



Network of Regional Governments  
for Sustainable Development

## nrg4SD's contribution to the works of the UN Global Sustainability Panel November 2011

Back in March 2011 nrg4SD took part in the consultation conducted by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) upon the request of the Secretariat of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (GSP). The submission from nrg4SD focused on the contribution of subnational governments and local authorities to the achievement of sustainable development (SD) goals at global level. In this context, nrg4SD called for a full revision of the global environmental governance and the SD framework capable of embracing a true multistakeholder and multilevel governance approach, which also recognises the full potential of "governmental stakeholders" such as subnational governments and local authorities in achieving SD.

Following this first input, nrg4SD has now the honour of being directly invited by UN NGLS to contribute again to the works of the UN GSP. Comments below constitute initial ideas to be read in connection to the report prepared by Mrs. Susan Alzner, Global Sustainability Consultant for UN GSP (in follow up of the telephone interview with nrg4SD Secretary General Mrs. Maruxa Cardama on 4 November 2011); the contribution of nrg4SD to the High-Level ministerial meeting on International Framework for Sustainable Development of 19-21 July 2011 in Indonesia (available [here](#)), and the submission of nrg4SD to the compilation document for a draft zero of the outcome document of Rio +20 (available [here](#))

The nrg4SD Secretariat is grateful for this opportunity to keep engaging in the works of GSP and stands ready to develop any of the ideas below and further contribute to GSP deliberations. For any queries please contact Mrs. [Maruxa Cardama](#).

### **Reducing policy and budget fragmentation - Mainstreaming SD at national level**

#### *Some ideas*

#### **1. Cross-departmental, over-arching national, fully resourced SD Strategies should be elaborated at national level and encouraged at subnational level.**

These would identify key over-arching priorities of each country as regards social, environmental and economic affairs in an intergenerational frame (25 years).

They would also provide for comprehensive annual spending reviews to feed into the elaboration of national annual budgets and monitor that the economic and fiscal policy of the country encourages SD goals (withdrawal of perverse subsidies, transition towards a fair green economy including the creation of green jobs for all, etc.).

Subnational governments and local authorities should be fully involved in the development of national strategies, with certain delivery aspects devolved to sub-national levels. Because sustainable development happens at subnational and local level, a bottom-up approach that encourages subnational/regional and local SD strategies should be put in practice at international and national instances.

## **2. Independent, multi-stakeholder, multilevel and fully resourced SD Commissions should be created at national level and encouraged at subnational level.**

They would be in charge of the elaboration and implementation of national SD strategies and the coordination of subnational SD strategies.

They would feed into international works via the UN Committee of national SD ambassadors with the UN SD Council. A key focus of their international work should be working in partnership with the UN Specialised SD Agency and the Intergovernmental Group of Sustainability Experts (see below) in order to move towards innovative integrated parameters and indicators for SD that go beyond GDP, as well as towards standard approaches and tools for SD data collection, monitoring, verification and reporting.

They would be staffed with:

- (i) Officers from a cross-sectoral representation of government departments and agencies with social, economic and environmental portfolios;
- (ii) Standing SD experts from the 3 fields, constituting a varied group with backgrounds related to key stakeholders' groups, as well national, subnational and local governmental stakeholders;
- (iii) Key stakeholders' groups;
- (iv) Governmental stakeholders from subnational/regional governments and local authorities.
- (v) UN bodies and country offices could be invited by the country to be part of the Commission for certain dossiers.

Their governing board would consist of (i) a compact group of government ministers responsible for social, environmental and economic portfolios, (ii) 1 representative per sector of expertise, (iii) 1 representative per stakeholder group; (iv) 1 representative of subnational governments and, (v) 1 representative of local authorities.

The overall responsibility for the work of the Commission would be with the Prime Minister Office or equivalent. The work of the SD Commission would be subject to the monitoring and scrutiny of the national parliament or equivalent.

## **3. SD ambassadors of national SD Commissions should represent national SD policies**

At national level these ambassadors could act in a capacity of 'ombudsman' to ensure independent, multi-stakeholder and multi-level SD strategies and Commissions.

At international level they could gather in an UN Committee of national SD ambassadors.

## **4. Further national policies for education on SD should be put in place**

Introduction of sustainable development *cursus* into children education programmes from early age, as well as into a wide range of relevant professional and vocational training fields (such as architects, builders, land planners, teachers, farmers, etc.).

## **Achieving coordination and standardisation at international level**

### *Some ideas*

#### **5. SD goals should be established as an outcome of Rio +20**

An ambitious, firm, transparent, fair and comprehensive agreement on a new paradigm for sustainable development that embraces and extends the Millennium Development Goals is necessary and possible.

New SD goals should be accompanied by quantifiable objectives, verifiable roadmaps and timescales, adequate resources and governance tools at all levels of government.

Some key SD goals could be:

- Food security,
- Poverty eradication and green jobs,
- Education to SD,
- Intergenerational and interracial solidarity: resilient communities,
- Empowering women to SD,
- The territorial dimension of SD: Urbanisation, the city-region approach and rural SD,
- Consumption and production patterns,
- Climate action: mitigation, adaptation and sustainable energy,
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services, and
- Access to and management of water and sanitation.

#### **6. The UN Commission for Sustainable Development should be upgraded into a UN SD Council**

This Council should:

- Be the UN forum for open and transparent North-South dialogue and the UN decision body for international SD policy. As such, it should agree for instance on SD goals, guidelines for national SD strategies and commissions, the elaboration of new international binding measures, etc.
- Have a stronger monitoring and control mandate on the basis of the information centralised by the Specialised Agency (see below), including the elaboration of recommendations to countries and the scrutiny of the initiatives of any UN body related to sustainable development,
- Include a Committee of national SD ambassadors to allow for exchange of practices and identification of common challenges,
- Include a Committee of governmental stakeholders representing subnational governments and local authorities to feed into the preparatory and monitoring phase of international SD policy and ensure a territorial dimension to SD, and
- Include a Committee of key stakeholder groups' representatives to feed into the preparatory and monitoring phase of international SD policy.

#### **7. The UN Environment Programme UNEP should be upgraded into a fully resourced UN SD Specialised Agency**

This Agency should enjoy a comprehensive mandate in order to:

- Commission and coordinate work to identify SD goals with the international community and put forward guidelines for the elaboration of national SD strategies and commissions.

- Commission and coordinate work on integrated economic development parameters beyond GDP,
- Commission and coordinate works into standardised data collection, monitoring, reporting and verification mechanisms for SD,
- Consolidate national and international SD information & knowledge and centralise all SD initiatives carried out within the UN;
- Cover the reporting and monitoring of all international sustainable development instruments,
- Put forward recommendations on how to mainstream SD concerns into UN bodies,
- Put forward proposals for international binding measures, and alert the international community about breaches of SD policies and instruments;

The Agency should work following a bottom-up approach and thus involve key stakeholders' groups, as well as governmental stakeholders from subnational governments and local authorities.

It would be supported by the national (and subnational) SD Commissions (see above), as well as by the Intergovernmental Group of Sustainability Experts (see below).

## **8. A permanent independent Intergovernmental Group of Sustainability Experts should be established**

This permanent Group would further encourage research, development and innovation in the field of SD in order to accomplish the mandates of the UN SD Council and the UN SD Specialised Agency.

It would rely on a network of excellence centres across the Globe to be identified jointly with the UN SD Specialised Agency.

A key focus of its work should be moving towards innovative integrated parameters and indicators for SD that go beyond GDP, as well as towards standard approaches and tools for SD data collection, monitoring, verification and reporting.

The Group will work with the UN Committees of national SD ambassadors, key stakeholder groups and governmental stakeholders within the UN SD Council and constitute the key R&D&I body of the UN SD Specialised Agency.

**Maruxa Cardama**

**nrg4SD Secretary General**

mcardama@nrg4sd.org and +32 475 844 339

# North and South Subnational Governments committed to Sustainable Development

The **Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, nrg4SD** works tirelessly to champion the work of subnational governments on sustainable development. International non-profit organisation representing namely federated states and regional governments at the global level; nrg4SD promotes understanding, partnerships and projects in sustainable development and seeks greater international recognition of the important contribution of subnational governments towards sustainable development. Member of the Organisation des Nations Unies-Forum Global d'Associations de Régions (ORU-FOGAR), nrg4SD is the voice of ORU-FOGAR in the field of sustainable development.



[www.nrg4sd.org](http://www.nrg4sd.org)

**Network of Regional Governments  
for Sustainable Development**

20, Bvd. Roi Albert II-Köning Albert II-iaan  
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel.: +32 (0) 475 844 339  
Email: [nrg4sd@nrg4sd.org](mailto:nrg4sd@nrg4sd.org)

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