

## **Strategies for sustainable development in the thicket of national planning processes**

**From convergent concepts  
to coherent actions  
in development cooperation**

**Division 44**

Environmental Management, Water, Energy, Transport

**Unit 4404**

Environmental Policy, Institutional Development

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## Preface

Since UNCED, sustainable development is a universally accepted vision guiding development policy. Agenda 21 and corresponding political decisions taken by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the European Union (EU) have charged development cooperation with supporting developing countries in formulating and implementing national strategies for sustainable development. In the 1990s, this gave rise in many countries to an upsurge of national planning processes. In practice, however, most of these processes have concentrated upon environmental issues.

With the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) process, and above all with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process launched by the IMF and the World Bank within the context of the debt relief initiative, further national planning processes very recently emerged. Both build upon the same principles as strategies for sustainable development, notably ownership, participation and a holistic approach.

Planning processes built upon such concepts plainly offer great opportunities, both for developing countries and for the modernization of development cooperation. They centre on strategies which present challenges to all participants, both in terms of substantive scope and in terms of the complexity of the requisite consensus-building processes. In many developing countries, their elaboration requires donor support. For the GTZ as a technical cooperation agency, the opportunity thus arises to position itself as a competent provider of relevant consultancy services in an important field – situated between 'projectitis' and global structural policy. To this end, the wealth of relevant experience available at the GTZ needs to be assembled and concentrated into a service package.

To exploit the opportunities, a range of preconditions must be met on both the developing country and donor sides. Building upon the experience gained with national strategies for sustainable development and other (environmental) plans in the 1990s, the present paper aims to contribute to the debate on the opportunities – and risks – associated with a renaissance of national planning processes. It seeks not least to demystify such plans. Wherever their preconditions are absent, their effectiveness will be limited. Experience in the environmental sector shows that, despite intentions to the contrary, shortcomings have arisen repeatedly and particularly in the process dimension. This raises the question why this is so. Finally, the aim is to prevent a proliferation, a (uncoordinated) spreading and overlap of such initiatives, such as already overburdens many countries today. No one would be served if the 'thicket' of national planning processes became impenetrable.

Strategies for sustainable development, the CDF initiative and PRSP processes all have very different strengths and weaknesses. In many respects, they break new ground for development cooperation. We therefore combine our contribution to the debate with an appeal to all those who have until now worked on these issues largely in isolation from each other to engage in a joint endeavour to learn from the diverse experience gained. This is essential if convergent concepts are to lead to coherent actions.

Readers pressed for time are urged to study sections 2.4, 5 and 6. We have done our best to make each section complete in itself and readily comprehensible. For the briefest overview, we refer to the executive summary.

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GTZ Pilot Project Institutional Development in Environment (PVI)  
Bonn/Eschborn, March 2000

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## Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| BMU   | Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit<br>(German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety) |
| BMZ   | Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung<br>(German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)                 |
| BUND  | Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland<br>(Friends of the Earth Germany)   |
| CBD   | Convention on Biological Diversity   |
| CCD   | Convention to Combat Desertification   |
| CDF   | Comprehensive Development Framework  |
| CESP  | Country Environmental Strategy Paper   |
| CILSS | Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel<br>(Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel)              |
| CSD   | Commission on Sustainable Development  |
| DAC   | Development Assistance Committee of the OECD   |
| DC    | Development cooperation  |
| DFID  | (British) Department for International Development   |
| FAO   | Food and Agriculture Organization  |
| GNP   | Gross National Product   |
| GTZ   | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit  |
| ICLEI | International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives  |
| IDA   | International Development Agency   |
| IIED  | International Institute for Environment and Development  |
| IUCN  | International Union for the Conservation of Nature<br>(The World Conservation Union)   |
| NAP   | National Action Programme to Combat Desertification  |
| NCB   | National Consultative Body   |
| NCS   | National Conservation Strategy   |
| NDCP  | National Desertification Control Plan  |
| NEAP  | National Environmental Action Plan   |
| NEMP  | National Environmental Management Plan   |
| NFP   | National Forestry Plan   |
| NGO   | Non-governmental organization  |
| NSSD  | National Strategy for Sustainable Development  |
| OECD  | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development  |
| PVI   | Pilotvorhaben Institutionenentwicklung im Umweltbereich<br>(GTZ Pilot Project Institutional Development in Environment)                                    |
| SMP   | Sectoral Master Plan   |
| TC    | Technical cooperation  |
| TFAP  | Tropical Forestry Action Plan  |
| UBA   | Umweltbundesamt<br>(German Federal Environmental Agency)   |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| UN    | United Nations  |
| UNCED | United Nations Conference on Environment and Development  |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework   |
| UNDP  | United Nations Development Programme  |
| UNEP  | United Nations Environment Programme  |
| VCI   | Verband der Chemischen Industrie<br>(the German chemical industry association)  |
| WBGU  | Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale<br>Umweltveränderungen (German Advisory Council on Global Change) |
| WCS   | World Conservation Strategy   |
| WWF   | World Wildlife Foundation   |

## Executive summary

### *Current trends in international development cooperation*

Based on decades of experience of international development cooperation, and as a reaction to the multifaceted challenges of our times, a trend can currently be observed towards *cross-sectoral, multi-donor, country-driven and intentionally highly participatory approaches to national-level strategic planning*. Three major international initiatives are currently under way to implement this conceptual trend in practice.

### *Current initiatives*

- OECD DAC members have committed themselves to support developing countries in formulating and implementing "*National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSDs)*". Being part of the international development targets as spelt out in the 1996 OECD DAC vision "Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", NSSDs offer a high-level framework to integrate and harmonize existing plans and strategies of the countries concerned. According to this common understanding, the focus of donors should be on promoting and facilitating societal processes, implying that NSSDs should be viewed as an offer – not a condition – from the donor community to developing countries to support these processes.
- Based on the World Bank's 1998 report "Assessing Aid", J.D. Wolfensohn put forth his proposal for a "*Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF)*" in January 1999. The CDF represents a widening of perspective, from a focus on macro-economic indicators, to include structural, human, physical and country-specific factors in development planning, and to increase the transparency of activities and plans between different actors in the planning process (government, civil society, the private sector, and the donor community). The basic principles of the CDF are ownership of the framework by the countries concerned, a holistic approach, a long-term vision, and a broad involvement of all relevant actors. The central management instrument of CDF, the CDF matrix, is currently being tested in 13 countries, all of which are self-selected.
- Meanwhile, the IMF and the World Bank have launched a third initiative that has, within the shortest time, come to be the most prominent one in the current debate: The call for developing countries to elaborate "*Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)*". Following the Cologne G7/G8 summit in June 1999, PRSPs represent a switch in the strategic orientation of the Bretton Woods institutions. In an attempt to strengthen the link between debt relief and poverty reduction, countries must demonstrate their commitment to take action against poverty. Based on the experience that ownership is a precondition to the commitment of countries to implement such strategies, and on the knowledge that, in order to be appropriately targeted, the people affected by their outcomes must be involved in their elaboration, PRSPs are – as is the CDF – to be formulated in country-driven, results-oriented, participatory processes, based on a long-term perspective.

### *From convergent concepts ...*

All three initiatives clearly have a number of common objectives and characteristics. The basic intention behind all of them is to set a solid, comprehensive, and commonly agreed framework for all actors involved in the development process, thereby improving the institutional and political conditions of the countries concerned, as well as increasing transparency and enhancing donor coordination.

However, there are also a number of differences between them. The strengths and weaknesses associated with each of them are related to their respective context and objectives,



and seem to be manifest in three main leverage points that may be decisive for their long-term success:

- The extent of *process orientation and openness* with respect to the envisaged results, which is decisive for the ownership of the outcomes as well as for the extent of participation open to all relevant actors. While NSSDs are probably the most open approach regarding the process as well as the results, the CDF already provides more stringent directions in terms of how these processes ought to be organized and what contents may be crucial. PRSPs, on the other hand, clearly focus on a specific aspect of development (poverty alleviation) and relate this to conditions for debt relief. Although there is a definite commitment on the side of the IMF and the World Bank to "put countries in the driver's seat" and to promote and support participatory processes, there must necessarily be limits to the openness of these processes – the reason lying in the following leverage point:
- The implementation of the Cologne agreements for debt relief inevitably exerts *pressure* on HIPC countries to respond to the demands of the donors. The international donor community justifiably asks for certain conditions to be fulfilled before major debt relief is agreed upon. However, it is precisely these conditions, and the pressure associated with them, that must inhibit true feelings of ownership and active, self-determined participation across sectors. The CDF on the other hand, and to a yet greater extent NSSDs, have rather less pressure behind them. While this has made progress slow in some cases, and some processes temporarily got stuck, the final outcomes of these strategic processes may be assumed to be more truly country-owned than those of PRSP processes.
- The third aspect is not directly related to the first two, but is another striking difference between the three initiatives: the extent to which the *environmental dimension of sustainable development* is considered. While NSSDs – in spite of intentions with respect to comprehensiveness – are still (and wrongly) often associated with purely environmental plans, the environmental dimension of development plays only a limited role in the CDF process. The PRSP initiative, in contrast, is not explicit at all regarding ways to deal with environmental issues. Yet there are good reasons to raise these questions: The relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation is as profoundly analysed as is the connection between poverty and environment.

Considering these strengths and weaknesses, the greatest current risk, it seems, is that the different initiatives continue to proceed in isolation from each other, and that the opportunities for synergy and coherence are missed in favour of yet increased proliferation of strategic planning demands, competition and dispersal. To make full use of those opportunities, and to minimize the risks, there is a need to move from the observed convergence of concepts to a coherence of actions.

#### *... to coherent actions*

To make all of these efforts meaningful, we must keep in mind that neither NSSDs, nor CDF or PRSP processes, are objectives in themselves. Rather, they are means to promote sustainable development, strategic planning, and poverty reduction. Having said this, we should return to some important lessons that have been learned in industrialized as well as developing countries, in the field of the environment as well as in many other fields. In the environmental field, for instance, these are to be found in the many planning processes related to the implementation of the various Rio conventions, in experience with the World Bank directive on National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs), etc., and not least in the difficulties even industrialized countries are facing when attempting to get involved in participatory strategic planning processes.

Experiences from the various recent initiatives, but also from similar, past approaches and from development cooperation in the various sectors and fields, should therefore be shared and approaches coordinated.

- The process dimension of national planning is decisive for the ownership by the countries and thus for the impacts it is able to produce. The complexity of these processes must not be underestimated. This has consequences for the nature and timeframe of deadlines and indicators, for the modalities of the respective processes, as well as for the roles and contributions of the donor community.
- Dynamic planning processes at a national level require a certain degree of pluralism. They need qualified organizations at all levels, and articulate stakeholder representation. These preconditions are not given equally in all countries; expectations regarding the speed of the process and the quality of the outcomes therefore need to be adapted realistically to country conditions. In turn, too many competing national planning approaches lead to a proliferation of demands on partner countries, and a potentially counterproductive absorption of local capacities.
- Far-reaching national planning processes – being means to an end rather than ends in themselves – should not be overburdened with too many objectives at the same time. Legitimate donor interests (e.g. in the context of debt relief) can probably be served better by interim plans, thus allowing the dynamics of the actual processes to evolve fully.

#### *The role of bilateral development cooperation*

There is a wealth of experiences and capacities to offer to support countries in their strategic national-level planning processes. Bilateral donor agencies assisting in the implementation of development programmes have the conceptual background as well as broad, hands-on experience with participatory approaches to strategic planning in different fields, different cultures, and at various hierarchical levels. However, there is little experience to date in supporting the specific kinds of far-reaching, comprehensive planning processes under discussion here.

It seems clear that donor support in national planning processes can be delivered best in terms of capacity development. In this, donors should take on a catalytic role, focusing on the methodologies and modalities of process management. The GTZ needs – as do other bilateral agencies – to make every effort to put its relevant capacities and experiences together in a consistent package of services, aimed specifically at supporting these crucial processes. Capacities available, e.g. in the GTZ, combine broad country experience with technical and methodological know-how in policy advice (on macro, sectoral as well as thematic level); experience in moderating and coordinating cross-sectoral, multi-donor strategic planning processes; experience with participatory approaches in many different fields and on various levels; etc.. The richness of an organization the size of the GTZ lies in its breadth of experience, spread across a great number of departments and among many people. Therefore, these experiences need to be painstakingly identified and bundled. GTZ is currently in the process of assembling such packages in an organization-wide communication and coordination process.

The learning process is thus two-sided: It is the partner countries' responsibility to set the scope and speed of their national strategic planning processes. In turn, it is the responsibility of development cooperation agencies to carefully and constructively use the lessons learnt from past experience, and to continue to learn from processes in the future.

## **1. National strategies within the context of international development cooperation trends**

For some years now, international development cooperation (DC) efforts – and with them German technical cooperation (TC) activities – have been undergoing a process of fundamental reorientation. Catchwords such as 'more political' TC, democracy promotion, good governance, policy coherence, programmatic approaches, donor coordination etc. dominate the debate. These changes are an outflow of lessons learnt and understandings gained in some 50 years of international DC efforts that have largely concentrated upon the project level (a focus now derided by many as 'projectitis').

This rethinking of development is accompanied by a quest for ways to bring about more coherence among the various policy sectors, to reform political and institutional settings in partner countries and to create more transparency – both within countries, among developing and industrialized countries, and among donors. The guiding principle of sustainable development – recognized internationally since, at the latest, the 1992 Rio de Janeiro UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – is a keystone of this endeavour. The principle of sustainable development expresses an understanding that, over the long term, economic, social and ecological goals are not in competition, but rather complementary and interdependent dimensions of the development process, and will only be attained through cross-cutting concepts and approaches. The principle further recognizes the fact that, global interconnectedness notwithstanding, such approaches can only be developed within specific local contexts, in accordance with the cultural, institutional and political framework conditions given in each case. This does justice to the realization that, while we are indeed all in one boat, each must row with his or her own oars.

The international agreements forged at UNCED concerning the implementation of Agenda 21 and the various Conventions (on climate, biodiversity and desertification) are an outcome of this rethinking. These agreements are not concerned with individual sectors but rather cross-sectoral issues (Conventions), or are geared to implementing the guiding principle of sustainable development as a whole (Agenda 21). A further characteristic is that many passages of these agreements underscore the need to involve all relevant actors on a broad basis in the strategy formulation process. Furthermore, the Rio agreements address all signatory states. Developing and industrialized countries alike are called upon to identify for themselves the avenues by which they shall implement the guiding principle of sustainable development and to elaborate appropriate strategies. However, industrialized countries should provide financial and consultancy support to developing countries in these processes.

Multilateral and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are now also increasingly embracing such cross-sectoral approaches. The trend towards such approaches is apparent at all levels. It is exemplified by the expansion of traditional structural adjustment programmes to sectoral investment programmes, the elaboration of National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs), National Conservation Strategies (NCSs) and many other moves. Almost all initiatives of this kind express a conviction that strategies enjoying broadly based acceptance are fundamental to visions that guide actions.

There is, however, the problem that adequate coordination among the various initiatives is frequently lacking. In fact, the point has now been reached at which there is a proliferation of strategy requirements upon individual countries. This is overburdening the financial, human-resource and institutional capacities of many partners. As yet, such initiatives have only contributed in isolated instances to improving the coherence of development efforts. It is not least for that reason that there is currently a new trend towards improving, at a superordinate level, the coherence of these approaches and contributing to the prevention of

a further proliferation of requirements. Recently, international attention has focused on three such initiatives:

- The National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD) initiative, derived from Agenda 21 and taken up in 1996 by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC),
- the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) presented in January 1999 by World Bank President James Wolfensohn, and
- the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) drafting processes initiated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank within the context of the debt relief initiative since autumn 1999.

Each of the three initiatives – discussed in more detail in the following sections – was launched for a different reason. However, their basic motivations and objectives have several parallels. In all three, great importance is attached to creating transparency, ensuring partner ownership of processes, gaining the participation of broad segments of the public and providing a processual orientation. Indeed, the terminology with which the various approaches operate is strikingly similar. This clearly expresses a rethinking of concepts, notably within the two Bretton Woods institutions, which is to be welcomed.

Nonetheless, the question does arise of the extent to which this new 'spirit' is manifested in the reality of the various initiatives. For the disparate reasons for which they were launched also condition their modalities of implementation. While this leads to a number of substantive and processual issues, at present the greatest danger is that approaches are inadequately coordinated. That could lead – now at a higher level – to an entirely counterproductive 'meta-proliferation' of 'holistic' or 'cross-cutting' strategies.

The purpose of the present paper is therefore to identify both the opportunities and the emergent risks, and to provide first indications of how German DC activities can contribute to avoiding these risks. The following discussion is based mainly upon experience gained in the environmental field.

## **2. Current national-level planning initiatives**

In the following, we first present the basic elements of the initiatives launched by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We provide a brief overview of their origins and motivations and of the reasons why the various initiatives emerged. Each section sets out the current implementation status of the initiative in question. In conclusion, we provide a comparative overview of common ground and differences among the three approaches.

### **2.1. OECD DAC: National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD)**

#### *Context*

The OECD DAC's 1996 strategy document "Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation" adopted a guiding vision for international cooperation in the coming decades. The document addresses the three dimensions of sustainability, formulating economic, social and environmental goal indicators for a year-2015 planning horizon. The goals are not unique; DAC is by no means striking out on its own. All goals are derived from previous international agreements. For these, the document sets out in particular the role and responsibility of the donor community.

- The goal for the economic dimension is derived from the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration: The proportion of people living in extreme poverty worldwide should be reduced by one-half by 2015.

- The social dimension is addressed by four sub-goals in the spheres of primary education, gender equality, infant, child and maternal mortality and, finally, reproductive health services. The corresponding goal indicators are quantified and derived from agreements adopted at the UN conferences in Copenhagen (social development, 1995), Peking (women, 1997) and Cairo (population, 1998).
- The goal for the ecological dimension reads as follows: *"There should be a current national strategy for sustainable development, in the process of implementation, in every country by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015"*<sup>1</sup>. The document stresses that the capacity of countries to address environmental issues and respond to environmental problems is a precondition to attaining this goal.

The third of these goals is derived from Agenda 21, which, notably in chapter 8, calls upon all states to formulate national strategies for sustainable development. Such national planning processes are viewed as a prime mechanism by which to implement at country level the guiding principle of sustainable development. This was reaffirmed by the 1997 Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS, Rio+5).

**Excerpt from Agenda 21, Chapter 8.7**

"Governments, in cooperation, where appropriate, with international organizations, should adopt a national strategy for sustainable development based on, inter alia, the implementation of decisions taken at the Conference, particularly in respect of Agenda 21. This strategy should build upon and harmonize the various sectoral economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country. The experience gained through existing planning exercises such as national reports for the Conference, national conservation strategies and environment action plans should be fully used and incorporated into a country-driven sustainable development strategy. Its goals should be to ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations. It should be developed through the widest possible participation. It should be based on a thorough assessment of the current situation and initiatives."

To operationalize the strategic NSSD target, DAC has set up a special Task Force (TF-NSSD) chaired by the United Kingdom and the European Union. The mandate of the Task Force is to clarify the understanding of the target for the donor community, and to elaborate, on an experiential basis, operational guidelines (best practices) for member states by which to support developing countries in drafting such strategies. The Task Force does not initiate strategic planning processes.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Task Force devotes particular attention to integrating the perspectives and experiences of partner countries. From the onset, developing country representatives were involved in Task Force debates. Moreover, concrete country-level experience shall be collected on the ground in the coming year, by means of intensive dialogues with representatives of the broadest range of groups in society (see on this the implementation status described below).

The Task Force is agreed that coordinating all groups in society and reconciling their disparate interests is a particular challenge in such strategy formulation processes. Experience teaches us that such broadly based, socially owned processes are lengthy and troublesome. Their progress can thus be described at best by 'soft' process indicators. The goals of the economic and social dimensions of the OECD vision – with which the elaboration of NSSDs is considered equivalent – are, in contrast, of a more tangible, quantifiable nature. In the opinion of the Task Force, this bears a certain risk that NSSDs, too, are misunderstood as 'hard' indicators, manifested in particular by the existence of corresponding strategy documents in the countries.

In the opinion of the Task Force, this risk is increased insofar as that a timeframe is set for the strategic NSSD target. This could be misinterpreted as a deadline by which to produce

corresponding documents. Such a view would run counter to the importance of the social process underscored in the same context – a process essential to acceptance and ownership of such strategies by all relevant actors, and thus ultimately crucial to the real implementation of these strategies.

Finally, the Task Force is aware that a perception of NSSDs as an isolated, add-on approach could lead to a further proliferation of requirements upon partner countries. This would be counterproductive. The fundamental idea of NSSDs, underscored in Agenda 21, is that of a framework serving to promote coherence among already existing planning processes. It follows that NSSDs should be viewed more as a new understanding of planning than a new plan.

The OECD confirmed this understanding at its high-level meeting in May 1999 by adopting a 'Clarification Statement' submitted by the German side (cf. Annex).<sup>2</sup> According to this, NSSDs are to be

- interpreted as overarching strategy formulation processes of a cross-cutting nature – not as environmental plans;
- conceived of as a long-term framework bringing coherence to already existing planning processes – not as additional planning processes;
- promoted particularly with respect to the planning and coordination process – and less with respect to the production of specific documents;
- understood as a long-term offer of the donor community to support developing countries in establishing such processes – not as a short-term requirement.

#### *Implementation status*

The Task Force is currently laying the groundwork for Country Dialogues with five selected partner countries. The objective of these dialogues is to collect, in an intensive exchange with participating countries, experience in establishing and steering strategic planning processes. From this, recommendations shall be derived for the support of such processes by the international donor community. The partner countries for the Country Dialogues are: Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Nepal, Tanzania and Thailand. A further Regional Dialogue is envisaged with countries belonging to the CILSS region. The outcomes of the Country Dialogues shall be published in late 2000 in the form of operational guidelines for the donor community and a collection of best practices.

To ensure broad dissemination of the experience gathered, particular attention was given when selecting the countries to their regional distribution, their breadth of experience with national planning processes and their wide range of initial conditions and contexts for such processes. Bolivia is also a pilot country for the World Bank's CDF initiative and is currently elaborating a PRSP (see below). This shall facilitate a timely commencement of dialogue with other initiatives of this kind.

At the meeting of the Council of EU Development Cooperation Ministers in November 1999, the ministers reaffirmed their support for greater efforts on the part of the European Commission to promote NSSD processes in developing countries<sup>3</sup>.

## **2.2. World Bank: Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF)**

### *Context*

In January 1999, World Bank President James Wolfensohn put forward a first proposal for a Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), as a centre and starting point for new strategic planning approaches among developing countries and donors.<sup>4</sup>

His reasoning for this new approach is based upon the 1998 World Bank study "Assessing Aid".<sup>5</sup> The analysis provided by that study of international DC experience gained over some 50 years comes to the conclusion that development efforts will only be able to have sus-

tained success if there is a stronger focus upon promoting good governance and upon bringing about institutional reform through civil society involvement. Mr Wolfensohn's speech was also influenced by a series of visits to and meetings in developing countries. In an urgent appeal to the donor community not to let their own problems obscure "The Other Crisis"<sup>6</sup> – poverty, environmental degradation and violent conflict – his speech culminates in the understanding that macroeconomic data and reforms are only one side of the development coin. "The other side of the balance sheet" is formed by structural, human and physical factors to which greater attention needs to be given in the future.

In Mr Wolfensohn's vision, transparency is a crucial element in this endeavour. In the past, thus Mr Wolfensohn, there has been inadequate coordination among the development efforts of the various 'players', approaches have been too isolated, too externally determined and too oriented to short-term successes. Pivotal concepts of the new strategic approach are therefore ownership, partnership, holistic, long-term visions and the consideration of structural and social factors. All actors involved in the development process of a given country (government, civil society, private sector and donors) must be brought together and their visions and activities coordinated.

As a management tool for such coordination processes, Mr Wolfensohn proposed a CDF matrix. The first function of the matrix is to provide clarity and transparency with respect to the activities of individual actors in the various sectors. The basic idea is that, in a first step, actors come together at round tables, where they jointly fill the matrix with content in a consensus-building dialogue. More in-depth analyses are to be integrated in these dialogues and attached to the matrix as annexes. This serves to identify gaps, overlaps and particular development bottlenecks, thus laying the groundwork for more coherent development planning.

### **The CDF matrix**<sup>7</sup>

|                               | Structural Factors  | Human Factors  | Physical Factors   | Specific Strategies   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Legal and Justice System</li> <li>• Financial System</li> <li>• Social Safety</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Knowledge</li> <li>• Health and Population</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water and Sewerage</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Transport &amp; Telecommunication</li> <li>• Environment and cultural issues</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural</li> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> <li>• Special National Considerations</li> </ul> |
| Government                    | Filling of matrix and strategy development through "round tables" with participation of different societal actors<br><br>Varying "Lead agencies" in different countries |  |  |   |
| Civil Society                 |   |  |  |   |
| Private Sector                |   |  |  |   |
| International Donor Community |   |  |  |   |

The World Bank has made it clear that it does not intend to assume sole responsibility for the process of matrix elaboration, nor for the subsequent strategy development processes. Quite on the contrary, it stresses that, as a first principle, the countries themselves must be in the 'driver's seat'. The development framework must be owned by the partner country in question. Members of the donor community can, however, assume coordination tasks. Here again it is stressed that it by no means need always be the World Bank which assumes these tasks. Depending upon specific local conditions, other donors can and should take a lead agency role.

The CDF initiative has encountered and continues to encounter broad political agreement and support among numerous bilateral donors, including Germany. The assessment of developing countries themselves is as yet little studied.

Initial criticism of the CDF has focused on the unclear modalities of implementation. It has further been noted that while the CDF matrix does indeed create transparency as a management tool, it by no means reflects 'holistic' approaches, promoting instead simplified thinking that seeks to assort items in neat boxes. Moreover, the environment departments of various donors have complained that environmental issues are limited to 'physical factors', only being taken into consideration in one category together with 'cultural' factors. All in all, the guiding vision of sustainable development is scarcely perceptible throughout the CDF approach. Strident warnings have therefore been voiced of a clandestine departure from that well-founded vision.

### *Implementation status*

The Comprehensive Development Framework – and particularly the matrix elaboration process – is currently being tested with major World Bank input in 13 pilot countries over a period of 18 months. With an eye to the aspect of ownership, the World Bank has been at pains from the outset to stress that all pilot countries decided to take part upon their own initiative.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>CDF pilot countries:</b>   | Bolivia, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gaza, Jordan, Kyrgyz Republic, Morocco, Romania, Uganda, Vietnam, West Bank / Gaza. |
| <b>BMZ / GTZ involved in:</b> | Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Vietnam, West Bank / Gaza.   |

During the first months of this test phase, sceptical voices at first dominated in the countries involved. These claimed e.g. that the World Bank excessively assumes, despite rhetoric to the contrary, a leadership role in the process (culminating in the joke that while countries are in the driver's seat, the Bank is the 'backseat driver'). In a number of countries, e.g. Ghana, there were reports that round tables with representatives of different stakeholder groups had by no means been formed for consultations, external expert papers having instead been prepared on selected issues in the matrix. In some countries, notably Bolivia, it was moreover complained that the World Bank had not in fact launched a process, but had rather latched onto a process already under way, and that this process was now threatening to overheat due to the pressure to deliver results exerted by the Bank. A further point of criticism was that the role of other, particularly bilateral, donors and the modalities of cooperation on the ground were by no means adequately clarified. In its first reports, the World Bank itself notes that there is, in particular, a problem with the ownership of processes by the countries concerned and reminds itself – and others – that "countries need to be put firmly in the driver's seat".

In the meantime, however, there are reports that the World Bank is beginning to move more quietly and slowly in the countries. On the other hand, almost simultaneously a further initiative has commenced which is imparting new dynamism to this process: the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) initiative launched by the International Monetary Fund together with the World Bank. Due to its preconditions, and particularly in view of its implications for developing countries, it is this initiative that is currently causing the greatest stir in the development policy debate.



### 2.3. IMF and World Bank: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)

#### *Context*

In connection with the Jubilee 2000 international debt relief initiative, an awareness has emerged among multilateral financial institutions, too – notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – that (a) if countries remain locked in a seemingly endless spiral of debt this will create critical barriers to economic growth for many of these countries, and (b) in addition to the question of growth the problem of distribution also needs to be tackled in the highly indebted countries in order to achieve sustained poverty reduction. This is why, in the follow-up to the Cologne debt relief summit in June 1999, the IMF and the World Bank proposed an expanded poverty reduction framework. By introducing a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) as a substitute for the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facilities (ESAF) in place until then, the Fund underscores poverty reduction as the central goal of its concessional lending. This new facility ties lending explicitly to poverty-focused policies in the countries; moreover, in individual cases the Fund makes special funds available to countries to implement poverty-focused measures.

The existence of a poverty reduction strategy in partner countries is a central element of the initiative and is the decision-making basis for awarding debt relief and new loans. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in the partner countries are the proposed tool. The Fund and the Bank put forward a first proposal setting out this approach in August 1999<sup>8</sup>; the PRSP initiative is thus the most recent of the three initiatives discussed here.

PRSPs are to be elaborated by countries in participatory processes that are as broadly based as possible. They are to comprise both an analysis of the nature and determinants of poverty in the country concerned, and medium- to long-term goals by which to reduce it. Before new loans can be awarded, the individual country strategies must gain top-level approval from the Bank and the Fund. Nonetheless, they are designed to be 'living documents'; future process-oriented updating of strategies is expressly envisaged.

The Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and its basis, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), were welcomed warmly by the international community because they represent a fundamental shift in thought and culture, notably of the Fund. In a similar vein as the World Bank's CDF initiative, a series of principles for elaborating PRSPs are stressed which are intended to express the overarching nature of this approach. These include ownership, participation, partnership and a long-term, comprehensive perspective. The latter principle also embraces the understanding that this may require institutional reforms in the countries which can only be set in train through lengthy processes of change. In this connection, the Fund and the Bank rely expressly upon support through bilateral TC.

Despite the great weight placed upon participation, every country-specific PRSP – as the basis for a decision on the award of new loans – must be approved by the management of the Fund and the Bank. Critical observers therefore pointed out early on that while, on the one hand, a certain level of external pressure can promote poverty-focused policy reforms in partner countries, seriously participatory approaches are, on the other hand, at odds with conditionalities. Some of the pertinent experience gathered with earlier approaches of this kind is discussed in section 3 of the present paper.

**Principles underlying the PRSP approach<sup>9</sup>****Country driven**

- Country-ownership of a poverty reduction strategy is paramount. Broad-based participation of civil society in the adoption and monitoring of the poverty reduction strategy tailored to country circumstances will enhance its sustained implementation.

**Results-oriented**

- An understanding of the nature and determinants of poverty, and the public actions that can help reduce it, is required for the formulation of an effective strategy.
- Medium- and long-term goals for poverty reduction, including key outcomes and intermediate indicators, are needed to ensure that policies are well designed, effectively implemented and carefully monitored.

**Comprehensive**

- Sustained poverty reduction will not be possible without rapid economic growth; macroeconomic stability, structural reforms and social stability are required to move countries to a higher path of sustainable growth.
- Poverty is multi-dimensional; specific actions are needed to enable the poor to share in the benefits from growth, increase their capabilities and well being, and reduce their vulnerabilities to risks. A poverty reduction strategy should integrate institutional, structural and sectoral interventions into a consistent macroeconomic framework.

**Partnerships**

- Government development of a strategy can provide the context for improved coordination of the work of the Bank and the Fund, as well as that of regional development banks and other multilateral, bilateral assistance agencies, NGOs, academia, think tanks, and private sector organizations.

**Long-term perspective**

- A medium- and long-term perspective is needed, recognizing that poverty reduction will require institutional changes and capacity building – including efforts to strengthen governance and accountability – and is therefore a long-term process.
- National and international partners' willingness to make medium-term commitments will enhance the effectiveness of their support for a poverty reduction strategy

**Implementation status**

In the meantime, initiatives to elaborate PRSPs have been launched in a variety of countries. In order not to delay implementation of the agreements that have resulted from the debt relief initiative, the Fund has now provided the possibility of submitting 'interim PRSPs'. These shall set out, in a few catchwords, the concept of the country's government with respect to the participatory process of elaborating the PRSP and shall, where possible, identify fundamental elements of a future strategy. A number of countries (e.g. Burkina Faso, Ghana and Tanzania) have already made use of this option. Other countries (e.g. Bolivia, Mauritania, Mozambique and Uganda) have now launched first activities aimed at instituting a more comprehensive strategy elaboration process.

The aim is that, if possible, all HIPC countries have created, by the end of the year 2000, a basis for taking a decision on the debt relief mechanism. This means in concrete terms that in order to reach this 'decision point' all countries should at least submit an 'interim PRSP' by that date.

Moreover, on the basis of this first experience, the Fund and the Bank have developed first tools – in the form of checklists and catalogues of questions – for partner governments to elaborate PRSPs. These are concerned with possible contents of the strategy of the country, and with the organization of the planning process. It has been stressed that these can only be general guidelines, which, furthermore, will need to be adjusted in step with experience gained.

**Questions for country authorities to consider when designing a PRSP<sup>10</sup>****A. Obstacles to poverty reduction**

- What are the key patterns of poverty in its various dimensions?
- How are these influenced by the level and pattern of growth; public policy; public service provision; social and institutional functioning; and by exogenous shocks?
- What are the main obstacles to more rapid growth and to spreading the benefits of growth to the poor?

**B. Objectives and targets**

- What targets for the various dimensions of poverty reduction have been established?
- What are the targets for selected intermediate indicators?

**C. Strategy / Action Plan**

- What are the priority public policies to increase growth and reduce poverty?
- What institutional changes are needed to implement the strategy?
- How can public spending and institutions be made more effective and responsive to the needs of the poor?

**D. Monitoring and evaluation systems**

- What is the framework for monitoring progress of the strategy and what is the involvement of civil society in the process of evaluation?
- What safeguards ensure the transparency and accountability of public budgeting and expenditure?

**E. External assistance and the external environment**

- What level of external assistance is expected to be available to support the country's efforts?
- Could more assistance be effectively absorbed, and if it were, what would be the likely impact on poverty reduction goals?
- How does technical assistance, from all sources, support implementation of the strategy?
- What would be the effect of greater access to partner country markets on growth and poverty reduction?

**F. The participatory process**

- What was the nature of the participatory process and how were the views and interests of the poor incorporated?
- What impact did the process have on the formulation and content of the strategy?

For the near future the intention has been voiced to intensify, in a targeted manner, the dialogue with partner governments on the one hand, but also with other donor institutions on the other. The various UN institutions, the World Bank and regional and multilateral development banks play a particular role for the Fund in such a dialogue. Intensifying contacts to NGOs and bilateral donors is envisaged; however, the relevant papers scarcely touch upon concrete modalities for this dialogue, in particular the envisaged distribution of roles.

#### **2.4. One intention, three manifestations: Comparing the NSSD, CDF and PRSP initiatives**

All of the three initiatives discussed here are – at different levels – an expression of a re-thinking of international development cooperation:

- In its strategy document "Shaping the 21st Century", the OECD DAC has formulated concrete objectives for the various dimensions of sustainable development, in order to operationalize this generally somewhat nebulous guiding principle. The strategic goal of "National strategies for sustainable development" can be viewed as a tool by which to integrate, in a long-term manner, economic, social and environmental goals by means of coordinating and involving relevant actors.

- The World Bank has departed from its orientation to macroeconomic target indicators, which frequently has been viewed as one-dimensional. With its Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) it expressly integrates structural, human, physical and country-specific aspects in its strategic approach. The CDF matrix provides a management tool creating transparency, identifying both the goals and activities of the various actors in the different sectors and thus creating a common information platform for strategic planning processes.
- The International Monetary Fund, too, no longer concentrates exclusively upon the fiscal stability of countries. With its PRSP initiative, it now expressly stresses the social dimension of its policies. In this, the goal of poverty reduction is viewed both as a social responsibility and as a basic precondition to economic growth. With this understanding, the PRSP initiative can be viewed as an attempt of the Bretton Woods institutions to harmonize, in debt policy, too, short-term stability aspects with long-term development goals.

All three approaches stress the importance of principles such as ownership of the strategy process by countries, broad involvement of all social actors, long-term visions, holistic nature, etc. This suggests a convergence of concepts among various bi- and multilateral institutions, which holds out great opportunities in terms of complementarity of approaches and utilizing synergies.

Each of the approaches harbours a series of strengths, but also weaknesses. The NSSD initiative can be viewed as the most comprehensive approach in aspiring to establish the guiding principle of sustainable development firmly in development practice. This approach also has the strongest social process orientation, as expressed in the circumstance that there are no fixed outcomes or binding deadlines whatsoever that might have to be fulfilled. Quite on the contrary, it is precisely the relative openness of outcomes that is regularly singled out as being a strength of this approach. However, this is possibly a cause of the difficulties in communicating NSSDs tangibly, which may well be why the process has exerted little attraction as yet. For the price of this openness is that – beyond the process – there is only a vague common understanding of the NSSD 'product'. Moreover, attempts to carry the NSSD debate beyond the environmental 'scene' are as yet only nascent. This is doubtlessly due in part to the circumstance that the strategic NSSD target is assigned in the OECD vision to the environmental dimension of sustainability.

The CDF approach counterbalances this weakness insofar as that the matrix provides a simple, tangible and operational tool by which to initiate the strategy debate. Moreover, in contrast to the NSSD approach, the CDF has a strong impetus beyond the environmental sector – among both partner countries and donors. The strong association of the term 'sustainability' with environmental issues possibly explains why Mr Wolfensohn speaks of a "comprehensive", not "sustainable" development framework. However, one result of this is that, to a certain degree, the environmental dimension of sustainability has been subordinated to the two other dimensions. In the CDF, environmental issues are merely marginal. Finally, while the CDF matrix provides a useful tool for diagnosing and analysing the development policy landscape of a country, the modalities of the strategic planning and implementation process remain largely unclear.

The PRSP approach is even more strongly focused on implementation than the CDF. Its concentration upon concrete goals – both substantively (poverty reduction) and with respect to its context (debt relief initiative) – has generated strong pressure upon partner countries to enter upon the corresponding processes. It is precisely this, however, that could run counter to the intended ownership, for the countries concerned have little choice in deciding whether or not to identify with the objectives set by the IMF and the World Bank. The World Bank, for instance, has made relevant experience with processes instituted in this manner during the 1990s, with its requirement to elaborate National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs) (cf. section 3.2. below).

**International initiatives for strategic planning in developing countries: A comparison of the NSSD, CDF and PRSP approaches**

|                                      | <b>NSSD</b>   | <b>CDF</b>  | <b>PRSP</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Status</b>                        | 1992 UNCED commitment; 1997 UNGASS agreement; 1996 and 1999 strategic OECD DAC development cooperation goal   | 1999 World Bank initiative; political support of bilateral donors affirmed at various high-level meetings   | IMF follow-up initiative to the 1999 Cologne G8 summit, upon the occasion of the Jubilee 2000 international debt relief initiative  |
| <b>Goal</b>                          | Stocktaking and long-term forecasting; long-term goal formulation; national, strategic development planning in accordance with the principles of sustainable development; policy coherence; institutional reforms; social mobilization; capacity development; abatement of the proliferation problem; orientation for donor community | Taking stock of ongoing development programmes; identification of bottlenecks; medium-term development planning; development partnership; orientation for donor community; donor coordination   | Linkage of growth and distribution goals for 'sustainable growth'; analysis of local causes of poverty; medium- and long-term poverty reduction planning; orientation for donor community; long-term framework for international cooperation        |
| <b>Timeframe</b>                     | 2002 (UNCED/UNGASS) or 2005 (DAC)   | Test phase until 2000, further procedure to be determined   | 'Decision points' envisaged for the end of 2000   |
| <b>Implementation</b>                | Related processes in some 80 developing countries and 14 industrialized countries (e.g. NEAPs, NCSs, NAPs), but only few NSSDs in the stricter sense; identification of best practices within the context of a DAC task force   | Currently in 13 pilot countries, conclusion and evaluation in 2000, various progress reports  | Submission of intermediate PRSPs by a number of countries; process initiation in numerous other countries; submission of documentation for PRGF decision-making envisaged by the end of 2000  |
| <b>Executing body in the country</b> | Usually environment ministry or environmental agency; in some cases head of government, cabinet committee, NGO  | As far as is known, usually planning ministry or finance ministry   | As far as is known, usually the planning, finance and/or economics ministry   |
| <b>Strengths</b>                     | Holistic, cross-sectoral, long-term, process-oriented new planning type; framework creating coherence for long-term economic, social and environmental planning; stress on process, ownership and social mobilization; dialogue orientation; donor role limited to moderation   | Holistic, cross-sectoral approach; clear, pragmatic tools for stocktaking; implementation orientation; stress on donor coordination   | Exceedingly pragmatic approach; oriented to short-term outcomes despite awareness of the long-term nature of strategic planning processes; PRSPs as 'living documents'; close cooperation with World Bank already initiated                         |
| <b>Weaknesses</b>                    | Unclear planning and analysis tools beyond the environmental sector; unclear scoping; little implementation orientation; high demands upon capacity and pluralism in developing countries   | Unclear implementation modalities beyond stocktaking; unclear process management and embedding in local structures  | Perception as IMF initiative; unclear position within CDF; collaboration with bilateral DC not clarified; abandonment of the environmental dimension of development   |
| <b>Risks</b>                         | Poor implementation; reduction to updating national environmental plans; abandonment of sub-targets; low degree of ownership outside of the environmental sector  | Dominance of World Bank (possibly future conditionality?); low degree of developing country ownership; lack of process orientation; contribution to proliferation of plans; reduction to stocktaking (matrix) and World Bank strategy; clandestine departure from the guiding vision of sustainable development | Problem of ownership vs. PRSP approval by IMF and World Bank Boards; little connection to earlier and/or other initiatives; contribution to proliferation of planning processes; clear departure from the guiding vision of sustainable development |

While in the CDF environmental issues still play a role – albeit a subordinate one – the PRSP approach excludes the environmental dimension of development completely. This plainly fails to take heed of the knowledge, gained over decades, of the connections between poverty, economic growth, social equity and environmental issues. Yet, there are no grounds for this at all: The links between economic activity and environmental problems (e.g. air pollution in the megacities, rainforest destruction in countries such as Brazil, Indonesia or Malaysia, flood disasters in Bangladesh, and many more) are well known, as is the institutional dimension of this linkage. The institutional dimension includes aspects such as poverty as an expression of lacking access to natural resources (land, water, forests etc.) or the overexploitation of natural resources due to unresolved property rights. It also includes the aspect that it is above all the poor who suffer from this, being rarely in a position to enforce their interests and rights.

Through a targeted search for synergies, but also for complementarity, the strengths and weaknesses of the three approaches set out above can be turned into an opportunity for international development cooperation. The goal must be to move from the already instituted convergence of concepts to a coherence of actions. This calls firstly for openness and willingness on all sides to engage in dialogue. This is the only way to safeguard the opportunities currently given while at the same time minimizing as far as possible the associated risks.

Multilateral institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank have stressed their interest in the relevant experiences of bilateral donors. These will be able to make a productive contribution above all if they both focus on their strengths and experience (policy advice, institutional development, process consultancy and moderation, participatory approaches, etc.) and call their commitments to mind – for instance within the context of the three strategic target dimensions of sustainable development set out in "Shaping the 21st Century".

### **3. National planning processes for sustainable development: Experience gained**

In industrialized and developing countries alike, national planning processes have experienced a renaissance with UNCED and with the guiding vision of sustainable development. This has been less a matter of old-style state (investment) planning, and rather one of a new understanding of planning. Planning for sustainable development proceeds from the assumption that competition between economic, social and environmental goals will tend to disappear if a long-term development perspective is taken. This is based in turn on the realization that economic, social and environmental problems are interdependent. Integrating the cross-cutting tasks of environmental protection and resource conservation into all policy areas can be achieved best by means of national-level strategies geared to creating coherence. Mobilizing stakeholders is the precondition to this.

The requirements placed by Agenda 21 upon strategies for sustainable development can be summarized in four points:

- National-level guidance and setting of priorities
- Harmonization of the various guidelines and plans of a country
- Participation of all stakeholders and transparency
- Comprehensive utilization and building of national capacities

With these principles, the guiding vision of sustainable development and thus also the strategies to implement this vision represent a fundamental change of paradigm, the country-level implementation of which resides ultimately in a process of negotiation in society. This openness of outcomes – misinterpreted by some as 'nebulosity' – is based on the confidence that all actors in society share long-term interests, that the pressures, in combina-

tion with democratic-pluralistic decision-making mechanisms, will suffice to mobilize stakeholders and that the common responsibility for the future generates sufficient cohesion to agree upon strategies for sustainable development and to implement these.

The principles thus also place high demands upon the capacity of all actors to articulate and negotiate their positions. They further place high demands upon actors' awareness of problems and long-term perspective, upon the equilibration of power structures and pluralism, upon the culture of cooperation in society and upon the tolerance of and respect for different positions and interests.

Before we attempt to concretize the key elements underlying strategies for sustainable development, we present in the following some of the experience gained with such and similar planning processes in both industrialized and developing countries.

### **3.1. Focusing on the environment: Planning for sustainable development in industrialized countries**

In most industrialized countries, the environmental problematique was the starting point for the debate on sustainable development. In the course of the 1980s – after two decades of confrontation – it became indispensable to engage in greater cooperation and integrate ecological and economic models of thought. One reason for this was that the emergent integrated pollution prevention and control approaches could only be implemented in cooperation with industry. This appeared realistic because it was becoming increasingly clear that such measures offer the prospect of cost savings and of medium-term competitive advantages for companies on the global markets.<sup>11</sup> With such 'win-win' solutions, environmental policy could be communicated as part of a strategy of modernization for the state and industry.

This development, in conjunction with the globalization of environmental problems and the fact that environmental policy continued to play a special institutional role as a new and cross-cutting department among the classic ministries, prepared the ground in many industrialized countries for a debate on sustainable development and the corresponding planning processes. In the meantime, about two thirds of all industrialized countries have elaborated national-level strategies for sustainable development. However, most of these are expanded environmental plans with a multisectoral approach, inasmuch as that they include sectors such as transport, energy and agriculture.

In the following, we briefly present some key elements of NSSD processes in industrialized countries.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Institutionalized planning*

The greatest binding effect of an elaborated plan is exerted in the Netherlands (partly also in Denmark, Japan, Portugal and Switzerland). In the Netherlands, the national plan is based upon a parliamentary resolution and a law. Reports and implementation programmes are prepared annually. An updated national plan is elaborated every four years. The requirements of the national environmental plan are taken up in national budget planning. In the United Kingdom, in contrast, the national sustainable development strategy has no statutory or parliamentary basis. However, reports are published annually, and the annual reports of all departments must contain an environmental chapter. In addition, there are numerous commissions and each ministry has a contact point for environmental concerns.

In many other cases, however, plans have little binding effect.

#### *Localization of the NSSD planning process in several ministries*

In many cases, close and institutionalized consultation with other sectoral ministries (e.g. 'green cabinets') has been established for the process of plan elaboration. In most instances, the environment ministry is the lead agency. In some cases (Denmark, Fin-

land, Japan, Switzerland), special government commissions have been formed which ensure coordination. In the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, there is a requirement that several ministries undersign the outcomes of the planning process. This promotes and creates a firm record of compromise among the various positions. Nonetheless, most plans are only to a limited extent an expression of true policy integration, notably with regard to their binding effect upon departments with a high degree of responsibility for the problems concerned (e.g. transport, energy, agriculture).<sup>13</sup>

#### **Clear goals and flexible implementation: Experience in the Netherlands**

The National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP) of the Netherlands was not only the first of its kind but also contained a detailed statistical description of the environmental situation, of development tendencies and binding targets with timeframes and financial budgets. The first NEPP, adopted in 1989, was followed one year later by a supplemented NEPP+ and in 1993 by NEPP2. On the basis of a parliament resolution, an updated NEPP is elaborated every four years upon the basis of a previous evaluation. Sector plans are elaborated according to the same schedule and are integrated in the NEPP. The general sensitization to environmental problems has been promoted by the reports of the state institute for public health and environmental protection, the foundation for nature and environment, which functions as a think tank, and the umbrella federation of environmental organizations. The elaboration of the first NEPP was largely an internal process within government and generated considerable conflict, culminating in the then government losing the national elections in 1989. Each NEPP revision has progressively stepped up the participation of the private sector and civil society.

The following elements make up the core of the environmental policy planning process in the Netherlands:

##### *Consensus*

Until the mid-1980s, Dutch environmental policy had a command-and-control focus and saw industry as the opponent of environmental policy measures. Environment Minister Winsemius appointed 'target group managers' within the environment ministry, each of which consulted and debated with certain groups of environment users. In doing so, they operated not only as ambassadors of the ministry to the target group, but conveyed to the same degree the perspective of the target group back into the ministry. Today, a system of mirror agencies has also become commonplace among the various sectoral ministries. The government planning system no longer focuses solely upon future actions, but also upon attaining coherence among existing measures, and promoting future motivation and the openness of debates. Issue-focused approach

The NEPP no longer groups areas of concern according to environmental media (water, soil, air etc.), as was previously common practice, but according to issue areas. Typical examples include climate change, eutrophication and waste management. This grouping facilitates analysis of the complex problems in a manner closely reflecting the realities on the ground. It further promotes joint efforts among the different government bodies charged in various ways with addressing the issue areas.

##### *Flexible implementation of clear stipulations*

In order to solve the classic problem of enforcement deficit, Dutch environmental policy makes stipulations which are as clear as possible and calls upon the generators of environmental problems to propose solutions. Government controls and inflexible requirements can be relaxed if companies comply with research and information agreements, appoint environmental experts and introduce internal environmental management systems. For instance, after carrying out an environmental impact assessment a company is obliged as a matter of principle to select the most environmentally sound option among the given alternatives. However, a different solution can be agreed upon in negotiations with the permitting authority. For companies, this procedure allows greater flexibility in making new investments. For the administration, it creates scope for negotiation which it can exploit creatively.

##### *Simplification and transparency*

In 1993, five environmental laws, each with separate permitting procedures, were unified to form a single Environmental Management Act with a uniform procedure. Other ministries continue to be responsible for individual environmental issues, but the complexity of permitting procedures has been reduced considerably. All interested citizens have far-reaching freedom of access to information on governmental decision-making processes, so that affected parties receive timely notice and can influence decisions.

#### *Participation avenues for civil society and the private sector*

In some countries, there is a high degree of involvement of various groups beyond the ministries. This ranges from voluntary agreements (the Netherlands) over eliciting numerous written opinions (Finland) and the firmly established involvement of NGOs (United Kingdom, Portugal) to the particular involvement of industrial management and labour (Austria). In



other countries (e.g. France, South Korea) the social grounding is weak, or designed clearly in terms of social self-help while abdicating 'final' state responsibility (Canada, Japan); this bears the risk of later exhaustion and frustration among participants.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Targetedness and relevance of goals*

The status of plans ranges from action plans (Japan, Switzerland) over government programmes (Finland) through to comprehensive long-term plans specified by sectoral plans (the Netherlands, Denmark). However, the target quality of these plans varies greatly. In the Netherlands, Denmark and Switzerland, concrete and specific targets have been determined, while in some other countries targets tend to be vague and hard to verify.

In sum, the diverse experience made in industrialized countries shows that NSSD processes presuppose the political will of the country's government, are open in terms of outcomes, demand scientific inputs and need continuous revision. In most cases, processes are politically complex, extend over several years and bind enormous planning capacities. This and the fact that, even in industrialized countries, the status and quality of planning varies greatly should be kept in mind when launching similar processes in developing countries.

#### **Many activities and no strategy yet: Sustainable development in Germany**

At the beginning of the year 2000, the German Parliament (Bundestag) adopted a resolution to elaborate a strategy for sustainable development. This had been one of the elements of the November 1998 coalition agreement. A corresponding committee at secretary of state level will report to the Office of the Federal Chancellor (Bundeskanzleramt). A 'futures council' (Zukunftsrat) composed of selected personalities drawn from various segments of society shall advise the federal government and shall serve as the interface to civil society. Broad participation of major groups in society and corresponding communication measures are envisaged. The German Federal Environmental Agency (Umweltbundesamt, UBA) and other bodies will have responsibility for the planning work. The German Environment Ministry (Bundesumweltministerium, BMU) will coordinate the work.

This decision follows on from a broad array of previous efforts, some initiated by the former government and some by NGOs. Shortly before the 1992 Earth Summit (UNCED) in Rio, the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) was established as a body advising the German government. The council has an interdisciplinary composition, its main task being to evaluate global change research and to derive from this recommendations for political action for sustainable development. The two Study Commissions (Enquete-Kommission) of the German Bundestag on the "Protection of the Earth's Atmosphere" and on the "Protection of Humanity and the Environment" have also conducted intensive examinations of the issues of sustainable development. In its 1998 final report, the latter commission stressed the importance of a national strategy for sustainable development and recommended the establishment of a council for sustainable development attached to the Office of the Federal Chancellor. The commission for sustainable development (Kommission für Nachhaltige Entwicklung) in place until now, with 35 representatives of major groups in society, has no clear mandate and scarcely any public profile. It serves as a loose forum for debate within the Rio follow-up processes.

At the federal government level, the Environment Ministry initiated in 1996 a dialogue process on "steps towards sustainable development", thus giving representatives of industry and civil society an opportunity to enter into debate. The outcomes were integrated into the ministry's 1998 "Draft for an environmental policy focus programme". In its study entitled "Sustainable Germany", the Federal Environmental Agency (UBA) addressed issues of sustainable development and possible packages of targets for the year 2010. The German Council of Environmental Advisors (Sachverständigenrat für Umweltfragen, SRU) has argued strongly for a participatory, transparent and step-wise process of defining environmental policy goals.

The greatest effect in terms of public awareness was achieved in 1996 by the study entitled "Sustainable Germany – A contribution to sustainable development" commissioned by Friends of the Earth Germany (Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland, BUND) and Misereor, and prepared by the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Energy and Environment. Within two years of its publication, 1600 discussion events had taken place on the study and on sustainable development in Germany. As part of the follow-up, the German chemical industry association (Verband der Chemischen Industrie, VCI) and the national union of chemical industry workers (IG Chemie) came together in a dialogue process entitled "building a sustainable Germany", presenting the industry perspective on these issues.

Numerous local authorities have followed the Rio call to engage in Local Agenda 21 processes. The Environment Ministry has supported them in cooperation with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).<sup>15</sup> In their Agenda processes, a number of German municipalities (such as Münster, Osnabrück, Nuremberg, Leverkusen and Freiburg) have made international North-South relations one of their focuses.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.2. Focusing on environment and development: Planning for sustainable development in developing countries

In developing countries, the point of departure for the debate on sustainable development was quite different from that in industrialized countries. The spirit of the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment, under which environmental protection was understood as a 'luxury' presupposing economic development, prevailed in developing countries into the 1980s. The environmental policy arena was nascent, its institutional foundations rudimentary. Scarcely any developing country had a strong environmental movement. Nonetheless, the connection between poverty and environment, and between environment and development in general, in conjunction with (here, too) the globalization of environmental policy, were decisive in making developing countries participate actively in UNCED.

In the UNCED follow-up, many developing countries initiated planning processes and investment programmes. Experience with the numerous planning processes for sustainable development shows that these have indubitably produced an array of successes. These can be summarized in the following catchwords:<sup>17</sup>

- Sensitization of the public to environmental protection and resource conservation issues
- Creation of forums for the emerging dialogue among social actors on problems and solutions within the context of sustainability
- Environmental policy innovation in the legal and organizational sphere
- Launching model projects for sustainable development
- Improvement of the capacity of developing country governments to respond to the reporting and participation requirements of international conventions

UNCED created a situative context (reporting duties, planning goals, environmental agreements) leading in many developing countries to an upsurge of national planning processes in the environmental and resource conservation sphere. The donor community saw in this a prospect of gaining a strategic framework and orientation points for their interventions in developing countries, and supported the planning initiatives vigorously (in association with international NGOs).

#### Planning processes for sustainable development in developing countries

In the following, we give an overview of the main types of action plans, planning processes and documents which have played a role in developing countries:<sup>18</sup>

##### *National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP)*

NEAPs were initiated by the World Bank, for the first time in Madagascar in 1987. Their purpose is to describe the basic environmental situation of a country, identify the principal causes of environmental problems and draft a strategy by which to tackle prioritized problems. NEAPs are to be designed as cyclical processes concentrating not on the planning document but upon the process as such. The aim is that a cross-sectoral environmental strategy is integrated into general development planning.

##### *Country Environmental Strategy Paper (CESP)*

These documents were prepared mainly by external consultants (usually on behalf of the World Bank). Above all in countries without any noteworthy environmental administration, they presented the first comprehensive inventory of environmental problems, thus serving as a first step towards a National Environmental Action Plan.

##### *National Agenda 21*

National Agendas 21 have been prepared in a series of countries. These have followed the global Agenda 21 in both content and structure. In China and India, for instance, the planning process took place largely within governmental and scientific institutions. In other countries, civil society participation has been stronger, while the stipulation of targets and the assignment of responsibilities have generally been weak points. National Agendas 21 have been supported by UNDP and a number of bilateral donors.<sup>19</sup>

##### *National Conservation Strategy (NCS)*

NCSs are a component of the 1980 IUCN/UNDP/WWF World Conservation Strategy. Since then, they have been carried out in a large number of countries (e.g. Pakistan, Zambia). In recent years, NCSs have evolved from nature-conservation-focused to general strategies, at least within the environmental sector. Their purpose

is to provide an overview of environmental protection and resource management and to contribute to environ-

mental aspects being taken into consideration in the development process.

#### *National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP)*

NEMPs have been elaborated in many South Pacific island states. This has been supported by the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, IUCN and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the latter providing coordination. Within the context of round table processes involving the main decision-makers, projects and programmes have been identified for donors.

#### *National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (NAP)*

In many countries, desertification is the most urgent environmental problem. To combat this, the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) has been supporting National Desertification Control Plans (NDCP) since 1985. These analyse the socio-economic and ecological situation and examine current activities and requisite policies in the field of desertification. Following adoption of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), the NDCPs were replaced by NAPs, the elaboration of which has been supported since then by numerous donors (e.g. in Mali, Burkina Faso). The Convention stipulates the overarching nature of a NAP and broad-based participation.

#### *Sectoral Master Plans (SMP) and Sector Investment Programmes (SIP)*

SMPs, e.g. agricultural development plans or conservation area development plans, serve primarily to coordinate the projects of different donors in a sector. Plan elaboration involves research activities, and works towards a sectoral policy framework. Participation does not play any great role. SIPs have been implemented since 1995 upon the initiative of the World Bank, notably in Africa. Their purpose is to integrate, through their sectoral focus, the projects of various donors within a coherent and common strategy. In implementation, donor coordination and broad public participation in planning have emerged as challenges. Capacity building, institutional reforms and linking SIPs with decentralization efforts will be issues in the further development of the SIP approach.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) and National Forest Plan (NFP)*

TFAPs were promoted in the 1980s, mainly by FAO and the World Bank, and were components of a global tropical forest conservation strategy. Building upon an analysis of tropical forest linkages, their purpose was to elaborate strategies aimed at forest management, tropical forest conservation and reforestation. Various donors, government agencies and NGOs were involved through round tables. Due to numerous weaknesses in practice (sectoral approach, inadequate participation, 'shopping list' character), TFAPs are increasingly being replaced by NFPs today.

#### *Environmental Profile*

Environmental Profiles compile information on the current state and development trends of the environment. They analyse underlying reasons, linkages and key problems for national environmental management. Environmental Profiles are promoted mainly by the Netherlands.

#### *CSD National Report*

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established as a part of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro UNCED follow-up process. National reports are to inform the CSD regularly on national progress in implementing Agenda 21 at the country level. In the run-up to UNCED, countries were already obliged to prepare UNCED National Reports, frequently in collaboration with NGOs and the private sector. Their purpose was to set out development trends and environmental influences and to identify the scope for political and institutional action in the run-up to the 1992 conference.

In developing countries, too, most planning processes relating to Agenda 21, the guiding vision of sustainable development and the related conventions ultimately centre on environmental protection and resource conservation. Most of these processes have thus been localized institutionally in the environmental sector, although efforts towards cross-sectoral localization are undeniable (inter-ministerial committees and task forces etc.). For instance, the World Bank implemented most of the National Environmental Action Plans (NEAP) together with environment ministries and environmental agencies. While in some cases (notably in Africa, e.g. Benin, Gambia) overarching authorities were indeed established with an inter-ministerial structure, these had no enforcement competency whatsoever, and thus remained relatively weak. Overall, the integration of such planning processes in day-to-day politics and the weight of the newly created institutions remained small.<sup>21</sup> National Action Programmes to Combat Desertification (NAP) also often proceeded as parallel processes within national administrative systems and were scarcely integrated into the relevant sectoral plans.<sup>22</sup>

In many countries, the diversity of forms of strategic planning processes led – initially unnoticed – to duplication and overburdening of local planning capacities. This, in conjunction with frequently inadequate coordination among donors, led in some countries to a proliferation of plans which reduced the effectiveness of each individual plan. In Tanzania, for in-

stance, three overlapping documents were prepared in parallel and without coordination: a National Conservation Strategy (NCS), a National Plan for Agenda 21 and a NEAP. The ownership and responsibilities for all three documents are largely unclear.<sup>23</sup> In Sri Lanka five environmental strategies were prepared within 10 years, while the national governments of Pakistan and Nepal succeeded in integrating new World Bank and UNDP initiatives in ongoing NCS planning processes.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, there is a high degree of integration of strategies for sustainable development into general development planning in Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Costa Rica. In these countries, however, economic constraints have limited the implementation of plans.<sup>25</sup>

#### **Coordination, coherence and participation: Experience in Mali**

The following key elements characterize the NEAP/NAP elaboration process in Mali:<sup>26</sup>

##### *Merging NEAP and NAP*

In 1994, NEAP and NAP processes commenced simultaneously. Since then, they have been developed in a joint process. The Desertification Convention provides for a donor focal point. At an early stage, the government of Mali made an informal request to Germany to assume this task. Within the context of the Desertification Convention, action programmes and subprogrammes are elaborated. In parallel, action programmes are also elaborated for other environmental issues. The NEAP process provides the overarching framework for these various programmes.

##### *Coordination by one donor*

The donor agency acting as donor focal point ("chèf de file") has the following tasks:

- to gather and collate information and disseminate this among donors and among structures in Mali;
- to develop consultation mechanisms among donors and to elaborate financing mechanisms;
- to supervise the process and implement operational plans;
- to strengthen and support national structures.

These tasks were carried out by a GTZ project located within the ministry for rural development and the environment.

##### *Establishment of intersectoral committees*

The permanent secretariat guiding the process was formed of staff drawn from the planning units of five important ministries. The secretariat was chaired by the representative of the ministry for rural development and the environment. In addition, there are two further committees which support and institutionalize the process at different hierarchical levels (ministers in an inter-ministerial committee; representatives of ministries, civil society, NGOs and donors in an advisory committee).

##### *Local and regional internalization/participation*

In addition to a communication campaign and a national forum, nine regional workshops took place, preceded by district-level information and discussion events. Using the information gained here, eight technical documents were prepared, which provided a basis for debate in the national forum.

##### *Interim outcomes*

As an outcome of the process, there is now a NEAP/NAP which contains national-level action plans and has been coordinated among the national government, civil society and donors. Further action plans have been elaborated for the regions and for selected local communities. Nonetheless, despite comprehensive and timely coordination efforts, a GTZ project progress review found in September 1997 that in Mali, too, no full coherence has been achieved among the NEAP/NAP, planned sector investment programmes and the various environmental and resource management projects. The main reason identified for this is that the permanent secretariat is located at too low a level within government, namely at directorate level within the ministry for rural development and the environment. This hinders, inter-ministerial representation notwithstanding, the execution of multi-sectoral and coordination tasks with other ministries. The donor community has made location of the permanent secretariat at a higher level a precondition for greater financial commitment to the NEAP/NAP process. Among donors, too, coordination is not optimal.

Ex-post evaluations of planning processes almost invariably criticize the poor degree of ownership of the process by the local government, with the consequence that planning processes have limited effects. The main causes of this phenomenon are departmental thinking, lacking understanding of participatory planning, limited planning capacities, but also time constraints and the perception of such planning processes as a donor requirement. This is exemplified by the National Environmental Action Plans promoted by the World Bank in the 1990s (cf. box). Overall, it can be stated that in most instances attention has concentrated

upon the planning outcome as such (where in doubt, the presence of a planning document), but not upon the design of the planning process. This, too, is a reflection of weaknesses on all sides (developing countries and donors) in steering complex processes. It also reflects the difficulty of synchronizing diverse reporting and planning requirements such that open planning processes are possible. In many planning processes, time pressures arise simply because local representatives wish to and must present process outcomes at international conferences.<sup>27</sup> Donor organizations are subject to diverse reporting requirements, and need locally produced documents as a basis for their own planning and to legitimate disbursements. Time constraints and substantive pressures greatly reduce local actor ownership.<sup>28</sup>

#### **Dynamics and conditionality: Experience with World Bank NEAP processes**

The first NEAPs were initiated with World Bank support in 1987 in Madagascar, Lesotho, Mauritius and on the Seychelles. A World Bank team received the opportunity to develop the concept and test it in these countries. The concept rapidly came to be viewed as pioneering and was implemented in further countries. In 1990, the World Bank organized a meeting of representatives of countries with a NEAP commitment, which formed the Dublin Club, later the Network for the Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA).

In the course of the 9th IDA replenishment, the World Bank adopted in 1992 its Operational Directive OD 4.02. This largely standardized NEAPs and provided guidelines for NEAP elaboration for World Bank staff. The key elements of NEAP processes are:<sup>29</sup>

- to take stock of and identify problems
- to set priorities based upon clear criteria and integrating economic appraisals
- to identify causes
- to prioritize measures with due regard to economic appraisals
- to select policy measures and tools upon the basis of clear criteria
- to analyse institutions and propose realistic institutional conditions for action plan implementation

However, OD 4.02 effectively made NEAPs mandatory for IDA countries. To other countries it was recommended that they elaborate NEAPs. This was against the background of political pressure upon the World Bank to embed its investment programmes within environmentally oriented development plans. The result is that today, for many developing countries, NEAPs are primarily a precondition to access to funding and only at a secondary level an environmental management tool. In 1996, the World Bank subjected NEAP outcomes to a critical introspective evaluation. This revealed weaknesses,<sup>30</sup> notably difficulties in defining priorities, an excessive focus upon the project level and insufficient analysis of political framework conditions, weak institutions, in particular environment ministries and authorities, insufficiently open participation and – on the part of developing countries – a perception of NEAP processes as donor-driven. In the meantime, NEAPs have been elaborated in more than 100 developing countries.

Although all planning types postulate that participation is an integral component of the procedure, ex-post evaluations repeatedly find inadequate participation in planning processes. On the one hand, this is a result of the time constraints and pressure to produce results that prevails in some planning processes, as noted above, and is a result of the great inputs (above all of time) necessitated by participatory processes. On the other hand, while there is general fluency in the rhetoric of participatory planning, there is often uncertainty in the modalities of its implementation among both developing countries and donors. Both sides frequently lack the will and the competence to relinquish control, 'bear' processes with open outcomes and provide methodological guidance as 'honest brokers'. There is often also a lack of qualified institutions which could provide the necessary knowledge base. Nor are civil society organizations always practised in articulating their interests in the face of appreciable resistance. It is not least for that reason that there is a tendency to pursue solutions at the project level rather than in the political and institutional arena. All participants are better acquainted with the project level, and it permits avoiding conflict-ridden and far-reaching decisions. Issues of fundamental import tend to be side-stepped through powerful stakeholders establishing blockages. This is one of the types of impediment identified by the World Bank in NEAP implementation processes.<sup>31</sup>

## **4. Lessons learnt: Key elements of national strategies for Sustainable Development**

We can certainly speak of a 'proliferation' of national planning processes since the end of the 1980s, above all in developing countries. This proliferation has been largely unplanned, being an outcome of uncoordinated initiatives taken by a variety of actors, remaining initially unnoticed and leading in the meantime not only to much overlap and duplication but in some cases also to considerable burdens upon the limited planning capacities of developing countries. There is thus an urgent need to address the question of possible synergies and of coherence among the different planning processes.

This was the pivotal question of the OECD DAC statement submitted by Germany and adopted in May 1999 at minister level (cf. section 2.1 above). The statement makes a clear appeal to the donor community and developing countries to make use of the opportunities offered by national strategies while avoiding the associated risks. This appeal – so much is certain – will only fall on fertile soil if it is not narrowed down to NSSDs exclusively but is also understood to embrace CDF and PRSP processes (which are ultimately pursued by the same donors, albeit by different internal departments).

Despite all incertitude and disparities prevailing in the situations confronting individual countries, experience suggests a series of preliminary conclusions concerning the substantive content of strategies for sustainability, their process dimension and the coherence of different planning processes. These are set out in the following.

### **4.1. Content and scope of national strategies for sustainable development**

Regardless of who initiates a national planning process, it will always start with the question of how broad the scope of the strategy should be (scoping). There is no universally valid answer to this. It rather depends upon the motives of the initiators, the specific conditions prevailing in a country and the question of which actors can realistically be involved in the process. In principle, the range of experience in the environmental sphere extends from sectoral, thematically limited environmental plans through to comprehensive strategies which – in the spirit of the sustainable development debate – aim at long-term solutions, not only for environmental problems, but simultaneously also for economic and social problems. The broader the scope of such a strategy, the more urgent the question becomes of the extent to which that strategy can be internalized effectively in planning processes and programmes of reform taking place beyond the environmental sphere. The fact that very few strategies have led to true policy integration is an indication of the institutional, political but also planning limits of a broad approach.

Wherever the debate on sustainable development has remained largely within the environmental sphere and where no environmental strategy in the narrower sense has been developed, an all too comprehensive approach has proven unrealistic, despite all intellectual challenges. Experience on the ground has been that usually those plans have had the greatest weight and effect which concentrated upon the environmental dimension of sustainability while at the same time having a cross-sectoral and issue-focused design (i.e. addressing issues such as energy, transport, settlement and agricultural policy) and aiming to orient economy, state and society to environmental principles. Poverty reduction has in

common with sustainability that it is not everywhere a topic that enjoys high priority and acceptance in all fields. It must therefore be asked whether practical implementation will not force PRSP processes, too – also in the interests of their effectiveness – to undergo departures from their comprehensive aspirations.

#### **Content and scope of a strategy for sustainable development**

- Scoping (sectoral environmental plan vs. comprehensive strategy for sustainable development)
- Stocktaking analysis (problems, generators), long-term trends, forecasts, risks
- Long-term targets (quality and action targets), indicators and timeframe
- Strategies of reform and projects for change (state and private sector)
- Mobilization of financial resources
- Implementation modalities
- M+E, reporting
- Revision

A well-founded stocktaking analysis of the environmental problems of a country, including long-term forecasts and scenarios,<sup>32</sup> is an indispensable component of a NSSD. The broader the scope of such a strategy is defined, the more economic and social problems have to be a part of the stocktaking analysis. The analysis serves not only to expand the knowledge base, but is also a precondition to maximum participation of all relevant stakeholders. This is because – with appropriate communication efforts – it can be the more effective in raising concern and triggering willingness to change the more sharply it highlights the long-term environmental, economic and social risks. A matrix form has proven useful as a stocktaking analysis tool in some countries. This places environmental problems in relation to their causes, and above all their generators (here there is a direct link to the CDF approach). This creates transparency and facilitates dialogue with specific actors, separate treatment of specific problems and derivation of strategies for action.

Stocktaking analysis and forecasts are also preconditions to setting priorities in a purposeful manner and deriving long-term goals. It has proven useful to concentrate the strategy initially upon such problems or 'syndromes'<sup>33</sup> which have particular relevance to the long-term development of the country in question. With regard to their goals, most strategies for sustainability are concerned with (environmental) quality targets (e.g. improving air quality in cities; containing soil erosion) but also action targets (e.g. reducing transport emissions, stabilizing energy consumption, designating protected areas). All of these need to be concretized by means of specific indicators and a timeframe. Action targets form the basis for debate on strategies for reform (institutional reforms, legislative measures, sectoral policies, incentives etc.) and concrete projects for change (investment programmes, cooperation schemes, education and research measures, self-help etc.). These should involve both the state and private sectors.

Implementing a NSSD will entail additional costs and will change the allocation of existing funds. It is therefore essential to address seriously, already in the planning phase, the mobilization of (internal and external) financial resources. In many cases, this has not been done, or it has been reduced to a 'shopping list' presented by some developing countries (in some instances upon donor pressure) and usually only taken up in small part. This shifts responsibility for inadequate implementation of a possibly overly ambitious strategy to the absence of financial resources, instead of thinking about the possibilities and limits of additional burdens and incentives, savings options, ways to reshuffle existing funds etc., and placing all this in relation to the anticipated outputs of the NSSD process.

At all events, the visionary vigour of NSSDs must be balanced constantly against what is practically feasible, in order not to end as an academic debate or just a paper that is quietly filed away. This concerns not only the financial aspects but also the modalities of implementation. The assignment of responsibilities (who, when, what, how, where?) within the

context of structures that already exist or perhaps first need to be created is pivotal. Implementational follow-up, including public reporting, is an important part of the process, because it is crucial to maintaining ownership and participation.

#### 4.2. Strategies for sustainability as a 'new type' of planning

NSSDs are widely understood to be a new type of planning process which, due to its democratic-participatory orientation, holds out the prospect of improved acceptance and implementability, but on the other hand places high demands upon state and particularly upon non-state capacities (cf. box). It therefore cannot be realistically expected in each country and at every point in time that such processes proceed with the same degree of success. This is a further reason why the corresponding DAC targets (cf. section 2.1 above) are relatively indeterminate. Because the preconditions for formulating NSSDs in developing countries vary greatly, implementational criteria must remain vague. However, this must not lead to a situation in which – in view of uniform timeframes for formulating NSSDs – more or less arbitrary (environmental) strategy documents become synonymous with NSSDs, regardless of their practical relevance and the way in which they were drafted. It is therefore doubtful that overly simple implementation indicators ("NSSD formulated"), as discussed currently in the DAC, are expedient.

##### Strategies for sustainability: A 'new type' of planning

- Bureaucratic action vs. political action
- Technocratic planning vs. mobilization
- Sovereign decision-making vs. cooperation and concerted action
- State responsibility vs. societal responsibility
- Policy planning vs. policy learning
- Sectoral planning vs. integrated planning

NSSDs, and participatory strategies in general, do not relieve the state of its responsibility, nor do they substitute state decisions. It has therefore proven expedient to stipulate 'final' state responsibility for the decisions to be taken within the context of the process. In contrast, national strategies relying exclusively upon mobilizing societal self-reliance tend to exhaust themselves in debates on issues of principle and generate frustration among participants.

With regard to the interplay between the state and civil society, a minimum level of pluralism and cooperative culture is indubitably a precondition to really developing NSSDs as 'new type' planning processes. This applies not least to the capacity to articulate and negotiate positions and interests (empowerment) and to the access of civil society groups and associations to information. Conversely, NSSD processes can themselves contribute to empowerment and capacity development. It is thus all the more important that these processes have sufficient time and space to build – and not to overburden – the corresponding capacities.

#### 4.3. Strategies for sustainability as planning processes

The focus placed by all sides upon its process dimension is the clearest indication of the understanding of the NSSD process as a new type of planning. This is a matter of a series of process elements which experience has shown – all differentiation of local circumstances notwithstanding – to make important contributions to success (see box). This also has important consequences for the role of development cooperation organizations in supporting such processes.



**Process dimension of strategies for sustainability**

- Initiative and ownership
- Status, institutionalization and integration in ongoing processes of reform
- Participation, cooperation and conflict management
- Decision-making, coordination, operational and communication structures
- Expertise and methods
- Implementation modalities

The initiative to embark on NSSD processes generally came from a mixed constellation. Often it was initially state or non-state environmental organizations, scientific institutions, advisory councils or development NGOs which counted among the protagonists, triggering a debate on the necessity of a NSSD. In developing countries it was often also single or several donors. Protagonists were motivated by particular problems in the country in question which could only be solved within the context of an overarching strategy. In many cases they also made reference to a model provided by other countries or to international agreements. This is most likely to come about in times when the situative context is favourable and public attention is not absorbed by, for instance, acute crises. Rio doubtlessly contributed to a favourable context.

The experience gained has shown that – depending upon the stage and intensity of this debate – it is important not to launch prematurely into the actual planning process. The risk is too great of ending in a pro-forma process which fails to generate the necessary dynamics and mobilize the essential actors. The first crucial step is to secure political support and ownership in the national government, without which the process must remain noncommittal. This is not to say that the initiatives of, for instance, individual NGOs or research institutes are not purposeful and worthy of promotion; however, they then have more the character of groundwork and inputs to the actual NSSD process.

The strongest expression of ownership is for the national government to assume political responsibility for the process, to give it an official status and to integrate it, wherever possible, into other ongoing planning and reform processes (e.g. environmental policy projects, decentralization, legislative reform, economic reform). This creates the best preconditions for strategies to be implemented on the institutional plane and for resources to be allocated to investment programmes. Models for this include corresponding statutory mandates, parliament decisions, process leadership by the head of government, or committees at minister or secretary of state level ('green cabinets') which assume responsibility for decisions and their implementation. In many practical cases – notably in developing countries – responsibility rested with the competent environment ministry or with an environmental authority at a lower level. This calls for a strong position and firm public support of the environment ministry if it is to be able to address multi-sectoral issues effectively and mobilize actors in other sectors. On the other hand, even a limited environmental plan can trigger later extensions in other sectors.

Experience suggests that strategies for sustainability will be all the more effective the better they succeed in involving the relevant stakeholders. These include – albeit with differing roles – both state and non-state actors, and notably the generators of the environmental problems identified and the groups affected by these problems. In the planning phase, an important role is also played by the actors who will later have to implement parts of a NSSD, the media, scientific institutions, political parties, the various levels of government administration etc. The extent of participation (from hearings over co-decision procedures through to mobilization) is a difficult balancing act between reserving final state responsibility and (possibly counterproductive) participation per se, between maximum mobilization on the one hand and frustration or false expectations among participants on the other. Insofar, it is cru-

cial to clarify the participation issue in a timely and differentiated manner (who, when, how?). At all events, it needs to be ensured that transparency is as comprehensive as possible. As it can scarcely be expected that such a planning process proceeds without conflict, suitable conflict management structures also need to be considered.

In some countries, it has proven useful to establish councils composed of personalities with a high public profile, operating as the central forum for discussion or communication, usually with an advisory function. However, such councils have only met the expectations placed in them where they had a clear mandate, a support structure and sufficient resources.<sup>34</sup> In many cases working groups on certain sub-issues have been established with a pluralistic composition (and in some instances with scientific support), sometimes linked to such a council. National symposia, hearings, competitions, future search conferences, scenario workshops, forums and action research involving local communities have a function, for instance in identifying divergent perspectives, clarifying interests, developing strategies and discussing results. Parallel performance of pilot and demonstration projects already during the planning phase can also be a purposeful form of promoting process participation and dynamics.

Whichever form is chosen, it is important to limit the number of participants. This in turn depends upon, among other things, the degree of organization of the relevant groups and the legitimation of their leadership; factors which can vary greatly from country and to country and group to group.<sup>35</sup> A suitable communication strategy is thus a pivotal element of the process. Within such a strategy, the direct participants, the media and also the educational and training institutions must assume a crucial 'translation function' between the abstract and open guiding vision of sustainable development on the one hand and concrete, binding and verifiable policy measures and projects on the other.

A further important issue is that of the operational structures required to gather and analyse robust information and to elaborate forecasts, strategies and concrete measures. Here, wherever possible, local institutions (subordinate authorities, associations, NGOs, research institutions, consultancy firms etc.) should be used. External expertise should only be called in where this is essential. Mobilizing local knowledge is the best foundation for appropriate strategies and ownership. In contrast, most plans elaborated primarily by external consultants have been filed quietly away. It is also important to build as far as possible upon understandings gained in other planning processes (e.g. NAPs, NEAPs) and to use these as 'entry points', instead of initiating a parallel process of dubious added value – as has happened in some countries.

In the past, successful planning efforts have usually been multi-year processes culminating at certain points in strategy documents or parliament or cabinet decisions, which were then taken up later in a revision round where they became an open planning process. Setting overly tight or even binding deadlines is in contradiction to the processual nature of such strategies and supports the illusion that planning documents alone already guarantee their implementation. Experience has also shown that planning processes have had a very limited effect in cases where they were not institutionalized adequately or were linked too closely to one sector, where participation and consensus-building were handled restrictively, where targets and timeframes remained vague and processes lost sight of concrete issues.

## **5. National planning processes in development cooperation: From convergent concepts to coherent actions?**

A renaissance of national planning processes has recently come about in the development cooperation debate. Initiatives in this direction enjoy a remarkably high political priority, as exemplified by the DAC and EU decisions on NSSDs and the current dynamics of the CDF and PRSP initiatives (cf. section 2 above). Concerning the understanding of planning processes, there is a convergence of concepts in several respects:

All the above planning approaches stress the concepts of ownership or partnership, thus representing a shift towards a new understanding of the roles of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation organizations.

- All the above approaches stress the concept of participation, thus representing a new focus on pluralistic, process-oriented forms of planning that are internalized within civil society.
- All the above approaches conceive of themselves as being cross-sectoral or 'holistic', thus representing a new focus on coherence and synergy.

This understanding of national planning indubitably offers major opportunities – for both developing countries and donors. National strategies can contribute to harmonizing the diversity of processes underway in developing countries and orienting these to common, long-term objectives. As pluralistic planning processes, they can contribute to empowering civil society; to promoting broad based policy learning in strategic issues; to building capacities; to launching institutional reforms; to creating framework conditions conducive to development processes; and to concentrating investment in priority areas. From the perspective of development cooperation organizations, they can provide a framework for country strategies, cooperation programmes, policy dialogue and donor coordination and may thus indeed create a foundation for a new development partnership.

However, the fact that the initiatives in terms of NSSD processes, on the one hand, and CDF or PRSP processes, on the other, have until now proceeded in the institutions largely independently does show that, in these questions, international development cooperation is still far removed from coherent action. On the contrary, considering current developments, it might even seem that the past proliferation and increasing overlap among the most varied partial strategies is now being replaced by a – fairly absurd – (meta)proliferation of comprehensive and holistic strategies which compete with each other down to the level of individual countries. Nonetheless – all common features notwithstanding – there are a number of important differences between the NSSD, CDF and PRSP initiatives:

- Each approach is embedded within its own (different) context. While country-level implementation of Agenda 21 informed the NSSD initiative, the CDF is primarily a management tool intended to serve, from the World Bank perspective, as a strategic framework for development cooperation and donor coordination. The PRSP initiative is an attempt to ensure that debt relief leads to concrete poverty reduction measures.
- NSSDs are based upon the long-term guiding vision of sustainable development. This, however, despite being generally recognized as a guiding vision, has remained institutionalized largely within environmental structures, even 8 years after Rio. Efforts have thus until now focused primarily upon integrating environmental aspects in all policy areas – a perspective which, while still rudimentary in the CDF, is entirely absent in the PRSP initiative. The CDF and, to an even greater degree, the PRSP initiative therefore represent a clandestine departure from the guiding vision of sustainable development.
- The formulation of NSSDs is a (non-binding) target following from Agenda 21, in conjunction with a long-term commitment of the donor community to support developing countries in this effort. PRSPs, in contrast, are factually a requirement for debt relief, whereby the IMF and the World Bank retain the right of 'final acceptance' and ultimately also set the deadlines. For this reason alone, PRSPs will develop major dynamics, at least in the HIPC countries. The status of the CDF initiative is still uncertain.

In view of these disparities, the question arises of to what extent the common principles (see above) will also be reflected in coherent actions, or will instead lay the foundation for a further (meta)proliferation of planning requirements, which would completely overburden many developing countries. With a view to practical implementation, it also needs to be asked whether, with regard to the above-mentioned common planning principles, the widely known gap between political pronouncements and their operational implementation prevails

and, above all, how this gap, should it prevail, can be closed. Experience in the environmental sector underscores that the implementation of principles and the effectiveness of plans have limits and therefore should not be mystified:

- National strategies truly based upon ownership and participation are dynamic and highly complex consensus-building processes. They need time (generally several years), they need a minimum degree of institutional underpinning, they must be internalized sufficiently, and they place high demands upon the planning and conflict resolution capacities of all participants. They further presuppose a minimum degree of democratic-pluralistic structures, legitimation of actors and cooperative culture, not to mention the degree of organization of marginalized groups and their capacity to articulate their positions. Not all of these preconditions are given at all times and in every country. It is thus unavoidable that such processes will differ in terms of their quality and time requirements.
- Despite the overarching aspiration of most NSSDs, it is only in a few cases that they have led to true policy integration. The cross-sectoral planning and coherence-building structures tested in practice have in most cases not proven strong enough to overcome departmental thinking, conflicts of interest and demarcation pressures. It is not apparent that this problem will present itself differently in CDF and PRSP processes. On the contrary, heedless handling of such planning processes can lead to the cementing of incoherence and conflicts of objectives. It is crucial to avoid this.
- Donors supporting national planning processes along the stated principles need patience, flexibility, willingness to accept uncertain outcomes, concentration upon the role of a process advisor and effective coordination among themselves. Experience shows that in these fields, too, there have been deficits in practice. This applies particularly to the different speeds at which individual donors have pursued (their) processes. The donor community needs to learn from this.
- Contrary to all good intentions, experience is mixed, to say the least, in the questions of ownership, participation, process design and the effectiveness of the corresponding planning processes in the environmental sector. While this weakness has been acknowledged explicitly in the international debate on NSSDs, this is not directly apparent for the CDF and PRSP initiatives, although the World Bank has already reported CDF ownership problems.
- Nor is it apparent how PRSPs, in particular, are to be accepted in practice as a coherence-building framework and foundation for donor coordination, considering that the IMF and World Bank Boards retain the exclusive right of 'final decision'. Here the disparities among donor strategies and approaches are evidently underestimated. Experience made with environmental strategies underscores that the planning process alone is not a suitable framework to ensure effective donor coordination.

In sum, it appears that the 'national planning' tool is being used to pursue an excessive number of disparate objectives (national-level policy integration, empowerment, donor coordination, DC strategy), which is ultimately overburdening the tool. All this bears the risk that the aspirations attached to national strategies cannot be met while the observable deficits and blockages are in fact cemented, and that such approaches become discredited as a whole in the foreseeable future.

It is quite plain that overly brisk donor activities, uniform timeframes and requirements ultimately lead to erosion of the ownership, participation and effectiveness of planning processes.<sup>36</sup> In order to satisfy legitimate donor interests (which also vary from donor to donor), greater consideration thus needs to be given to intermediate forms not subject to the same requirements. Examples of this include in the environmental sector the Country Environmental Strategy Papers (CESP) which the World Bank has accepted in some cases as providing substitute compliance with NEAP requirements for IDA countries. CESPs were usually simple strategy papers which were elaborated largely by (World Bank) experts and had only a very limited degree of internalization within local structures. It is also a step in this

direction that the IMF has now acknowledged the possibility of accepting 'interim reports' as a precondition to debt relief measures. All the present approaches have different strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, donors are ultimately breaking new ground with all three approaches. It is therefore expedient to gather experience and learn together from all three approaches, without excessive deadline pressure. This learning process must include reflection upon the role of development cooperation institutions. It further needs to be based upon the principle that responsibility for national planning processes and their design rests within the countries concerned.

## 6. Strategies for sustainable development as opportunities: Conclusions for development cooperation

The foreseeable need to support developing countries in national planning processes of the types set out above offers technical cooperation (TC) organizations the opportunity to assume key tasks. Although the substantive focuses of NSSD, CDF and PRSP processes are not identical, they all have the potential to be country-level consensus-building and coordinating processes. In addition to classic sectoral, project-specific consultancy, such processes above all offer entry points for policy advice uniting elements of technical, methodological, organizational and process consultancy.

National planning processes supported by TC with the above understanding doubtlessly harbour great opportunities – for both developing countries and the modernization of development cooperation. They further present a real plane of intervention for more political TC, situated between global structural policy on the one hand and 'projectitis' on the other. This is a plane on which organizations like GTZ could position themselves successfully. On the other hand, such planning processes bear an array of risks – not least due to the high demands placed upon all participants. These risks include the absorption of scarce local planning capacity to produce papers which then just quietly 'gather dust', the increasing proliferation of plans, the cementing of structures and many others. The experience in the environmental sector presented here shows that the extent to which such risks materialize depends less upon *what* concrete planning issues are about, and more upon *how* planning processes develop and *how* actors (including donors) perceive their roles. Here it must also be kept in mind that neither NSSDs nor CDF and PRSP processes are ends in themselves, but are means by which to attain objectives such as sustainable development, strategic development cooperation, poverty reduction etc.

The opportunities should certainly be exploited. However, the current debate and the emergent dynamics, notably with regard to the PRSP initiative, also highlight that by assuming a consulting role in these fields e.g., the GTZ would not only plunge into the 'thicket' of national planning processes but would also join the throng of donors and local actors. In this, an organization like GTZ has at least three roles:

- It is involved (together with the BMZ) in international bodies and at country level in designing the framework conditions for national planning processes.
- It must define its role and service package vis-à-vis potential clients in developing countries whose planning processes it aims to support.
- Furthermore, it must clarify its commission carefully vis-à-vis potential clients or donors (in both normal business and technical cooperation for international clients) in order to create the preconditions essential to successful planning processes.

This diversity of roles to some extent creates a problem that can ultimately only be solved through great professionalism, long-term thinking and agreement upon a common code of conduct. It is decisive in the debate on NSSD, CDF and PRSP processes that TC organizations coordinate their behaviour internally in all these roles. This is the only way to prevent premature decisions and a resultant long-term loss of credibility among developing countries or donors. It is further crucial to maintaining the scope for action that these organiza

tions need to realize their comparative advantages in relevant consultancy commissions.

The GTZ and the BMZ should therefore draw attention in the relevant forums – above all DAC, World Bank, IMF, UN, convention negotiations, EU and international NGOs – to the following points with regard to designing framework conditions for promoting NSSD, CDF and PRSP processes:

- In the environmental sector, but also in other fields, there is broad-based experience with the promotion of national planning processes. This should be taken into consideration in further activities relating to NSSD, CDF and PRSP processes. Experience underscores not least implementational problems, which are already perceptible in the CDF initiative and are predictable for the PRSP initiative.
- It is essential to prevent a further proliferation of national planning processes and the associated reporting requirements, which today already pose capacity problems for many developing countries. It is particularly important to prevent competition emerging among various 'holistic' initiatives. This calls for greater coordination, notably among the protagonists of NSSD, CDF and PRSP processes and among donors. In general, the 'national planning' tool should not be overtaxed with too many objectives of equal priority.
- The process dimension is crucial in all national planning processes that are not intended as requirements but as processes of change. The complexity of this dimension should by no means be underestimated. This has consequences for the duration of such processes, for their design and for the role of donors. It encompasses the necessity to invest adequately in the process, above all, as well as in the planning output. In this issue, the GTZ, as a TC organization, can offer its experience with great authority.
  - In order to maintain the preconditions for ownership and participation, legitimate interests of donors – expressed e.g. within the context of the debt relief initiative in PRSP requirements and deadline pressure – should be distinguished as clearly as possible from overly extensive demands upon the planning process. Here intermediate solutions and a special terminology (cf. 'interim PRSP') are a step in the right direction. This further calls for differentiated (product and process) indicators for international reporting on compliance with requirements, on the one hand, and attainment of strategic goals, on the other.
  - To promote national planning processes such as the NSSD, CDF and PRSP initiatives, it is necessary to continue the international debate on altering the roles of the donor community, increasing the flexibility of their funding instruments and improving donor coordination. Technical cooperation plays a particular role here and has a wealth of experience to offer.

For the GTZ, in particular, promoting national planning processes offers an opportunity to position itself in an important field of political TC and to build upon its credibility among developing countries and donors, thus raising its profile as a competent provider of relevant consultancy services (incl. technical cooperation for international clients, notably for the EU and the World Bank). The GTZ has a comparatively strong presence and extensive experience in developing countries. Hardly any other organization unites to the same extent country know-how with broad technical and methodological experience, consultancy competence and process competence at the implementational level. But the GTZ – and other donors, too – does not yet have much practical experience with promoting this type of process in the narrower sense. Nonetheless, potentially fruitful technical, methodological and process experience is available in related areas.

Due to the high (possibly excessive) dynamics associated with the issue at stake, in the PRSP context the conditions for TC to become active at country level tend to be more unfavourable. Here the initial priority would seem to be to influence framework conditions in the manner set out above. However, in order to play a more active role in NSSD elaboration and at the same time to provide in-process consultancy to the CDF/PRSP initiatives, there

is an immediate need to assemble the experience and competence available, e.g. within the GTZ, in order to make up a coherent service package. This needs to be communicated in a suitable form, both internally and externally, in order to ensure that developing countries and donors will be aware of and demand the service package. In this endeavour, there is a role to be played by active collaboration in the DAC-initiated Country Dialogues, which aim to identify best practices in the promotion of NSSD processes.

#### **GTZ innovation project: NSSD service profile**

An internal project launched by the GTZ at the beginning of the year 2000 is a first step in this direction. The goal of the measure is to elaborate a multi-sectoral and operational GTZ service package for promoting NSSD processes in developing countries, including their dissemination in developing countries and among the donor community. Because this task cuts across thematic boundaries, cross-departmental collaboration is envisaged. Activities shall build upon the following experience in particular:

*Division 44 (Environmental Management, Water, Energy, Transport):*

Membership in the OECD DAC Task Force on National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD), concepts and project experience in the spheres of environmental policy consultancy and institutional development, process consultancy within the context of national environmental action plans, environmental management in private industry, implementation of environmental conventions, energy policy, transport policy, water policy, mediation, communication consultancy

*Division 42 (State and Economic Reform, Civil Society):*

Policy advice (economic and social), PRSPs, legal advice, institutional reform, municipal development, Local Agenda 21, organizational development, cooperation and communication consultancy, civil society

*Division 45 (Rural Development):*

Agricultural policy, forest policy, integrated rural development, combating desertification, resource management

*Cross-cutting experience:*

Participatory planning, process consultancy, process management, moderation, mediation, integrated planning, participation in international negotiations, donor coordination

Developing a service package for the promotion of NSSD processes not least offers an opportunity to internalize in TC practice current concepts and scientific approaches more broadly than before. This includes approaches relating to, for instance, institutional economics, new public management, capacity development, institutional development and livelihood systems, but also methods of action research, interactive training, systemic consultancy and organizational development.

To position NSSDs effectively within the context of practical development cooperation, further measures are conceivable in addition to elaborating and refining a GTZ service package:

- promoting NSSD processes in selected developing countries through pilot measures or through appropriate TC projects or programmes;
- supporting CDF or PRSP processes in selected countries in order to learn pragmatically from experience and, conversely, integrate experience gathered in NSSD processes;
- enshrining the NSSD approach in the BMZ Concept for Development Policy, which is currently being revised, in BMZ country concepts, GTZ country working papers, programmatic approaches and in policy dialogue;
- disseminating experience gathered in developing countries to the forums which elaborate the German strategy for sustainable development, in order to contribute thus to alleviating the often criticized lack of a 'southern perspective' in this debate;
- disseminating experience to the events planned for the year 2002 upon the occasion of Rio+10 (UNGASS, numerous events in Germany, public awareness raising).

However, such measures require an appropriate, institutionally anchored support structure. This can take the form of special teams and funds such as those established by the World Bank for the CDF pilot phase or – following the British model – a NSSD support unit, which, in the UK, is located within the DFID's environment department. The issue would doubtless warrant – even major – strategic investment in order to support a proactive role of German development cooperation in national planning processes.

## Footnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> OECD-DAC: Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – The Contribution of Development Co-Operation. Paris 1996; p. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Thereby, as a reference point, the understanding set out here now has the same political standing as the NSSD target itself.
- <sup>3</sup> European Commission (1999): 2215th Council Meeting – Development, Brussels, 11.11.99 (12638/99 – Press 340-G); p. 7 and Annex p. 18.
- <sup>4</sup> Wolfensohn, James D.: A Proposal for a Comprehensive Development Framework (Discussion Draft), Address to the Board, Management, and Staff of the World Bank Group, Washington, January 1999, <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/cdf/cdf-text.htm>
- <sup>5</sup> World Bank: Assessing Aid – A World Bank Policy Research Report, Oxford University Press, New York, November 1998
- <sup>6</sup> Wolfensohn, James D.: The Other Crisis, Address to the Board of Governors, Washington, October 1998, <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/am98/jdw-sp/am98-en.htm>
- <sup>7</sup> Wolfensohn, James D.: A Proposal for a Comprehensive Development Framework (Discussion Draft), Address to the Board, Management, and Staff of the World Bank Group, Washington, January 1999, <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/cdf/cdf-text.htm>
- <sup>8</sup> International Monetary Fund and International Development Association: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative – Strengthening the Link between Debt Relief and Poverty Reduction, Washington, August 1999, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/hipc/0899/link.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> IMF: "Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – Operational Issues", December 1999, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/pdr/prsp/poverty1.htm>
- <sup>10</sup> IMF: "Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – Operational Issues", December 1999, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/pdr/prsp/poverty1.htm>
- <sup>11</sup> Jänicke, Martin and Helmut Weidner (Eds.) (1997): National Environmental Policies. A Comparative Study of Capacity-Building. Springer, p. 310.
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- <sup>13</sup> Jänicke et al. (1997): Nationale Umweltpläne in ausgewählten Industrieländern; p. 19
- <sup>14</sup> Jänicke et al. (1997): Nationale Umweltpläne in ausgewählten Industrieländern; p. 19
- <sup>15</sup> ICLEI (1998): Handbuch Lokale Agenda 21. Wege zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung in den Kommunen. BMU/UBA (Eds.), Bonn/Berlin.
- <sup>16</sup> ICLEI (1997): Local Agenda Survey. <http://www.iclei.org>
- <sup>17</sup> IIED (1994): National Sustainable Development Strategies: Experience and Dilemmas. Environmental Planning Issues, No. 6, p. 24.
- <sup>18</sup> IIED (1994): National Sustainable Development Strategies: Experience and Dilemmas. Environmental Planning Issues, No. 6, p. 24.
- <sup>19</sup> IIED (1994): National Sustainable Development Strategies: Experience and Dilemmas. Environmental Planning Issues, No. 6, p. 32.
- <sup>20</sup> Engel, Adalbert (1999): Can SIP succeed? Institutional and political challenges to a new approach. Agriculture and Rural Development 2/99, pp. 12 ff.
- <sup>21</sup> World Bank (1996): Effectiveness of Environmental Assessments and National Environmental Action Plans: A Process Study. Report No. 15835, p. 16.
- <sup>22</sup> Club du Sahel (1998): Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Points for Discussion in seven Countries in the Sahel. p. 4.
- <sup>23</sup> IIED (1994): National Sustainable Development Strategies: Experience and Dilemmas. Environmental Planning Issues, No. 6, pp. 32 f.
- <sup>24</sup> Carew-Reid, Jeremy (Ed.) (1997): Strategies for Sustainability. Asia. IUCN, Earthscan, p. 9.
- <sup>25</sup> Lopez, Arturo (Ed.) (1997): Strategies for Sustainability. Latin America. IUCN, Earthscan, pp. 6 and 9.
- <sup>26</sup> Cf. Hoffer, Wilfried (1995). Der Umweltaktionsplan und die Umsetzung der Wüstenkonvention in Mali. In: GTZ/PVI (Ed.) (1995): Erfahrungen und Ansätze der TZ bei der Unterstützung von Umweltaktionsplänen. Dokumentation eines Erfahrungsaustausches im Dezember 1995 in der GTZ. Also: GTZ (1997): Bericht über eine Projektfortschrittskontrolle zum Projekt "Unterstützung bei der Umsetzung der Internationalen Desertifikationskonvention", Mali.
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- <sup>28</sup> Wood, Adrian (1997): Strategies for Sustainability. Africa. IUCN, Earthscan.



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- <sup>29</sup> IIED (1994): National Sustainable Development Strategies: Experience and Dilemmas. Environmental Planning Issues, No. 6, pp. 22 ff.
- <sup>30</sup> World Bank (1996): Effectiveness of Environmental Assessments and National Environmental Action Plans: A Process Study. Report No. 15835. pp. 15 ff.
- <sup>31</sup> World Bank (1996): Effectiveness of Environmental Assessments and National Environmental Action Plans: A Process Study. Report No. 15835. p. 16.
- <sup>32</sup> Cf. on scenarios e.g. German Advisory Council on Global Change (1998): World in Transition: Strategies for Managing Global Environmental Risks; Annual Report 1998; [http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu\\_jg1998\\_engl.html](http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg1998_engl.html)
- <sup>33</sup> "The syndrome approach organizes the highly complex dynamics of human-environment interactions ... along the lines of their prime, typical basic dynamics, the syndromes. Syndromes are transsectoral in nature; while specific problems may affect several sectors (such as the economy, the biosphere, population), they are always related, directly or indirectly, to natural resources. Syndromes are globally relevant when they modify the Earth System and have a noticeable impact ... on the basis of life for a major part of humankind ..." German Advisory Council on Global Change (1996): World in Transition: The Research Challenge; Berlin/Heidelberg, pp. 3f. The 'syndromes' include desertification, overexploitation, the Green Revolution and water scarcity. Cf. also De Haan, Gerhard: Von der Umweltbildung zur Bildung für Nachhaltigkeit; FU-Berlin 1998, [http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu\\_jg1996\\_engl.html](http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg1996_engl.html)
- <sup>34</sup> World Resources Institute: Rio+8 – An Assessment of National Councils for Sustainable Development. Environmental Governance Notes. Washington D.C.; December 1999
- <sup>35</sup> Lopez, Arturo (Ed.) (1997): Strategies for Sustainability. Latin America. IUCN, Earthscan, pp. 30 f.
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## **ANNEX 2: DAC CLARIFICATION STATEMENT ON STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ADOPTED AT THE DAC HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON 11.5.1999**

### **Assisting Developing Countries with the Formulation and Implementation of National Strategies for Sustainable Development: The Need to Clarify DAC targets and strategies**

#### 0 Introduction

1. The OECD Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) strategy document *Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation* (1996), sets a target date of 2005 for national strategies for sustainable development (*nssds*) to be in the process of implementation in every country, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed by 2015. The document commits DAC Members to support partner developing countries in the formulation and implementation of *nssds*. In 1997, at the UNGASS "Rio + 5" meeting, a target date of 2002 was agreed for the introduction of sustainable development strategies in all countries.

2. Based on experiences in the past and on extensive discussions within various fora, it is timely to clarify the opportunities and risks presented by the *nssd* target and in particular to specify the role of development co-operation in assisting partner developing countries in the formulation and implementation of *nssds*.

#### 1 II. Opportunities in Formulating National Strategies for Sustainable Development

3. The formulation of a *nssd* offers a number of opportunities to integrate the economic, social and environmental goals of sustainable development:

- The formulation of a *nssd* can serve as both a catalyst and an umbrella to reorient a country's existing policies, plans and investment programs towards the goal of improving economic efficiency, social justice, and environmental sustainability simultaneously. *Nssds* offer the opportunity to analyse a country's or region's economic, social and environmental development trends, to take stock of interrelated policies and plans, and to identify key problems. On this basis, *nssds* are a way to formulate strategic goals and begin necessary action towards sustainable development, to design and implement institutional reforms, to improve policy coherence across sectors, and to benefit from synergies. At the regional or sub-regional level, *nssds* offer the opportunity to identify common challenges between neighbouring countries with different social, economic and environmental circumstances and to facilitate the emergence of regional approaches to address them.
- Sustainable development requires the mobilisation of society at large. *Nssds* potentially are new types of participatory planning processes based on continuous democratic dialogues and debates amongst broad sections of society. This involves building ownership in, not only government and administration at all levels, but also in civil society such as the business community, NGOs, the rural and urban communities, the media, the scientific community etc. Thus, *nssds* offer the opportunity to expand the knowledge base amongst all relevant actors on issues relevant to sustainable development; to promote broad based policy learning and capacity development; to create transparency and awareness of the strategic choices and dilemmas facing a country; and to initiate actions to address them.

- *Nssds* are internationally recognised as the way of giving shape to governments' commitment to the goal of sustainable development as spelt out in Agenda 21, balancing sound technical analysis with participatory planning processes. As such, *nssd* processes acknowledge the dynamics of planning for sustainable development, as they are based on concerted efforts across sectors; and on negotiation, conflict management and crisis prevention.

### III. The Need for Clarification of the DAC NSSD Target

4. Based on experiences with other national planning efforts, e.g. national environmental action plans and national action plans under the various global conventions, there is a need to acknowledge a number of risks in making the formulation of *nssds* a strategic target of development co-operation:

- In the past, many *nssds* or related initiatives had little practical impact because they focused mainly on the production of a document as an end-product. While the preparation of strategic documents plays a role in mobilising stakeholders and identifying common objectives, making the formulation of a *nssd* a strategic target of development co-operation could lead partner developing countries and donor agencies to concentrate efforts on the preparation of expert documents while neglecting the process dimension of *nssd* formulation and the environmental change results, thereby missing crucial opportunities.
- The *nssd* target could be perceived by partner developing countries and donor agencies as yet another addition to existing planning and reporting requirements. There is a risk that a further proliferation of planning processes, notably in response to international conventions, could overburden government departments and divert resources and attention from concrete development activities to planning exercises which are overlapping and duplicative.
- Setting a uniform timeframe for all countries bears the risk of neglecting the specific needs and circumstances of a country. *Nssd* formulation needs to take account of the differing situations with regard to, e.g. the practicalities of participation by civil society, levels of governance and democracy, the capacities of NGOs and the media, availability of information and the environmental situations confronting the country. Large countries might need to prepare plans at decentralised or sector focused levels first, before engaging in a *nssd*.

### 2 IV. Clarifying the Role of Development Co-operation

5. The DAC should reconfirm its commitment to support partner developing countries in formulation and implementation of *nssds*. However, the *nssd* target as spelt out in the DAC *Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* document should be clarified to highlight the opportunities offered by *nssds* and to minimise the risks involved. In particular, the following clarifications should be made:

- *Nssds* should be recognised as strategic and participatory processes encompassing analysis, democratic debate, capacity development, planning and action towards sustainable development. Partner developing countries and donor agencies should focus their efforts on designing and organising the process of *nssd* preparation, rather than on the preparation of planning documents as such. Partner developing countries and donors should acknowledge the complexity of *nssd* processes and make sure that investments in products, processes and results are balanced accordingly.
- The fact that the DAC target on *nssds* is linked to environmental sustainability goals should not be interpreted to imply that *nssds* are primarily environmental plans. Partner countries and donors should seek ways to ensure that *nssd* processes address all aspects of sustainable development, i.e. economic efficiency and social justice as well as environmental sustainability. Efforts should be made to mainstream *nssds* in overarching development strategies, i.e. by involving non-environment staff in donor

- agencies and by increasing communication and co-operation between different government departments.
- All efforts should be made to avoid a diversion of capacities through further proliferation of plans. There is a need to understand *nssds* as an umbrella, building on existing plans, seeking synergies, improving policy coherence across sectors and strengthening co-ordination, including notably amongst donors. It should be acknowledged that *nssds* can have many different promoters and entry points, e.g. government or NGOs; national planning or local initiatives; environmental and other sectoral plans; and international convention commitments.
- It should be emphasised that government commitment and ownership by all relevant stakeholders including civil society are crucial for *nssds* to mobilise capacity for implementation. Therefore, the *nssd* target should be understood as a long term commitment by DAC Members to assist partner developing countries in formulating and implementing their *nssds* and to make maximum use of the opportunities involved with *nssd* processes, rather than as a requirement to produce planning documents.
- The timeframe set out in the *nssd* target should be interpreted as a timeframe for achieving progress, rather than as a strict deadline. In this context, monitoring progress should be based on indicators reflecting the quality of the planning and implementation process rather than the existence of planning documents. This should be complemented by efforts to develop the necessary capacity to monitor actual progress towards sustainability objectives.
- To avoid the risk of overburdening partner countries, attention should focus in the first instance on selected priority initiatives likely to have a big impact on sustainable development prospects and where rapid and visible progress is achievable.
- Since *nssds* are a new type of strategy, donors should, in partnership with developing countries, work towards elaborating best practices in assisting developing countries in the formulation and implementation of *nssds*. In pursuit of this objective, key institutional processes, factors of effectiveness, indicators of implementation progress and priorities for donor support and improved co-ordination should be identified and widely disseminated.

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### Unit 4404: Environmental Policy, Institutional Development

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| 402/95 - 12 e PVI    | Market-Based Instruments in Environmental Policy in Developing Countries - Framework for Policy Planning and Institutional Development in the Environment   | P3-012-e  |
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