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Issue: ***Assessing progress to date and remaining gaps***

The EU * and its Member States Common Responses to Questionnaire B of UNDESA as Contribution to UNCSD2012

B.3 Based as far as possible on these indicators, please provide an assessment of the progress made towards sustainable development over the past 18 years (1992-2010), (a) at the level of your country (where applicable) and (b) globally. Please attach any relevant technical studies or policy analyses. For each input, kindly provide the original article or url, and enter a short abstract.

Current EU assessment of the progress made towards sustainable development

The measurement of sustainable development in the EU is based on core sets of indicators relating to the three components, with the aim of monitoring in an effective and transparent way the EU trends of sustainable development. In 2005, a first comprehensive assessment of the progress towards sustainable development within the EU was made by Eurostat in its publication "*Measuring progress towards a more sustainable Europe - Sustainable development indicators for the European Union*" covering the period 1990-2005 as a follow up of the Work Program on Sustainable Development Indicators of the CSD. This assessment was based on a set of more than 100 sustainable development indicators related to the EU sustainable development strategy, launched by the European Council in Gothenburg in 2001.

Since the adoption of the EU renewed Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) in 2006, the monitoring and assessment of the Strategy are ensured by 2 types of report published each two years: a progress report on the implementation of the SDS in the EU and the Member States and a monitoring report describing a comprehensive set of sustainable development indicators.

- The *progress reports*: The Commission's assessment of the implementation of EU Sustainable Development Strategy is given in the 2007 Progress Report on EU SDS implementation[1] and the 2009 EU SDS Review[2].
- The *monitoring reports*: These reports produced by Eurostat's provide a wide summary of the progress towards sustainable development in terms of the objectives and targets. They describe more than 100 sustainable development indicators (SDI) structured as a three-storey pyramid distinguishing between three levels of indicators. The indicators in the first level provide the headline indicators related to the seven key challenges of the EU SDS, the indicators of the second level pertain to the operational

* **References to the EU should be understood as referring to the EU and its 27 Member States**
[1] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007DC0642:EN:NOT
[2] 2009 Review of SDS Strategy: http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st16/st16818.en09.pdf

objectives of the strategy and the indicators of the third level relate to actions described in the strategy or explanatory variables. The first monitoring report was published in 2007 and the second one in 2009[3]. Its main results are summarized hereunder (more detailed statistics are provided by Eurostat on its website[4]).

SDI theme	Headline indicator	EU-27 evaluation of change
Socioeconomic development	Growth of GDP per capita	
Climate change and energy	Greenhouse gas emissions*	
	Consumption of renewables	
Sustainable transport	Energy consumption of transport relative to GDP	
Sustainable consumption and production	Resource productivity	
Natural resources	Abundance of common birds**	
	Conservation of fish stocks***	
Public health	Healthy life years****	
Social inclusion	Risk of poverty****	
Demographic changes	Employment rate of older workers	
Global partnership	Official development assistance*****	
Good governance	*[No headline indicator]*	:

* EU-15 ** Based on 19 Member States *** In North East Atlantic **** EU-25, from 2005 ***** From 2005

LEGEND:

clearly favourable change/on target path

moderately unfavourable change/far from target path

no or moderately favourable change/close to target path

clearly unfavourable change/moving away from target path

: contextual indicator or insufficient data

NB: The evaluation principles used in this publication are described in detail in annex 1 at the end of this publication.

[3] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/publication?p_product_code=KS-78-09-865
[4] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/sdi/indicators

Clearly favourable changes

Changes since 2000 are clearly favourable for GDP per capita and resource productivity

Recent developments can be considered as favourable for the two headline indicators related to 'socioeconomic development' and 'sustainable consumption and production'. Between 2000 and 2008, **GDP per capita** in the EU-27 grew by 1.8 % per year on average, with increasing growth rates during the economic upturn from 2003 to 2007. This favourable development led to an increase in **resource productivity**, which is the headline indicator of the 'sustainable consumption and production' theme. With resource use (in terms of domestic material consumption) growing at a slower annual rate than GDP, EU-27 resource productivity significantly increased by 1.1 % per year on average between 2000 and 2005.

No or moderately favourable changes

Moderately favourable changes for energy consumption of transport, healthy life years and employment rate of older workers

Moderately favourable changes can be observed for the headline indicators related to 'sustainable transport', 'public health' and 'demographic changes'. Changes were not significant for the headline indicator relating to 'social inclusion' and for one of the two 'natural resources' headline indicators.

Concerning 'sustainable transport', the headline indicator **energy consumption of transport in relation to GDP growth** shows only slight signs of the relative decoupling of transport energy demand from economic growth. Between 2000 and 2007, the energy consumption of transport in the EU-27 increased by 1.5 % per year on average. The moderately favourable evaluation is a result of the even higher GDP growth rates of 2.1 % per year over the same period, which outstripped the increases in energy consumption.

Concerning 'public health', data on life expectancy and **healthy life years** in the EU-25 indicate some progress in healthier and longer lives for EU citizens. A child of either sex born in 2006 would be expected to live, on average, 62 years free of disability.

Changes in the **employment rate of older workers** in the EU-27 over the period 2000 to 2008 reflect moderate progress towards the target that at least half of older workers should be in employment by 2010. This positive trend indicates an increased participation of older people in the labour market and a reduction in demand for pensions expenditure.

Both the risk of poverty rate and figures on the abundance of common birds remained broadly stable

Addressing the issue of 'social inclusion', the headline indicator **risk of poverty** shows that there has been no change in the overall number of people at risk of poverty in the EU-25 since 2005. In 2007, one-sixth of the inhabitants in the EU-25 lived under the poverty risk threshold, defined as 60 % of their country's median equivalised disposable income. Single households, children and elder people are at particular risk of poverty.

Data on the **abundance of common birds**, one of the headline indicators of the 'natural resources' theme, show that the index for all common birds has remained relatively stable, although the number of farmland birds declined unfavourably between 2000 and 2006. This indicates that the EU is still not on track to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

Moderately unfavourable changes

Moderately unfavourable changes for both headline indicators

Changes are moderately unfavourable for the two headline indicators related to 'climate change and energy'. EU-15 **emissions of greenhouse gases** in 2007 stood only at 5 % below their Kyoto base year value, remaining significantly above the 8 % reduction required by Kyoto between 2008 and 2012. However,

taking into account the significant emission reductions achieved since 2004, recent projections compiled by the European Environment Agency indicate that the Kyoto Protocol targets should be reached. These calculations are based on the additional policies and measures already planned by Member States, including the use of carbon sinks and so-called Kyoto flexible mechanisms as well as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. Despite increases in the **consumption of renewable energies** in the EU-27 over the period 2000 to 2007, their share in inland energy consumption has not grown sufficiently to be on the target path.

of climate change and energy

Clearly unfavourable changes

Changes are clearly unfavourable for the second headline indicator of the 'natural resources' theme, as well as for the headline indicator related to 'global partnership'.

Following slight improvements in the **conservation of fish stocks** between 2003 and 2005, total fish catches outside safe biological limits increased up to 21 % in 2006. Overall, fish catches in all categories far exceeded sustainable levels of exploitation.

As regards the EU's international commitments, the share of Gross National Income (GNI) spent by the EU-27 on **official development assistance** to developing countries decreased between 2005 and 2008 to 0.4 % of GNI, thus moving away from the intermediate target of 0.56 % set for 2010. However, it should be noted that many of the other indicators of the 'global partnership' theme display more favourable trends.

Trends in the conservation of fish stocks and the EU's official development assistance are clearly unfavourable

No headline indicator

The 'good governance' theme contains no headline indicator as no indicator was judged to be sufficiently robust and policy-relevant to provide a comprehensive overview of the good governance concept.

See: 2009 monitoring report of the EU sustainable development strategy "Sustainable development in the European Union"
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-78-09-865/EN/KS-78-09-865-EN.PDF

This summary based on the headline indicators illustrates the advantages but also the limitations to work with a small number of indicators to measure the progress towards sustainable development. For instance, although the share of Gross National Income spent by the EU on official development assistance decreased between 2005 and 2008, the absolute amount spent by the EU-27 on official development assistance significantly increased over this period of time.

The trends of the list of Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI) have been assessed in the monitoring reports with some reliability for the last 10 years, but for the previous years various obstacles do not allow us to carry out effective assessment. In the 2009 monitoring report, the *evaluation of the progress since 2000 based on the headline indicators shows a rather mixed picture*.

Other assessments deliver relevant additional information on the progress towards sustainable development at the EU level, such as for example the first assessment stemming from a G8+5 initiative and sponsored by Germany and the European Commission. This assessment points to the growing pressures on biodiversity and ecosystem services across the world and the need for improved valuation metrics for pricing natural resources. The main pressures come

from population growth, changing diets, urbanization, climate change and invasive alien species. *[The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity - Interim Report, European Communities, 2008)]*.

Next steps to measure the progress made towards sustainable development

In order to improve the indicators used to measure the progress towards sustainable development, several initiatives have been recently launched :

- the report of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission or Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. This Commission was created at the beginning of 2008 on French government's initiative to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, to consider additional information required for the production of a more relevant picture, and to discuss how to present this information in the most appropriate way. The report of this Commission makes 12 concrete recommendations which in particular emphasize the need to complement GDP by indicators on well-being (http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/en/index.htm);

- the communication "GDP and Beyond" COM (2009) 433. This Communication includes actions to better measure progress in a changing world, in particular better using and communicating environmental and social indicators, developing other indicators on wellbeing and quality of life, developing a SD scoreboard, ensuring more timely information for better policy making (also linked to chapter 40 of Agenda 21);

- the EU efforts to identify ecological sustainability thresholds to provide reference values for the interpretation of indicators;

- the work on environmental and eco-system accounting to measure the two-way interaction between the economy and environment to support measures of green growth.

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

Inclusive economic growth and balance prosperity are key drivers in implementation, recognized as such by EU. The other factors mentioned above, such as the use of integrated strategies can also be considered as more important than economic growth to explain progress in implementation by some countries.

In this regard, other factors and policies have to be mentioned which are related in particular to environmental issues, such as safe and sustainable energy technologies, including the accessibility, renewability and efficiency of safe energy use, the reduction of GHG and other

emissions as well as to the overall promotion of biodiversity, including its sustainable conservation and fair use. And public interest or public awareness, which in turn influences political will, is also a key factor, as well as "evidence". Finally, good governance with institutionalised coordination and cooperation mechanisms between government departments and between government and civil society contributes a great deal to successful implementation.

Political will can take the form of (1) Targets and measures incorporated in the Government Policy Programme, (2) Sustainable development perspective integrated in sector programmes and strategies and (3) Decentralised ownership and commitment within the Council of State (ministers and officials)

Political will depend on the level of political commitment and awareness at the national and local levels, which increases in interaction with the commitment of civil society as a whole, including the private sector. Among other factors explaining progress in implementation, the use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs, see also Response to question C.7) can boost sustainable development by delivering the breakthrough needed for new solutions for society's socio economic challenges. Moreover the performance of the private party can be linked to environmental criteria. [more in the Communication on Public Private Partnerships (COM(2009)615)]

B.5 Has your government introduced integrated planning and decision making for sustainable development? If so, under what title (NSDS, PRSP, Five Year Plan, NCS or NEAP, other)? What are the lessons from this experience?

(See also responses to A.1 and A.6 in questionnaire A and the annex to A and B questionnaires)

Since early 90s sustainable development has become a fundamental objective of the EU, and in 1997 it was recognized as an overarching objective of EU policies, through the inclusion in the Treaty of Amsterdam. At the Gothenburg Summit, in June 2001, EU leaders launched a sustainable development strategy (EUSDS), proposing objectives and policy measures to tackle a number of key unsustainable trends in the EU and globally. In 2006 the Strategy has been renewed, identifying new priorities, calling for a new approach to improve synergies and reduce trade-offs, and calling for a more integrated approach to policy making, based on better regulation (impact assessments) and on the guiding principles for sustainable development.

The EUSDS invited Member States to elaborate National Strategies according with the European key priorities and foreseeing that the biannual Reports elaborated by the EU Commission should be built on the basis of Member States actions to implement the EUSDS. In 2007 the EU Commission adopted the "Progress Report on the Sustainable Development Strategy 2007", that reviewed results in moving towards the seven core objectives of the Strategy and identified policy initiatives at both EU and Member States level that have contributed to the results.

The December 2007 European Council asked the Commission to provide a second progress Report on the EU SDS. In July 2009 the Commission adopted the 2009 Review of EU SDS "Mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies: 2009 Review of the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development". It underlined that in recent years the EU has

mainstreamed sustainable development into a broad range of its policies but a number of unsustainable trends require urgent action. The Report underlined, in the paragraph 4, that the EU SDS "has also been instrumental in developing sustainable development strategies at national and regional levels. Today, almost all EU Member States have their own national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) in place, in line with international recommendations of best practice. A recently published study, commissioned by the Committee of the Regions, provides a detailed analysis of these national strategies". (http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/DocumentTemplate.aspx?view=detail&id=046e4f93-3757-4e90-8297-9552c72f9271)

The 2006 EU SDS invited Member States to make use of the existing European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) "to enhance the mainstreaming of sustainable development issues, vertical integration and coherence between the EU, national and sub-national levels of policy-making". In 2007 the EDSN elaborated a document "Objectives and indicators of sustainable development in Europe: a comparative analysis of European coherence". It gives an overview of objectives and indicators of sustainable development in Europe and also of the development of NSDSs in Europe, and it characterises them in terms of basic types focus, structure and objectives.

B7 Is the technical assistance from UN system entities a key factor in explaining progress with sustainable development?

The construction, step by step, of the scientific foundations necessary for a new governance of global environmental issues owes much to technical entities of the UN.
We must welcome here, again, the role of the IPCC, which criticisms have reinforced, since the IPCC is taking the opportunity of these criticisms to improve its functioning. Its legitimacy remains. It is an imperative need of the international community to have the advice of scientists for the decisions to be made on global environment issues.

We must also mention the importance of IPBES, which should be formally established by the end of 2010, and the importance of an ambitious and realistic framework to be adopted for biodiversity beyond 2010. The input of UN technical units in particular will be awaited.

B.8 What are the major barriers to implementation? Please rank in order of importance 1 = most important.
- inadequate coordination between ministries
- low political priority for integrated decision making
- problems created by slow growth
- lack of data
- inadequate or unpredictable international support
- inadequate public awareness or engagement
- other; please specify: _____

In line with the response to B.4, the lack of political will and leadership, ie to move from policy ideas to action, is considered as the major barrier to implementation. The lack of comprehension of how to operationalise this political objective (linked to the lack of data) can also be an obstacle even when there is an understanding of the principles of sustainable development.

Insufficient official co-ordinating mechanisms at national and local government level and insufficient coordination between ministries and/or ownership of SD in sector ministries, can also be major obstacles. What is missing in the question B.8 above is other key conceptual barriers such as confusion over what SD actually is, SD being nested in environmental departments and not considered in a wider context, without understanding of the interdependency between the three components of SD (see B.12) and of SD as part of the solution to the economic crisis.

Stressing the need of clear targets, timetables and responsible executors, need of adequate or predictable international support at key levels (e.g. the weak position of the EU SDS in the EU policy-making) as key issues are also in line with the response given on success factors. The overcoming of the predominance of short term interest and planning over long term and sustainable political outlook also would contribute to smooth barriers out.

Another important factor which is not mentioned above is the need to involve the general public in the formulation and implementation of sustainable development policy, as well as the need of adequate public awareness or engagement (need of joint actions and common solutions) Furthermore, the need of sufficient mutual confidence between the players, including the one between developing and developed countries, also might contribute to eliminate barriers of implementation as well as some restraints by the private sector, which should be therefore included into the respective strategies and programmes.

At the international level, the gaps of the governance system have been identified and are the main obstacles to progress in implementation of SD: science base and policy interface, the need of a global authoritative and responsive voice for environmental sustainability, the need of effectiveness, the need of predictable and coherent funding, the need of a responsive and cohesive approach to meeting country needs.

B.12 *(reformulated)* How to insure positive or virtuous interdependence and mutual reinforcement of the three pillars of sustainable Development? What are the risks to sustained progress towards convergence among these 3 “pillars”? *(See also answer to A.6)*

The positive mutual reinforcement of the three pillars can be ensured by a consistent promotion of common SD principles, which each “pillar”/Ministry/actor/stakeholder would follow. Transition to sustainable development is realised when environmental, social and economic perspectives are considered in an integrated way as interdependent "components" of a sustainable development, interacting on each other. Highlighting and advocating triple-win -opportunities and good practices can simultaneously increase or reinforce social, environmental and economic benefits.

One way to demonstrate the links between the different components is to identify the major synergies but also conflicts or trade-offs across economic, environmental and social impacts (such as short term economic growth externalizing social and environmental costs). The risks of these trade-offs cannot be ignored when robust policy objectives are defined from one dimension without simultaneously taking account of other ambitious targets. The risks are:
- that there is focus on economic growth to the exclusion of all other issues
- that there is no shared vision, no clear long term solution to problems
- that there is a lack of integration of and coherence between diverging strategies

The challenge is to prove that comprehensive sustainable development policy analysis can overcome or event prevent various crises by bringing more coherent, legitimate and

sustainable decisions and solutions instead of (only) slowing down and complicating the national and international decision-making processes.

To insure positive or virtuous interdependence and mutual reinforcement of the three components of sustainable Development is possible:
- by making National SD Strategies , which have often been too strictly environmental (in the "first generation"), more balanced strategies at all levels,
- by introducing a stronger social dimension in these strategies,
- by developing horizontal and cross-cutting policies such as Sustainable Consumption and Production, which require a cross-cutting governmental approach and involve all stakeholders in civil society.