation management systems.***
Traditional development often tends to generate severe competition over resource allocation and use, and this leads invariably to conflict among stakeholders. Strategy development needs to address this issue for genuine partnership and participation. Thus, resolving conflicts, averting potential ones, facilitating and building capacity for negotiation, bargaining and effective inclusion must be central elements of the strategy process.

*Source: OECD DAC (2001a)*

Annex 3

# The Bellagio principles for assessing progress towards sustainable development

The Bellagio Principles were drawn up by 1996 by an international group of sustainability measurement experts who synthesised the state of then current thinking on how to assess progress towards sustainable development and organized insights into four main areas. Principle 1 deals with the starting point of any assessment – establishing a vision of sustainable development and clear goals that provide a practical definition of that vision in terms that are meaningful for the decision-making unit in question. Principles 2–5 deal with the content of any assessment and the need to merge a sense of the overall system with a practical focus on current priority issues. Principles 6–8 deal with key issues of the process of assessment and Principles 9 and 10 address the need to establish a continuing capacity for assessment.

The principles for assessing progress towards sustainable development comprise:

1 **Guiding vision and goals**
- Be guided by a clear vision of sustainable development and goals that define that vision

2 **Holistic perspective**
- include review of the whole system as well as its parts
- consider the well-being of social, ecological, and economic sub-systems, their state as well as the direction and rate of change of that state, of their component parts, and the interaction between parts, and
- consider both positive and negative consequences of human activity, in a way that reflects the costs and benefits for human and ecological systems, in monetary and non-monetary terms

3 **Essential elements**
- consider equity and disparity within the current population and between present and future generations, dealing with such concerns as resource use, over-consumption and poverty, human rights, and access to services, as appropriate
- consider the ecological conditions on which life depends, and
- consider economic development and other, non-market activities that contribute to human/social well-being





4 **Adequate scope**
- adopt a time horizon long enough to capture both human and ecosystem time scales - thus responding to needs of future generations as well as those current to short-term decision-making
- define the space of study large enough to include not only local but also long distance impacts on people and ecosystems, and
- build on historic and current conditions to anticipate future conditions - where we want to go, where we could go

5 **Practical focus** – based on:
- an explicit set of categories or an organizing framework that links vision and goals to indicators and assessment criteria
- a limited number of key issues for analysis
- a limited number of indicators or indicator combinations to provide a clearer signal of progress
- standardizing measurement wherever possible to permit comparison, and
- comparing indicator values to targets, reference values, ranges, thresholds, or direction of trends, as appropriate

6 **Openness**
- make the methods and data that are used accessible to all, and
- make explicit all judgments, assumptions, and uncertainties in data and interpretations

7 **Effective communication**
- be designed to address the needs of the audience and set of users
- draw from indicators and other tools that are stimulating and serve to engage decision-makers, and
- aim, from the outset, for simplicity in structure and use of clear and plain language

8 **Broad participation**
- obtain broad representation of key grass-roots, professional, technical and social groups including youth, women, and indigenous people - to ensure recognition of diverse and changing values, and
- ensure the participation of decision-makers to secure a firm link to adopted policies and resulting action

9 **Ongoing Assessment**
- develop a capacity for repeated measurement to determine trends
- be iterative, adaptive, and responsive to change and uncertainty because systems are complex and change frequently
- adjust goals, frameworks, and indicators as new insights are gained, and
- promote development of collective learning and feedback to decision-making

**10 Institutional capacity**

Continuity of assessing progress towards sustainable development should be assured by:

- clearly assigning responsibility and providing ongoing support in the decision-making process,
- providing institutional capacity for data collection, maintenance, and documentation, and
- supporting development of local assessment capacity.

*Source: www.iisd.org*





# Typical roles of the main actors in strategy processes, and constraints faced

## a Politicians and leaders

Politicians and leaders in the private sector and civil society will be expected to provide leadership and to endorse and promote the strategy as an initiative in the nation's interest and of importance to society as a whole.

## b Public authorities

Public authorities (i.e. central government, sub-national authorities at various levels, resource boards/agencies) play an important role in putting economic, social and environmental problems on the agenda. They must also provide resources for tackling problems (e.g. money and information); create the framework for economic, political and social rights; shape the regulations to realise goals; establish mechanisms to set standards and to adhere to international obligations; and ensure that policies, plans and programmes are implemented and applied, and that legislation and regulations are complied with. The authorities are also expected to act in the general interest (e.g. protecting wildlife and landscape).

The ***central government*** needs to take the lead in establishing the mechanism(s) for the strategy and creating the necessary enabling conditions – notably an open and transparent, participatory process. Government tends to be bureaucratic and intransigent but can/should:

- resist taking full ownership of and operation control of the process, but play an enabling role - acting as a facilitator of a wider process, creating the broad framework and supporting participation, seeking to engage and empower stakeholdersso as to foster a partnership approach between the different levels of government, the private sector and civil society, and promoting the development of a long-term vision for national development;
- use/build on existing forms of participatory structure available within government which have been used in strategic planning (e.g. the planning systems, decentralised administrative systems, education systems), establish new structures (e.g., special committees, round tables), and build capacity;
- encourage/promote participation throughout the vertical hierarchy – provinces/states and different types of lower-level divisions;
- ensure the committed engagement of all sectoral departments and agencies and key individuals within them (notably those who have cross-sectoral expertise/vision and are open to change);
- ensure the strategy is not affiliated strongly with particular political parties (to help it to survive a change of government), is not in the hands of

politicians or civil servants who could be moved by a new government, and promote strong support outside government.

***Sub-national authorities*** (e.g. at regional, provincial, district and municipal levels) play a parallel role to national government, promoting the development of strategies at these levels. They can/should act as a broker between national policy and the specific demands of different groups on the ground, establishing links and dialogue with the general public (resource user groups, local communities, NGOs, etc) and private sector businesses.

But these more local authorities will need to be given more 'policy space' – more ability to develop policy that is relevant at their geographic levels. Thus, they will need to consider how to transform and translate any national-level strategy(ies) into more detailed or comprehensive approaches relevant at their levels and addressing more local concerns – this may mean taking the lead in establishing a more local strategic planning process (e.g. a Local Agenda 21). Conversely, such authorities (and other stakeholders) will be able to build on already existing sub-national strategies (e.g. the approaches they have followed, the issues and problems addressed, and the solutions and outcomes agreed) in contributing to a national process.

Regional and local authorities will also have to assume and discharge (formal and legal) responsibilities for which they are (or will be) accountable to central and other government bodies and others. They will have to assume responsibility for reporting, monitoring and providing quality assurance, and make clear agreements with one another on these matters. Partnership implies mutual accountability, first horizontally, to the authorities' own management board and the local community, and thereafter vertically to the government level which sets the framework. As monitoring and reporting becomes more integrated, less policing by central government of policy implementation and enforcement will be necessary.

Local rural and municipal authorities are the layer of government closest to the general public, and this gives them a special responsibility for getting ordinary citizens involved in the strategy process (working with NGOs wherever possible – see below).

***Resource boards/agencies*** (e.g. water boards) play a key role in coordinating resource use, increasingly on an integrated resource management basis (this is now acknowledged as more appropriate to sustainable development). They can make valuable contributions to fostering debate and coordinating actions related to natural resources at national to local levels.

### c The private sector

The private sector is responsible for creating goods and services, generating profit for investors and providing employment opportunities, innovation and economic growth. It can nominate representative, accountable members of





the sector to engage in the strategy process. Leaders of large businesses responsible for making new patterns of investment and operation can play an effective role. But there should also be representatives of smaller-scale industries which are important for employment and smaller businesses with particularly high resource requirements (e.g. small-scale mining, agricultural processing) or industries that have sensitive impacts (e.g. tourism).

Organisations and businesses in particular economic sectors or in other homogeneous groups – sometimes referred to as target groups (e.g. agriculture, industry, retail trade, transport) can be the source of particular problems (e.g., pollution) and, as a consequence, can contribute to their solution (e.g. by improving production processes). They also benefit from the good social, economic or environmental conditions (e.g. the food industry needs clean water). Often, the organisations and companies in these sectors have considerable in-house know-how. The private sector (from large multinationals to domestic, small and medium-sized enterprises) also has a major role to play in identifying how it can ensure that it invests in activities and ventures that promote and underpin, and not undermine, sustainable development.

### d Civil society

Some of the more prominent civil society groups tend to be combative and territorial, but can/should:

- Elect/appoint organisations/people to participate in strategy meetings, workshops, and so on, ensuring that they are accountable and aware of/reflect the views of the groups they represent, and have a mandate to voice particular views. Accountability can better be achieved when an interest group is represented by an association with democratic procedures (e.g. chambers of commerce, professional association);
  - Resist being compromised by any support provided to enable their participation (e.g. to meet the costs of attending meetings or preparing informed positions).

NGOs can play an important role in drawing attention to particular issues and problems, mobilising public opinion and advancing knowledge. In developing countries, NGOs play a vital role undertaking development programmes in poor urban and rural communities, have much better knowledge of community problems and concerns than government and can play a key catalytic role in engaging communities in voicing their concerns. In developed countries, the NGO movement is very sophisticated and maintains a dialogue with industry and government. Environmental NGOs, for example, play a major role in nature and environmental education and take action, often through the courts, to defend conservation and environmental interests. NGOs and interest groups must therefore be important partners in any strategy process. Unlike public authorities or target groups, NGOs seldom have any formal responsibilities for implementing or applying government policies, and are free to choose their own roles.

The ***public*** ultimately determines how ambitious policy can be and which measures are acceptable. A societal support base is therefore a prerequisite for a successful strategy. It is the public that puts into practice the notion of sustainable development – by making choices in which they trade off economic and social factors against environmental considerations. The public will play a key role in bringing about desired socio-cultural, administrative and technological breakthroughs and achieving society-wide changes, for example, changing consumption patterns, greening tax systems or moving to environmentally friendly transport systems.

The public are particularly significant consumers. Individuals demand and purchase durables. They respond to financial instruments and price incentives and have their say in local policy-making and planning. They undertake their livelihoods, use resources, produce and dispose of waste (even separating it), pursue recreation, drive vehicles and continually make choices that affect the environment or other citizens and therefore influence sustainable development. But the public also fulfil other roles and they have rights and obligations. They form part of the immediate living environment and comprise employees, employers, self-employed workers, voluntary workers, recreationists, members of householders, those raising children and so on.

Other, more general, organisations such as *citizens' groups* (e.g. trade unions, motorists' associations, councils of churches, consumers' associations, youth groups) can play a key role in communications with the public. Emphasis needs to be placed on action as much as knowledge. The citizen needs to know what he or she can do himself or herself, and both 'desire and be able' to change. It is difficult for the government to gain access to private citizens. Specialist organisations are better placed to do this.

*Source: Dalal-Clayton & Bass (2002)*





# Members of Peer Review Team

| THE PEERS | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mr Pancho Ndebele **Chair** | Corporate Sustainability Manager, South African Breweries | South Africa |
| Dr Ralph Hamann | Senior Researcher at the Environmental Evaluation Unit, University of Cape Town | South Africa |
| Ms Leila Mahomed | Director, Sustainable Energy Africa (NGO) | South Africa |
| Prof Dr Mikael Hildén | Programme Director, Finnish Environment Institute | Finland |
| Ms Dr Armi Temmes | (formerly) M-real Corporation, Senior Vice President | Finland |
| Ms Elina Rautalahti-Mietttinen | Environmental Councellor, Ministry of the Environment, Unit for Sustainable Development | Finland |
| Mr Leo Stranius | Friends of the Earth, Finland | Finland |
| Dr Albert Statz | Head of Division Environmental Policy and Sustainability Strategy, Fed. Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety | Germany |
| Ms Ulrike Röhr | Director, genanet - Focal Point Gender, Environment, Sustainablility / LIFE e.V. | Germany |
| Dr Joachim Spangenberg | Researcher, Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ | Germany |
| Mr Ludwig Karg, Prof Dr Maximilian Gege | INEM/B.A.U.M. Consult GMBH, Chairman/Managing Director | Germany |
| | | |
| Dr Barry Dalal-Clayton **facilitator** | Director for Strategies, Planning and Assessment International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London | Consultant |

Annex 6

# Members and observers Steeringcommittee and project team RMNO

| STEERING COMMITTEE | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** |
| Mr Roel in 't Veld, chair | Chair RMNO |
| Mr Frans Evers | Chair Steering Committee EEAC/council member RMNO |
| Mr Peter Vogtländer | Chair General Energy Council (AER) |
| Ms Marijke van Schendelen | Consultant/ member of the Council for the Rural Area (RLG) |
| Mr Fred Langeweg | Deputy director Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (MNP) |
| Mr Bastiaan Zoeteman | Professor Tilburg University/ member of the Council of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM-council) |
| Mr Jelle Blaauwbroek | Deputy director RMNO, supervisor Peer Review Process |
| **Observers** | |
| Ms Candice Stevens | Advisor OECD Sustainable Development |
| Ms Ingeborg Niestroy | Secretary General EEAC |
| Mr Pedro Barbosa | European Commission, DG Environment, Sustainable Development & Economic Analysis |
| Ms Brigitte Alvarez-Rivero | Sustainable Development Officer NSDS for the UN Secretariat |
| **Secretariat** | |
| Ms Linda Docter | Project manager RMNO, until March 30, 2007 |
| Ms Fieke Krikhaar | Project manager ad interim RMNO, from April 1, 2007 |

| PROJECT TEAM FACILITATING THE REVIEW | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** |
| Mr Jelle Blaauwbroek | Deputy director RMNO, supervisor Peer Review Process |
| Ms Linda Docter | Project manager RMNO, participating until March 30, 2007 |
| Ms Fieke Krikhaar | Project manager ad interim RMNO |
| Ms Willow Martin | Office manager RMNO |
| Ms Anneke Heinecke | Communication officer RMNO |
| Mr Henry Terlouw | Trainee RMNO |



Annex 7

# Schedule of peer review sessions 1-5 april

| SCHEDULE OF PEER REVIEW SESSIONS 1-5 APRIL | |
|---|---|
| Saturday/Sunday morning | |
| | Arrival of peers at hotel in the Hague |
| Sunday 1st | |
| 13.00 | Briefing session for Peers |
| 15.30 | Presentation of latest SD survey results by Fred Langeweg, MNP |
| 16.30 | Depart to Rotterdam |
| 17.00 | Reception by Mayor of Rotterdam |
| 17.30 | Presentations and discussion: Rotterdam as a sustainable city with focus on energy |
| 19.30 | Drinks and Dinner (boat tour in Rotterdam Harbour) |
| 21.30 | Bus leaves for The Hague |
| Monday 2nd | |
| 8.30 | Plenary Government |
| 10.00 | Meeting with Minister Jacqueline Cramer (Spatial Planning and Environment) |
| 11.00 | Plenary NGOs and Business |
| 12.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 | Plenary Politicians |
| 15.15 | Parallel sessions Planning bureaux and Science/Education |
| 17.00 | Peers only session (distil days' discussion) |
| 20.00 | Dinner |
| Tuesday 3rd | |
| 9.00 | Plenary Rural areas/agriculture |
| 12.15 | Lunch |
| 13.30 | Parallel sessions Water and Energy |
| 17.00 | Peers only session (distil days' discussion) |
| 20.00 | Dinner |
| Wednesday 4th | |
| 9.00 | Plenary Process |
| 12.15 | Lunch |
| 13.30 | Meeting with youth and observers |
| 15.00 | Peers only (prepare conclusions/recommendations) |
| 20.00 | Dinner (with a group of key-persons for the Dutch review/strategy) |
| Thursday 5th | |
| 9.00 | Peers only (prepare conclusions/recommendations) |
| 12.15 | Lunch and Presentation of conclusions/recommendations to steering committee |
| 14.00 | Presentation of conclusions/recommendations to high ranking civil servants + feedback |
| 16.00 | Drinks and Depart from 17.00 hours onwards |

Annex 8

# List of participants at peer review sessions

| INTERVIEWS 19-20 FEBRUARY 2007 | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** |
| Mr Jeroen Bordewijk | Council Member RMNO |
| Mr Frans Evers | Council Member RMNO |
| Mr Johan van Reenen | Environment Department, City of Delft |
| Mr Cees Plug | Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment |
| Ms Alice Bouman-Dentener | Netherlands Council of Woman |
| Ms Margaretha Bakker | Netherlands Council of Woman |
| Mr Fred Langeweg | Netherlands Environmental Assesment Agency MNP |
| Mr Gert de Bruijne | WASTE |

| TELEPHONE CONFERENCES | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** |
| Mr Chris Kalden | Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality |
| Mr Rudy Rabbinge | Wageningen University |
| Mr Peter van Wijmen | The Council for the Rural Area (RLG) |
| Mr Frank Dietz | Ministry of Economic Affairs |
| Mr Rein van der Kluit | The Association of Water Boards |
| Mr Pier Vellinga | Wageningen University |
| Ms Annemieke Nijhof | Ministry of General Affairs |
| Mr Adriaan van der Schans | Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment |
| Mr Peter Vogtländer | The Dutch Energy Council |
| Mr Paul de Jongh | |

| REVIEW WEEK 1-5 APRIL 2007 | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | **Organization** |
| Ms Thérèse van Gijn - Bruggink | Advisory Agency van Gijn |
| Mr Rene van Dijk | Aedes |
| Mr Hans Veenenbos | Association of the Dutch Chemical Industry (VNCI) |
| Mr Bas van de Griendt | Building Society MAB Property Development B.V. |
| Ms Lian Merkx | City of Delft |
| Mr Ivo Opstelten | City of Rotterdam |
| Mr Lucas Bolsius | City of Rotterdam |
| Ms Lilianne Ploumen | Cordaid |
| Mr Cock Pietersen | Corus |
| Mr Ad Bijma | COS Netherlands |
| Ms Bernadine Bos | CSR Netherlands |
| Mr Frans Evers | Council Member RMNO |
| Ms Rietje van Dam-Mieras | Council Member RMNO, Open University |
| Mr Bart Jan Krouwel | Council Member RMNO, Rabobank Netherlands |
| Mr Bastiaan Zoeteman | Council Member RMNO, Universiteit van Tilburg |
| Mr Herman Eijsackers | Council Member RMNO, Wageningen University |
| Ms Marga Kool | Council Member RMNO, Water Board Reest en Wieden |
| Mr Hans Haarlem | Delta |
| Mr Niko Roorda | DHO, Dutch network for sustainable development in higher education |
| Mr Remco Ybema | Energy Research Center Netherlands |
| Mr Jan Rotmans | Erasmus University Rotterdam |
| Mr Wim Hafkamp | Erasmus University Rotterdam |
| Mr Paul van Son | Essent Germany |
| Mr Aldrik Gierveld | European Union |
| Ms Florrie de Pater | Free University Amsterdam |
| Mr Frans Berkhout | Free University Amsterdam, Institute for Environmental Studies |
| Mr Donald Pols | Friends of the Earth Netherlands |
| Ms Liesbeth van Tongeren | Greenpeace Netherlands |
| Mr Geurt van der Kerk | Index for a Sustainable Society |
| Mr Doeke Eisma | IUCN Netherlands Committee |
| Mr Jan Paul van Soest | JPvS Advise for Sustainability |
| Mr Jan de Groot | KLM |
| Mr Ferd Crone | Labor Party |
| Mr Cees Romeijn | LTO Nederland, Dutch Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture |
| Mr Barto Piersma | Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality |
| Mr Seppe Raaphorst | Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality |
| Ms Jolinda van der Endt | Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality |
| Ms Michela van Kampen | Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality |
| Ms Renée Bergkamp | Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality |
| Mr Hugo Brouwer | Ministry of Economic Affairs |
| Ms Carla Moonen | Ministry of Finance |
| Mr Paul Hassing | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Mr Ton Boon von Ochssee | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Ms Annemieke Nijhof | Ministry of General Affairs |
| Mr Hugo von Meijenfeldt | Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment |
| Mr Johan Osinga | Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment |
| Mr Onno van Sandick | Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment |
| Ms Henny van Rij | Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment |
| Mr Joost Buntsma | Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management |
| Mr Siebe Riedstra | Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management |
| Ms Renske Peters | Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management |
| Mr Frits Spangenberg | Motivaction International |
| Mr Roelf Venhuizen | NAM |
| Mr Ton Bos | Natuurmonumenten |
| Mr Klaas van Egmond | Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency |
| Mr Gerard Keijzers | Nyenrode Business University |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ms Sylvia Borren | Oxfam Novib |
| Ms Esther Ouwehand | Party for Animal Welfare |
| Mr Jan Laan | Program Office ROM-Rijnmond |
| Mr Ferdi Timmermans | Province Zuid Holland |
| Mr Wiebe Brandsma | Province Zuid Holland |
| Mr Joep Thönissen | Recron |
| Mr Douwe Jan Joustra | SenterNovem |
| Mr Rob Boerée | SenterNovem |
| Mr Ewald Breunesse | Shell Netherlands B.V. |
| Mr Rein Willems | Shell Netherlands B.V. |
| Mr Eric Wanders | Staatsbosbeheer |
| Mr Peter van de Ven | Statistics Netherlands |
| Ms Robert Stikkelman | Technical University Delft |
| Ms Herma de Wilde | The Council for the Rural Areas |
| Mr Marius Enthoven | The dutch Energy Council |
| Mr Hans Mommaas | Tilburg University |
| Ms Elise Allart | TUI |
| Mr Chris Dutilh | Unilever |
| Mr Ton Spoor | VEMW, Association for Energy, Environment and Water |
| Ms Helma Neppérus | VVD |
| Mr Roelof Kruize | Waternet |
| Mr Gert Jan Euverink | Wetsus |
| Ms Maayke Damen | Youth delegation |
| Mr Kimo van Dijk | Youth delegation |
| Mr Gerbrand Haverkamp | Youth delegation |
| Ms Sanne van Keulen | Youth delegation |
| Mr Jochem Knuttel | Youth delegation |
| Ms Marijke Langeveld | Youth delegation |
| Mr Arjan Klopstra | Youth delegation, Coordinator |



Annex 9

# Framework questions for peer review sessions

**Notes:**

a) These questions listed below aimed to provide a flexible framework for discussion for the various sessions of the peer review meetings on 1-5 April, 2007. They were not designed to be limiting or exclusive, but to provide a basic structure and menu/selection for dialogue and exploration (not all necessarily need be asked in every discussion).

b) Some participants were involved in only one or a few parts of the existing strategy process. Others may have been involved in more. But all participants were asked to reflect, in advance, on their experience so as to be best prepared to enrich the debate.

c) The questions are categorised in the four main themes that are the key elements of a cyclical, iterative, SD strategy cycle: process, content, outcomes, and monitoring.

BOX A.1 PROCESS QUESTIONS

### Leadership

- Where should the overall leadership of a new strategy be placed – in a particular line ministry or more centrally (e.g. Prime Minister's office, Cabinet)?
- How should a broader team effort (i.e. broader than just politicians) to take the strategy process forward be enabled?
- What would be the most helpful forum for enabling debate and dialogue between major stakeholder groups? Would a new Council for SD help? Or something else. How might this best be constituted?

### Vision

- How can a guiding vision for SD best be developed? Who should participate? How can the process be organised?

### Strategy management and organisation

- Who should be responsible for managing the day-to-day tasks of developing the strategy (e.g. which agency, institution(s), individual(s), independent secretariat)?
- What competences would be necessary to make the team work?
- How can the strategy process be best designed so that it is an iterative, learning process that includes periodic revision, building

on feedback and results? Do you agree with this assumption If not why not?
- How frequently should the strategy be reviewed or revised?
- How can continuity be enabled – so that the strategy is not at risk of being sidelined, ignored or abandoned by changes in government and political programmes?
- How can a new strategy build on, link to, and support the existing Action Plan and past strategies as well as sectoral and local strategies, policies and plans?
- How long should the process to develop the strategy take?

**Participation**
- How can broad and genuine stakeholder participation be best organised – so that organisations and individuals are able to be directly involved, reflect their priorities/views and be involved in determining/influencing the process and strategy content, and in implementation?
- How can the strategy best develop or build partnerships amongst government, civil society, private sector and external institutions?

**Information and communication**
- What approach is required to communicate the strategy effectively (the process and ways to engage in it, the content, ways to engage in implementation, etc) so that it is understood, accepted, owned and carried out by the whole country (government, civil society and private sector, all age and interest groups, etc)?

**Resolving different opinions/conflicts**
- What approaches might be used to make choices, resolve different opinions about particular issues, and negotiate trade-offs?

BOX A.2 CONTENT QUESTIONS

**Focus and integration**
- How can we make an SD strategy part of the mainstructure of governmental policy AND other parts of society like business and NGOs at the same time?
- What would be the necessary elements of an effective strategy?
- What are the key issues that the strategy needs to address (e.g. climate change, energy use, transport, environmental degradation, conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, international footprint of NL, etc)?

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- How can the strategy (a) better address social issues and (b) integrate economic, social and environmental objectives?
- What should be the core drivers of the international dimension of the strategy? Is it the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), millennium development goals, key challenges (e.g. climate change, globalisations, security), etc)?
- How can the domestic and international dimensions be better integrated? Should the strategy link national and international plans?
- Can the strategy be harmonised with the EU SD strategy as well as with other existing regional, national and local strategies and planning processes (e.g. environmental strategies/action plans, biodiversity strategies, strategies for particular resources or sectors, Local Agenda 21 type activities) and decision-making systems?
- Should the strategy provide an overall umbrella framework for development, or merely address gaps in existing policies, plans and strategies?
- Should the strategy be linked coherently with the national budget, and how?
- How should the strategy be linked to private sector investment?

BOX A.3 OUTPUT/OUTCOME-RELATED QUESTIONS

- What outcome/result of a strategy would make you happy, what results should be visible to satisfy you?
- What approaches would help focus on achieving effective strategy implementation?
- Should the strategy be related to a parliamentary process, e.g. a parliamentary committee or debate on the strategy and the issues it raises?
- What steps can be taken to 'green' the political, business and consumer mainstreams, and influence values, lifestyles and choices that underlie and shape them?
- What steps can be taken to influence innovation and a step-change in delivering sustainable development? For example, how could the strategy
  - Help government departments to work together?
  - Set priorities?
  - Engage and involve the youth in becoming ambassadors of sustainable development?
  - Change behaviours?
  - Make a difference in individual sectors?
  - Engage the private sector in delivery/implementation and invest in sustainable development activities?

**BOX A.4 MONITORING AND INDICATOR QUESTIONS**

- What would be the main purpose of monitoring for a SD strategy and what reporting and monitoring mechanism(s)/system(s) are needed?:
  - Are existing ones adequate and effective?
  - How could they be improved?
  - Is there available/adequate data to support the indicators?
  - What types of indicators are needed?
  - Should the indicators be split to social, economic and environment?
  - Is there room for the use of foot printing concepts?
- What is the appropriate type and number of targets and indicators? Is a wide range of indicators best? Or perhaps few headline/core indicators?
- How should progress be reported; and to who?
- What would be appropriate mechanisms for assessment, follow up, evaluation and feedback ?

**RMNO, linking policy and research**
The Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment (RMNO) advises the government, either on its own initiative or in response to requests from ministries, on the content and organisation of research concerning spatial planning, the environment, nature and landscape. Focusing on mid- to long term planning, RMNO tries to be a knowledge broker between science, politics and society. Preparing advice is often a complicated and time-consuming process. The publication of preliminary studies is a way to stimulate reflection, and is often a landmark in such processes. Therefore RMNO not only issues Advice, but also Preliminary studies and Background studies.

**A new Sustainable Development Strategy, an opportunity not to be missed** is the report of the peer review process of the SDS of the Netherlands. Peers from Finland, Germany and South Africa were asked to review the existing Dutch NSDS and to make recommendations on how best to develop a new NSDS based on their own and other international experiences. The review involved several steps, preparation of a background report, a scoping workshop to design the methodology, interviews and telephone conferences and as main event a peer review week (1 to 5 April 2007) with discussions with participants from government, business, civil society, science and youth.

In the report 46 recommendations for a new sustainable development framework are presented. The report is the advice from the peers to the government of the Netherlands. Whilst it is presented in the RMNO series 'Advices', it is not the advice of the RMNO itself. The RMNO is merely acting as the message carrier on behalf of the peers.

Advisory council for research on spatial planning, nature and the environment

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