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Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Through Transformative Governance Practices and Vertical Alignment at the National and Subnational Levels in Africa

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
ANAFE	African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education
ATPS	Africa Technology Policy Studies Network
AU	African Union
AUC	Africa Union Commission
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CCKN	Climate Change and Knowledge Network
CEPA	Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy
CoP	Community of Practice
CRGG	Climate Resilient Green Growth
CSD	Council for Sustainable Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GN-NCSDS	Global Network of National Councils for Sustainable Development and Similar Bodies
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Assessments
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NESDA	Network on Capacity Building for Governments and CSOs
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
PACJA	Pan African Climate Justice Alliance
ROPPA	Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific Measurable Assignable Realistic Time-Related
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP/RBA	United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNOSD	United Nations Office for Sustainable Development

1.0 Introduction

There is a shared global understanding of the urgency of addressing the many comingled economic, social and environmental issues standing in the way of sustainable development, the greening of economies and improvements in human well-being, quality of life and happiness.

During the first four months of 2014, SDplanNet and its operating institutions (the International Institute for Sustainable Development [IISD], Institute for Global Environmental Strategies [IGES] and Africa Technology Policy Studies Network [ATPS]), together with its regional and global collaborating partners, convened a series of regional workshops in Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa designed to explore the future of governance and practice for mainstreaming sustainable development principles and green economy approaches at the national and subnational levels and scaling up implementation. The collaborating partners include the Global Network of National Councils for Sustainable Development and Similar Bodies, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development. The champions responsible for creating and implementing their national development plans or their national sustainable development or green economy strategies were invited to participate in an intensive three-day working session in their respective regions.

The 2014 Regional Sustainable Development Transition Series aims to advance a Community of Practice (CoP) among government planners and policy-makers, thus creating a knowledge base and capacity-building agenda for innovative practices in strategy making, planning and implementation commensurate with the demands of transformation posed to all regions of the world by the post-2015 Development Agenda and sustainable development goals (SDGs) now being discussed at the international scale.

This paper is a synopsis of discussions held at the SDplanNet-Africa regional workshop series that took place in Nairobi from March 3–5, 2014. Participating were 27 practitioners from across 11 African countries and SDPlanNet colleagues from other regions, including government planning offices and environment departments at the national level, as well as regional organizations and networks that have mandates for sustainable development and planning at the regional levels.

This paper is structured along the format described above, based upon insights gleaned from the Nairobi workshop discussions. It is prefaced by an overview of sustainable development issues currently being discussed in the region, drawing on the recent consultations convened by United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) at the headquarters of UNECA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from October 31 to November 5, 2013 with representatives from all the 54 member states in Africa.

2.0 Overview of Sustainable Development Goal Issue Areas Being Discussed in Africa

Africa has come a long way since the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 drew attention to the need to think about the environment and consciously connect the economic, social and environmental components into an integrated development process now known as sustainable development. With an average annual economic growth rate of around 5 per cent, Africa is increasingly seen as a growing space for investments and growth. The emerging middle class has also increased potential for innovations for sustainable development.

Recent studies indicate that African countries on average, exhibit lower levels of per capita resource use, energy consumption, and carbon dioxide emissions, but at the same time, these statistics show rapid growth during the past decade (McKinsey Global Institute, 2010; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2012). The rapid economic growth in Africa is mostly driven by improved political environments, sustained aid flows, significant macroeconomic stability and notable micro-economic reforms (African Development Bank, 2010; McKinsey Global Institute, 2010; UNDP, 2012).

Africa has also received particular attention in the low-carbon development dialogues for multiple reasons, including its relative comparative advantage in requisite renewable energy resources (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2012), and also the potential opportunities to industrialize on the basis of low-carbon energy options, and thus avoiding being locked into high-carbon technologies (Urama et al., 2011; Ockwell & Mallett, 2012).

On one hand, Africa accounts for less than 4 per cent of global GHG emissions (World Bank, 2009), yet it is the region most vulnerable to the impacts of global climate change (IPCC, 2007). On the other hand, Africa is endowed with vast renewable and non-renewable sources of energy, and with limited sunk costs on carbon-intensive energy infrastructure. It has better potential for integrating low-carbon energy options in its energy mix compared with counterparts in the developed world. At the same time, Africa countries risk increasing greenhouse gas emissions beyond acceptable thresholds should they continue to rely on high-carbon energy options for much-needed and imminent industrialization and economic growth in the coming decades (Urama, et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, achieving the targets of the millennium development goals (MDGs) is an critical for Africa to effectively progress towards sustainable development. Finding a sustainable development pathway for African countries is therefore an urgent priority. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, norms and principles are relevant to all nations, irrespective of economic, social or environmental contexts. However, global goals do not easily translate to particular national contexts due to different starting points, capacities, priorities, etc. Therefore, in order to be useful for all countries (and to create national ownership) global goals will be adapted into targets and indicators that reflect national contexts. The challenge will be to ensure coherence between broad global goals and widely differing national contexts.

2.1 Overview of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and SDGs Consultation Processes in Africa

The overall aim of the SDGs is to provide guidance and contribute effectively to transformative changes “in support of a rights-based, equitable and inclusive approach to sustainability at global, regional, national and local levels” (UNECA, AU, & AfDB, 2013, p. 3). Africa’s development aspirations must address the complex relationships among economic, social and environmental considerations. To pursue focused and coherent action (and prepare Africa to speak with

one strong voice on the region's sustainable development priorities and aspirations), there have been many ongoing consultations amongst relevant multistakeholders at the local, national, subregional and regional levels since the Rio +20 Earth Summit. These processes and consultations still follow the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs tracks.

The consultations on the post-2015 development agenda for Africa were initiated by four institutions: the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Africa Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP/RBA) sanctioned by African governments during the AU Heads of State Summit in July 2012. The consultations were carried out through extensive consultations with all stakeholders at the national, regional and continental levels, aimed at articulating a common African position (UNECA, AU, AfDB, & UNDP, 2013). Stakeholders from 53 African countries participated in the consultations, representing governments, regional economic communities, civil society organizations (including youth and women's organizations), parliamentarians, academic institutions and the private sector. The consultations led to the development of an "Outcome Document" that summarizes the African priorities for the post-2015 development agenda into five pillars: "(i) structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; (ii) science, technology and innovation; (iii) people-centered development; (iv) environmental sustainability, natural resources management, and disaster risk management; and (v) finance and partnerships." Each pillar is defined below.

Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth: Stakeholders identified the primary pillars of economic transformation and inclusive growth as: inclusive growth that reduces inequality; sustainable agriculture, food self-sufficiency and nutrition; diversification, industrialization and value addition; developing the service sector; and infrastructure development.

Science, technology and Innovation: Stakeholders identified the need to enhance technological capacities for Africa's transformative agenda; enabling environment; increasing support for research and development; and optimal utilization of space and geospatial technologies.

People-centred development: The consultations emphasized the following key pillars for attaining people-centred development outcomes: the importance of improving both the quality of and access to social services; the importance of eradicating poverty; education and human capacity development; universal and equitable access to quality healthcare; population dynamics and development; realizing Africa's demographic realities/harnessing Africa's youthful population; and access to sustainable human settlements.

Environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management: Stakeholders identified the following as contributing to this pillar: the need for improved management of natural resources and biodiversity; access to safe water for all; climate change; desertification, land degradation, soil erosion, flooding and drought; and natural disaster risk reduction and management.

Financing and partnerships: Adequate financing under a suitable global environment is required for a post-2015 development agenda. Stakeholders identified the following as vital for the implementation of the agenda domestic resource mobilization; innovative financing; implementing existing commitments and promoting the quality and predictability of external financing; mutually beneficial partnerships; partnership for trade; and partnership for managing the global commons.

In order to achieve these development outcomes, the stakeholders also identified some development enablers as prerequisites for the post-2015 development agenda. However, these enablers will need to be prioritized in line with

each country's development needs. They include: peace and security; good governance; institutional capacity; equality and access to justice and information; human rights for all; gender equality; domestic resource mobilization; regional integration; credible participatory process with cultural sensitivity; statistical capacity; prudent macroeconomic policy; democratic and development framework that is ably guided by the state to ensure that short-term imperatives of growth are tempered by long-term development considerations such as equity, environmental sustainability and social inclusion; and an enabling global governance architecture.

Similarly, the consultation processes for the SDG issues in Africa started with the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development Goals convened by UNECA, AUC and the AfDB in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from October 31 to November 5, 2013 and attended by 54 member states in Africa. Deliberations centred on improving understanding of Africa's post-2015 development priorities and priority sustainable development issues; high-level political guidance and consensus on achieving convergence between the post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs process; and guidance and strategies for Africa's unified approach to the global level consultations and negotiations on SDGs and the post-2015 Development Agenda. Four regional and sub-regional consultations took place in Accra, Ghana (November 2011); Mombasa, Kenya (October 2012); Dakar, Senegal (December 2012) and Hammamet, Tunisia (March 2013): Participants represented 43 African countries.

In January 2014, Africa Heads of States adopted the report of the High-Level Committee building a consensus on Africa's conception of a new sustainable development framework. This common position is what African nations will take into the negotiations at the UN, in the hope of securing a deal that delivers for people across our continent. The Draft Common Africa Position¹ addresses the crucial issues of inequality, accountability, quality of services and promoting a sustainable environment, thus balancing the three pillars of sustainable development (social, economic, environmental), that were not achieved in the Millennium Development Goals.

Articulating the continent's interests, issues, and priorities from the four subregions in Africa and based on the framework for action and followup, as contained in the Rio+20 outcome document, "The Future We Want" (United Nations, n.d.) and taking into account the priorities identified in the Africa Regional Consultations, 12 SDGs were identified for the African region for a period of 15 years starting from 2016. The goals highlight the key elements of sustainable development for economic growth, social development, environmental sustainability, good governance and effective institutions (UNECA, 2013). These goals below are subject to modifications according to the availability of new information and developments and further consultations:

1. "Eradicate poverty in all its forms.
2. Promote sustainable agriculture, and achieve food security and adequate nutrition for all.
3. Ensure quality, adequate, affordable, accessible and comprehensive health services for all.
4. Achieve universal access to affordable and quality education at all levels.
5. Achieve gender equality, protect and empower women, the youth and persons in vulnerable situations.
6. Ensure social inclusion and protection, including guaranteed minimum income, and social security and decent employment for all, particularly for the youth.
7. Structurally transform economies and attain inclusive sustained economic growth; accelerate infrastructure development, industrialization and access to affordable energy; and build resilient cities and sustainable human settlements.

¹ This Draft Common Africa Position on the SDGs was agreed on during the Africa Heads of State and Government Meeting at the 22nd Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly which was held in January 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

8. Enhance the quality, resilience and protection of the environment; and promote sustainable exploitation, use and management of natural resources.
9. Combat desertification and land degradation, mitigate drought and promote sustainable management of land and oceanic spaces.
10. Promote culture, research, science, innovation and technology development.
11. Scale up global partnerships for development.
12. Promote good governance at national and international levels.”

The strategies for implementation of these SDGs were also identified to include: domestic and external financial resource mobilization; education and capacity development; regional integration; trade and market access; development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; good governance and effective institutions; South-South cooperation; and reform of international financial and development institutions; as well as effective monitoring and evaluation at all levels—local, national, subregional, regional and global with a common reporting framework for performance indicators to compare performance across countries, subregions and regions.

The continent is still in the process of developing sustainable development indicator frameworks and is in consultation with relevant international and continental institutions through the Africa Working Group on Development Indicators. Furthermore, leadership participation and implementation frameworks will be strengthened through high-level political leadership and effective participation of all stakeholders. The regional economic communities will take responsibility for collating performance at the subregional level, while support for continental and regional monitoring and evaluation will come from the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme.

3.0 Narrative on Future Regional Governance Practices in Africa—2030

This section reflects on four key questions to explore the future of governance and practice in the year 2030 for mainstreaming sustainable development principles and green economy approaches into national planning:

1. What are the multistakeholder processes and institutions that enabled the new African country to set and implement its strategy?
2. What does integrated development planning look like in the new African country, with respect to vertical and horizontal collaboration?
3. What are the types of policies and programs that were able to achieve co-benefits for water, energy and food security?
4. What monitoring, reporting and accountability processes and institutions enabled the country to continually improve and adapt over time?

The initiating scenario was a fictional new African country that has achieved the SDGs by 2030.

3.1 Multistakeholder Processes and Institutions

There was consensus that this new Africa country would need to establish a national council/commission for sustainable development (NCSD) to oversee the overall policy vision for sustainable development. The NCSD designs/defines strategies and action plans for short-term, medium-term and long-term development: these are reviewed and updated at intervals depending on need and changes in situations. The NCSD also makes a case for national budgetary allocation to it on annual basis.

The President (or Prime Minister, as the case may be) chairs the NCSD as part of an executive committee that drives the institution. Other members of the executive committee are drawn from various government departments including: environment, natural resources and climate change; planning and infrastructure; finance; social ministry (e.g., gender, health); energy; and education. Other stakeholders that also sit on the executive committee include: the private sector; academia/research; and civil society actors, among others. The national executive committee meets three times in a year to review updates on their mandates and roles. The SD Secretariat is responsible for vertical coordination through a reporting mechanism that enables the sharing of experiences at all levels. Each priority SD theme has a working committee composed of varied stakeholder groups and experts. The Secretariat also coordinates the various committees working on different issues such as water, health, energy, food security, and so on.

At the state/municipal or local levels, the capabilities of stakeholders are well advanced to contribute to the SD objectives. There is also cultural acceptance of themes and programs, with effective cooperation among stakeholders. Coordination and collaboration are both vertical and horizontal, with regular meetings to review updates and progress.

3.2 Integrated Development Planning With Respect to Vertical and Horizontal Collaboration

Mainstreaming sustainable development into national planning and implementation at both national and subnational levels requires innovative governance arrangements and practices that integrate vertical and horizontal collaboration. Strong horizontal collaboration between the national body (NCSD) and the different sectors of the economy including finance, environment, and social departments among others is critical in new African country. At the same time, vertical relationships exist between the national body and other subnational bodies including the states, provinces, districts, cities and communities.

Certain factors are found to be responsible in new African country for effective collaboration to occur at the vertical level. These include: coordinated approaches in planning and implementation; access to information; space for participation of all actors; empowerment of communities to implement priority actions; application of subsidiarity principle; capacity building at community levels; and raising of awareness at all levels. Similarly, integrated development planning with respect to horizontal collaboration is realized in new African country when: issues identified at lower levels (subnational) are fed upwards to national levels; guidelines for planning and mainstreaming sustainable development are provided; provisions are made for gender mainstreaming and consideration for vulnerable groups; experiences are shared between communities; provisions for legal framework and adherence to the rule of law; and when the “silo” thinking mentality is removed. Other considerations include: accountability and transparency; clear responsibilities; good monitoring systems at all levels; effective communication of results to stakeholders; integrating systems thinking in the educational curriculum; adult education; political goodwill and less corruption. Other horizontal enablers in new African country include: regular communication and feedback mechanisms; integration of indigenous knowledge systems; effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems; linkages with global, regional, national and local policies and plans (so-called “glocal” planning); removal of financial barriers to integrated planning; inclusion of an environmental budget; mobilization of resources to address priority issues; continuous capacity building; planning based on cultural heritage; minimal external influence on domestic issues; design of “living plans” that are regularly reviewed; and long-term planning as an act of parliament, among others.

3.3 Cross-cutting Policies

To achieve co-benefits across sectors such as water, energy, and food security through policy integration, a number of policies were identified as being responsible for new African country in realizing all its national SDG targets. These include: renewable energy policy; social development policies (including education, capacity building, ICT, health, human settlement, culture and tourism); and infrastructural development (roads, housing, irrigation, etc.) policies. Others include policies on poverty impact assessment; strategic environment assessment; conflict management; gender; food security; climate change; devolution and decentralization; inclusive growth and access to resources; disaster and risks management; emergency management (resilient policies); polluter-pay policy; demographic/population policy; sustainable cities; partnerships and cooperation; research-policy-practice linkage; and the policy on science, technology and innovation (STI) development.

For these policies to take effect, some development enablers in new African country responsible for achieving co-benefits across sectors such as water, energy, and food security were identified. These enablers include: that policies must be based on existing resources (human and material) available in the countries; and that policies should be demand-driven, people-centred and home-grown. They should be environmentally friendly, able to sustain economic growth through empowerment and inclusive growth opportunities. New African country also has coherence in policy formulation identifying synergies across the relevant sectors. In this regard, a national innovation system coordinates activities of the different sectors of the economy. Above all, there is good governance and effective leadership to drive the policies that were developed.

3.4 Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability Processes and Institutions

The need for efficient monitoring, reporting, accountability, and institutions has been identified as crucial for innovative planning and scaled-up implementation of SD practices at national and subnational levels. It was agreed that the new African country had adopted several successful mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and accountability processes as well as institutions to have been able to achieve all of its national SDG targets by 2030.

On monitoring issues, the critical enabling factors and arrangements in place include: the availability of disaggregated (baseline) data used for measuring progress in planning and implementation activities; and the setting of clear goals at the national and subnational levels that align with global SD goals. The goals have clear indicators that are SMART-specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound at national and subnational levels that mirror the global indicators as well. Other monitoring issues addressed by new African country include: social, economic, and environmental governance; and participatory monitoring that takes local knowledge into consideration.

On reporting issues, vertical and horizontal reporting in new African country is important for ensuring effective planning and implementation of SD activities. Such reports are timely and based on effective monitoring and analysis of data, with adequate capacity to achieve this at the national and subnational levels.

The accountability issues implemented by new African country include: building trust among stakeholders; the need for all stakeholders to be accountable to the entire process; accountability/performance indicators agreements; monitoring and evaluation that are supported by resources; budgetary allocation based on sectorial priorities; and targeting a manageable set of indicators (result, outcome, and output).

The evaluation process has to be timely, with a feedback loop. It is participatory and needs capacity as well as effective coordination.

An effective institutional framework at the national and subnational levels is in place in new African country to accomplish SDG targets. These institutions regularly provide information sources that will enable monitoring and evaluation processes.

4.0 Overview of Existing Regional Governance Practices—2013

This section describes the current good practices and challenges or gaps in governance and practice in the African region across the same four key planning and implementation practice areas for SD at the national, subnational and regional levels. The four key areas include: stakeholder participation and strategy planning; integrated planning and analysis through vertical alignment and partnerships; policies that enable countries and the region to achieve co-benefits across sectors such as water, energy, and food security; and monitoring, reporting, and accountability processes as well as institutions that enable countries to adapt and improve over time.

4.1 Multistakeholder Participation

The current state of practice with respect to stakeholder participation and strategy planning shows that countries in Africa are at different levels of engagement with stakeholders for SD. In Mauritius, a Council for Sustainable Development (CSD) oversees the implementation of SD plans in the country. Its functions includes coordination of SD programs at all levels; providing advice for the government on SD policies; and acting as the “watchdog” for SD in the country. The strategic committee is composed of academia, government officials, the private sector, and civil society. This committee provides strategic advice to the CSD on emerging and compliance issues as well as legal issues. The overarching SD plan was approved in June 2013 and is already being implemented, although financial limitations are hampering its effective implementation. Taxes on fossil fuels (about 30 per cent) are used to support the implementation of the SD plan in Mauritius.

In the Republic of Benin, the SD plan has been translated in four local languages and French to ensure effective dissemination to the public and the grassroots levels for desired impact. There are still consultations, however, with stakeholders to this end to ensure an inclusive and adequately resourced SD plan, which incidentally is not currently a priority of the government.

A new law on National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) is currently being considered in Cote d’Ivoire for implementation of SD strategies. Ethiopia has established a National Planning Commission for Sustainable Development Planning, Implementation, Coordination and Evaluation. It has also established a Climate Resilient Green Growth (CRGG) Strategy and is in the process of implementation through a five-year growth and transformative plan. Ethiopia has all sectorial policies and plans including energy, water, agriculture, education, and health among others. The Malawian Government also has a National Strategy for Sustainable Development that was published in 2004.

Uganda has an SD plan overseen by the Ministry of Water and Environment. The Ministry oversees strategies, policies and regulations related to the environment including the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) which is semi-autonomous. Nevertheless, stakeholders for SD in the country are drawn from various ministries including energy, economic and finance, development planning and the civil society organizations. The Development Plans in Uganda take into consideration issues at the sub-county, district, sector, and national development levels. These issues built up into the government’s National Vision 2030. Botswana has village development committees that promote community-specific needs that feed into the district development plans and sector plans. These then feed into the national development plan of the country.

In addition, some challenges/gaps in the governance and practice for SD with respect to stakeholder participation and strategy planning were identified. These include: lack of institutionalized mechanisms or frameworks for stakeholder engagement and consultations; and lack of understanding of key SD issues by stakeholders participating in the process.

This is fuelled by poor communication skills amongst the stakeholders including governments and non-governmental bodies. Other challenges include: low awareness about SD at the institutional and public levels; lack of common vision by stakeholders; top-down orientation of SD plans; inadequate resources to bring a diverse and comprehensive range of stakeholder (voices) into strategy-making processes; poor implementation of recommendations agreed by stakeholders; and conflicts in integrating national strategies into intra-national issue such as watershed management.

4.2 Integration of Analysis and Planning Between National, Subnational and Regional Levels of Government

The current state of practice in Africa with respect to integrated planning and analysis through vertical alignment and partnerships shows very few good examples in the region. There are regional coordination activities in crosscutting sectors such as river basins. There are reports of good regional policies by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on sectors such as mining and energy. More specifically, in Ethiopia, there has been remarkable coordination of states by the National Plan to ensure coherence and effective planning and implementation of programs at the national and subnational levels. The single development plan also includes monitoring and evaluation reporting systems that are implemented at all levels of government.

There are many challenges and gaps in the integration of analysis and planning between the national, subnational and regional levels of government in Africa. Most of the issues centre on poor governance structures and lack of coordination among relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies. More specifically, centralized governance structures that are bureaucratic with weak institutional support are regarded as a common challenge in multistakeholder participation and strategy planning Africa. Other identified challenges include: lack of political goodwill; poor accountability and transparency; limited coordination within and across sectors; lack of SD policy; poor implementation mechanisms; lack of resources for effective monitoring and evaluation; lack of harmonized and coherent plans; and sectoral competition rather than collaboration. Issues of sustainable development are not yet adequately covered in educational curricula, just as many stakeholders are not yet aware of the concept and its importance. They also noted that SD plans are gender “blind,” a fact that defeats the principle of inclusiveness in multistakeholder participations. Other challenges include: external influences on Africa’s development; brain-drain syndrome; poor use of endogenous capacity and resources; lack of evidence-based planning; and poor alignment of plans against human needs and priorities.

4.3 Crosscutting Policies

Reports from various country government representatives during the meeting indicate that currently, there are both good practices as well as challenges in policies that enable countries to achieve co-benefits across sectors such as water, energy, and food security. Some case examples of good practices were provided. The delegate from Uganda reported that the current state of practice of policies in the country has been marked by poor implementation across all sectors of the economy. To this end, the delegate noted that the governments have now put some mechanisms in place to ensure effective and efficient implementation of policies across sectors in the country. In Mozambique, a strategy for policy and an action plan have been put in place to ensure full implementation of the plans and policies. There is also monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms to ensure compliance with plans and targets in different sectors. The policy strategies are reviewed every five years to allow adjustments based on overall strategic goals. In Nigeria, governments have utilized policies that encourage the use of homegrown capacities in delivering sustainable development initiatives with adequate domestic mobilization of resources to support such initiatives. This is observed in sectors such as food security and energy developments. Mauritius and Burundi reported that there are adequate stakeholder consultations and processes leading to SD policy development and implementation across sectors.

According to the delegate, this vision is being driven by the sitting Prime Minister in Mauritius. There are also ongoing efforts in Burundi to harmonize policies in selected sectors such as water, climate change, environment, energy and food security to ensure coherence in action and productivity.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a sustainable development strategy has been developed and will be validated in April 2014. The strategy provides action plan for growth, development and poverty reduction which is strengthened by the President's Vision 2015. Cote d'Ivoire and the Republic of Benin already have policy, strategy and action plans on sustainable development issue in areas such as water and the environment, while Ethiopia has a national policy direction that is driven by peace initiatives, political stability, and development issues. Ethiopia's National Planning Commission is responsible for sustainable development cooperation and develops strategies for actions including agricultural development and industrialization. The Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) in Malawi aims to contribute to the development of best practices in environmental and natural resources management in Malawi and the Southern Africa Region. It also conducts research on policy issues. In 2002, the National Environmental Policy was signed into law. Cameroon and Ghana currently conduct demand-driven research that feeds into policies on specific sectors such as water, energy, and food security.

The notable challenges and gaps in governance and practice for sustainable development in Africa with respect to policies in key sectors include: poor policy implementation across sectors (Uganda, DRC, Burundi); lack of coordination in policy development and implementation (Burundi); poor monitoring, evaluation and reporting of policies (Burundi); new and emerging issues such as climate change not captured yet in national policies (Nigeria, Kenya); corruption in upper and lower sections of government (Nigeria, Kenya); lack of legislative backing for the commission coordinating implementation of the SD plan (Mauritius); and institutional conflicts due to the lack of a National System of Innovation (Mauritius, Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi, Benin, Malawi). Others include: little evidence-based policy development (Cameroon, Ghana); poor utilization of endogenous capacities (Cameroon, Ghana); policies often not translated into other local languages (Burundi); and lack of political goodwill to make policies that are pro-poor (Burundi). Overall, the lack of policy integration across sectors, legislative bureaucracies, and the influx of many development tools with few implementation strategies were identified as crosscutting gaps in governance and practice for SD policy in Africa.

4.4 Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

The current state of monitoring, reporting, and accountability processes (as well as institutions that enable countries to adapt and improve over time) shows that Africans generally are in favour of partnerships and result-oriented projects. There are ongoing programs in the region with clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Some of these programs are also well resourced to be able to lead to desired outputs and outcomes. The STI capacities in the region (and skills for M&E) have improved, and there are statistical services and information being provided at various levels (regional, national and subnational). The region are signatories to several global treaties and conventions, though questions have been raised about the competitive advantage of this action to the region, especially considering the low capacity in terms of expertise to systematically deliver the evidence-based and concrete views of Africans in such dialogues.

The challenges and gaps mentioned above suggest an overall dearth of data and information required for effective SD planning and strategy making in Africa. This has led to the production of poor-quality reports that are not evidence-based and often result in disputes and misconception of the situation. Where the information exists, it may not be accessible and freely shared. Besides, there are poor logistical supports for data collection, analysis and storage. The challenge of not providing up-to-date statistical services in the region further leads to the development of unrealistic indicators. It was agreed that monitoring and evaluation is very expensive and hence is not prioritized even though it is critical.

5.0 Capacity-Building and Knowledge-Sharing Needs for Advancing Development Planning and Implementation Practices at the National and Subnational Levels

It is difficult to over-emphasize the need for capacity building and knowledge sharing that will enable national and subnational governments to advance development planning and implementation practices. Capacity-building and knowledge-sharing needs in Africa were assessed across the four planning and implementation practice areas, including: stakeholder participation and strategy planning; integrated planning and analysis through vertical alignment and partnerships; policies that would enable countries and the region to achieve co-benefits across sectors such as water, energy, and food security; and monitoring, reporting, and accountability processes as well as institutions that enable countries to adapt and improve over time. Initial discussions centered on how the main gaps in the four areas between current governance and practice and future ideal situations in 2030 could be closed.

5.1 Multistakeholder Processes and Participation

In order to close the main difference/gap between current governance and practice and the ideal future situation already discussed, it is necessary first to develop a guideline or institutional framework for stakeholder engagement in the process. This guideline should specify who will be involved in the process, their roles, tenure, and mandates. National Councils for Sustainable Development should be created in countries where they do not exist and strengthened in other countries where they do. Such councils/commissions should be institutionalized with multistakeholders drawn from well-informed experts. There should be an awareness and education drive by the council to ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed and aware of the activities of the council/commission. The councils/commissions should have a robust power devolution system and a harmonized committee to coordinate different sectors that are doing similar activities for sustainable development.

5.2 Integrated Planning and Analysis Through Vertical Alignment and Partnerships

To close the gaps between the ideal future and the current existing state of SD planning and implementation practices already discussed, some horizontal and vertical planning measures would be required. At the horizontal level, there should be coordination across various ministries/stakeholders in government. This is important to ensure harmonized budgeting and financing plans. There should also be mechanisms to ensure genuine cooperation and collaboration between sectors and government departments based on related program-implementation plans. This should occur more regularly and at all levels. There is also a need for stakeholder ownership of the plans, with clearly defined roles for each stakeholder category. At the vertical level, there is the need to formally involve municipalities in the national and subnational planning processes. This could be a role for the national councils for sustainable development to oversee as well as increase the institutional capacities.

5.3 Crosscutting Policies

Greater policy integration is required to effectively close the gap between “what is” and “the ideal.” This will involve mainstreaming SD and systems thinking in each sector of the economy. These sectors must also demonstrate they are meeting or incorporating national and subnational SD targets and objectives. For example, the energy policy should

show how it is addressing SD goals across interrelated sectors such as food, water, and poverty reduction. Most times, this is achieved in the short term; hence, it emerged that there is a need to significantly improve opportunities for long-term policies with sustainable social, economic, and environmental co-benefits. An interagency coordinating body should be established to coordinate various sector policies. This role can also be played by the national councils for sustainable development.

5.4 Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability

To effectively close the gap between what is and the ideal, in monitoring, reporting and accountability, policies at all levels must be assessed for efficiency and effectiveness. Standards have to be set for quality data collection and analysis. A national framework for M&E and accountability should be developed. This framework should have very clear indicators. Indicators (beyond GDP and based on disaggregated data) must be aligned to the SD strategy: this calls for capacity building of personnel to ensure that SMART-specific indicators are developed. These indicators should also be disaggregated by region or district and used to inform, shape, or direct policies and financial resource mobilization. Systematic monitoring, evaluation, reporting and accountability must occur at different levels, including the national and subnational. There should be clear incentives or disincentives for compliance or non-compliance with set standards. In order to effectively carry out monitoring, evaluation, and reporting functions, it is necessary to allocate adequate resources to the Bureau of Statistics of any country to enable it to collate and generate data, build personnel capacity, develop tools, mobilize equipment, and share data across sectors and borders. It is important to constantly review existing treaties that national governments have entered into to ensure continued relevance to the government. It is also important to utilize indigenous knowledge systems for sustainable development planning and strategy making.

5.5 Overarching Capacity-Building and Knowledge-Sharing Needs

The overarching capacity-building and knowledge-sharing needs required for advancing development planning and implementation practices at the national and subnational levels were categorized into three levels: systemic, institutional and individual. Table 1 presents the summary of the discussions on these needs for advancing sustainable development.

TABLE 1: CAPACITY-BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING NEEDS FOR ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CAPACITY BUILDING	KNOWLEDGE SHARING
SYSTEMIC LEVEL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building capacity on the methodological approaches for developing, implementing and assessing SD issues ▪ Building databases and harmonizing standards ▪ Improving planning skills ▪ Dialogue and demonstration at the rural levels to understand SD and its implications ▪ Mechanisms to empower personnel at different levels and mobilize resources for SD activities ▪ Capacity on compliance with international/regional standard agreements ▪ Awareness raising on SD issues at all levels ▪ Capacity building on monitoring and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wide dissemination of best practices, lessons learned from local, country, regional and global cases ▪ Document, translate, synthesize knowledge generated from SD and communicate same to relevant stakeholders including ministries, subnational actors, civil society, and the general public ▪ Legitimacy of SD plans/policies for recognition and acceptance ▪ Amplifying sustainable rural lessons and case examples for up scaling opportunities ▪ Platform for knowledge sharing on SD strategies/plans to avoid duplication ▪ Effective advocacy to mobilize political supports and goodwill ▪ Networking and building coalition around shared interests
INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthening institution to integrate SD into policies, plans and strategies (horizontal and vertical) ▪ Improving communication and leadership skills through training ▪ Providing skills and tools for SD implementation and assessment ▪ Establishing auditing mechanisms that go beyond just financial reporting in the ministries ▪ Capacity building on transparent budget management ▪ Forecasting and scenario building that links to SD targets and indicators ▪ Resources mobilization to finance SD programs and priority projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All the knowledge sharing issues under systemic level also apply to the institutions.
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing/improving analytical and evaluative capacity for SD ▪ Ability to develop policy briefs from research projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linking research results and outputs among researchers to policy and practice ▪ Network building and collaborations

6.0 Strategies for Strengthening and Coordinating Community-of Practice Networks (CoP)

6.1 Community of Practice (CoP)

A Community of Practice (CoP) is comprised of people put together by institutions or organizations to accomplish a certain function or who have a common goal or problem for which they can share knowledge. Since its establishment two years ago, the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) has organized several activities that have brought together a number of people and created connections between them. However these events-focused networks have not been nurtured as CoPs in which people actively exchange knowledge through virtual exchanges (or sometimes onsite) to discuss themes relevant to all participants, even though these activities and events could constitute the basis for establishing CoPs. Establishing a CoP is useful for learning together and supporting peers from the group with similar backgrounds and for collaborative research and development. It serves as a platform to spread good practices and solutions.

There are necessary conditions that must be met in establishing a successful CoP. One important condition is to have a clear and relevant domain with shared interest that is demand driven rather than abstractly focused. There is also the need for dynamic leadership, expertise and new, vibrant members who are capable of mobilizing the group. There is the need to build trust through face-to-face meetings and build a sense of belonging in the community. It is very important that the environment within the CoP remain collegial (i.e., not hierarchical), a prerequisite of maintaining trust. It is also very important to have links with other CoPs to bring in new ideas. Establishing a CoP also entails measuring and showing the impact of learning and knowledge-sharing outcomes, (for example, the best practices that have been used and how they have provided solutions to particular problems).

While there are several conditions for success in establishing CoP, there are also conditions that risk failure. These include lack of core group, lack of leadership, insufficient one-to-one interaction and trust, a domain of practices that is too broad with little tangible and applicable practices within the community, and knowledge with little value to the community.

In applying the CoP concept to national SD strategies, UNOSD has made efforts to map out the important stakeholders in the CoP at the regional and global levels. Part of this effort has been to consolidate communities of practice in the SD planNet networks at the regional levels. UNOSD has also done some scanning to identify active organizations, and their networks and hubs involved in CoPs. The rationale for mapping these networks is to know who is who and who is doing what, how they are connected together, and what kind of services they provide. By mapping this network out and making it accessible online, UNOSD provides useful links to enable peers identify peers to work with one another. It provides an idea of potential partners, shows active NCSDs, the inactive ones, the reasons they are active or inactive, and their main areas of focus.

Finally, it is important to conduct pre-CoP experience analysis to see if there is a need for further mapping of actors and activities and to identify missing gaps in nurturing CoPs while looking for options to fill the eventual gaps. It is also essential to mobilize membership and facilitate dialogue through key regional and global events such as the global Sustainable Development Transition Forum hosted by UNOSD. These CoPs can also be linked to state advisory services and ensure continued interactions through virtual platforms.

6.2 Networks and Knowledge-Sharing Platforms for Delivering the Post-2015 Development Agenda and SDGs

Delegates identified some existing networks and knowledge-sharing platforms in Africa that could champion the effective delivery of the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs in the region.

NETWORKS	OVERVIEW
The African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) http://atpsnet.org	Has a mandate of “building Africa’s capabilities in science, technology, and innovation policy research, policymaking and implementation for sustainable development.”
The Sub-Global Assessment Network (SGA) http://www.ecosystemassessments.net/	Seeks to create a common platform for practitioners (individuals and organizations) involved in ecosystem assessment at regional, subregional, national and subnational levels. The intention is to promote and facilitate improved capacity in undertaking and using assessments.
Network for Environment and Sustainable Development for Africa (NESDA) http://www.kabissa.org/directory/nesda	Aims at strengthening African individual and institutional capacities in formulating, carrying out, monitoring and evaluating strategies and programs of action aimed at promoting sustainable development on the continent.
Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) http://www.pacja.org/	Is a continental coalition of civil society organizations on the African continent brought together by a common agenda of promoting and advocating for climate-related and equity-based development that considers climate change as a key driver of sustainable development.
Network for the Payment of Ecosystem Services in Africa (KATOOMBA) http://www.katoombagroup.org/about.php	Addresses key challenges to developing markets and payments for ecosystem services, from enabling legislation through establishment of new market institutions, strategies of pricing and marketing, and performance monitoring. The group works through strategic partnerships for analysis, capacity building, information sharing, investment, market services and policy advocacy.
Climate Change and Knowledge Network (CCKN) http://www.iisd.org/cckn/about.asp	Aims to increase the exchange of knowledge and research expertise between developed and developing countries on climate change-related activities and to make this knowledge accessible to all countries of the world. Through the cross-fertilization of ideas and collaborative efforts between and among members of the network, the CCKN seeks to strengthen the pool of knowledge on climate change that could be fed into the international policy process.
African Forest Forum (AFF) http://www.afforum.org/	Aims to promote the sustainable management of forest and tree resources to support people’s livelihoods, national economies, and environmental stability.
The African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE) http://anafe-africa.org/?page_id=2	Aims to improve, in a sustainable manner, the contribution of agricultural and natural resource management education to social and economic development of the African people.
Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of West Africa (ROPPA) http://www.fidafrique.net/article1928.html	A network concerned with food sovereignty of the West African subregion.
Sustainable Development Network (SDN) http://www.sustainabledevelopmentnetwork.com/	Provides a space for NGOs, government, and professionals to network and access information and research in sustainable development, health, welfare and in the education and training sectors. The SDN promotes projects and lifestyles that will ensure that our children and their children will be able to sustain them now and in the future.
Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa http://www.kabissa.org/directory/nesda	To promote sustainable development by helping African countries develop and implement effective environmental management strategies, policies and plans.
The East African Sustainability (SusWatch) Network http://www.easuswatch.org	Is a network of NGOs from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania spearheaded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Sustainable Environmental Development Watch Network (SusWatch Kenya), and Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD). The mandate of EA SusWatch is “monitoring and advocating for the effective implementation of national and regional obligations to International agreements and other arrangements for sustainable development in Eastern Africa
African Youth Network for Sustainable Development http://www.africanprosperity.com	The goal is to connect African organizations locally, nationally, regionally as well as internationally with leading experts, scholars, and institutions throughout the world working on similar issues or looking for local partners.

6.3 Priority Efforts for Strengthening and Coordinating Communities of Practice in Africa

In order to strengthen and effectively coordinate a community of practice (CoP) for sustainable development in Africa, certain efforts need to be prioritized, including the need for an effective communication system across horizontal and vertical alignments. Effective communication improves information access and flow amongst stakeholders and hence implementation. A communication strategy is therefore required to define the target audience for organizations and how best to reach out to them with a clear message.

Again, there is need for strong coordination between members. In this case, the roles of each member must be clarified. Champions from each region will need to be identified to promote the ideals of CoP in the area. This will include the SDplanNet-Africa delegates.

Resource mobilization in human and financial forms will be required to strengthen CoPs in Africa. This could come from internal or external sources; however, it is recommended that African countries mobilize their own resources with minimal support from external sources in order to make development sustainable in the region. Organizing Annual General Meetings (AGMs) to review progress and share information on SD issues also was prioritized for the region. However, this is dependent on available resources. Piggybacking on other regional meetings and domestic resource mobilization were then recommended as a way to cut costs to achieve this objective.

There is a need for a formal rule of engagement or charter to be developed and agreed from the outset as a guiding principle for the operations of CoPs in the region. This should include making clear the objectives of the network, the constituencies, and their roles among others.

6.4 Recommended Actions for SDplanNet and GN-NCSO for 2014-2015

For the first fiscal year of SDplanNet Africa, delegates identified certain actions that need immediate attention for the region during the 2014/2015 period. These include:

1. Organize inaugural meeting—done.
2. Develop regional practices paper and newsletter—ongoing.
3. Publish joint policy brief is derived from the regional practices paper—ongoing.
4. Organize training and capacity-building programs on SDG issues and key gap areas identified in-country and regionally. Undertaking online training on these issues will be cost-effective.
5. Develop a formal institutional framework for the SDplanNet-Africa Network that stipulates who the members are, their roles and responsibilities, and the overall objective of the network. There is need to identify the subnational objectives as well, based on need and priorities at the subnational level.
6. Sharing of best practices in the region. This will include celebrating and promoting success stories at national and subnational levels. The criteria for selection and evaluation process will be made very clear.
7. Regular feedback from delegates/members on how they are applying knowledge/skills learned from SDplanNet in their respective countries.
8. The regional networks should support continued involvement of national and subnational actors across the region in promoting the ideals of SD.

9. For vertical alignments to be achieved there is need for an effective linkage to other national networks and stakeholders so as to implement best practices.
10. Need for institutional supports to the NCSD (where they exist) as they are the bodies already in place with national knowledge and stakeholder links for SD. Where the NCSD does not exist, support could still be given to establish one.
11. There is a need to identify opportunities for involvement in international processes and meetings on sustainable development.
12. Building a network of CoP for participation into national strategies/plans.
13. Sharing outcomes of SDPlanNet workshop with colleagues and encourage experts in the various sectors to join.
14. Build a network for SD review in country and also organize a capacity-building workshop to share knowledge and promote SD.
15. Provide feedback from national SD activities that feeds into regional SDplanNet policy brief and practices paper.
16. Translate SDplanNet website into French.
17. Include the SD goals into national environment strategies.
18. Establish NCSD in countries where they do not yet exist and provide necessary support they may require.
19. Develop methodology for translating macro-level tools into rural-level tools to monitor green growth in rural areas.

7.0 Conclusion

The inclusive paradigm and need for structural changes being promoted in the post-2015 Development Agenda require the strengthening of vertical and horizontal governance practices at the national and subnational levels. These present opportunities for strengthening existing arrangements for multistakeholder engagements and/or encourage their creation where they do not exist. Changes in development planning practices will call for organizational change as well as changes in the culture that drives the process. The need for information flows and evidence-based planning will be brought to the fore in this approach and will likely call for more robust data collection, analysis and dissemination with improved infrastructure and processes. It will also strengthen monitoring and reporting frameworks, thereby strengthening accountability. Although these will not be easy to achieve, there is a notable desire to move in this direction and this is necessary for the roll out of development planning in the post-2015 era.

The evolving engagement of multiple stakeholders in governance practices and strategy making is not without its challenges. The lack of institutionalized mechanisms or frameworks for stakeholder engagement and consultation fuelled by poor communication and coordination at national and subnational levels remain significant. In some countries there is an absence of policies to drive SD objectives, while in others the policies and strategies do exist but are poorly implemented. Furthermore, the lack of effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting have meant that programs and policies do fail, while the dearth of data and information have frustrated effective SD planning and strategy making.

Inclusiveness and trust have to be built in ways that cross political barriers and engender a sense of ownership of the process and its outputs. Key to achieving this is the engagement of subnational and local levels of government in planning, implementation and reporting to achieve vertical alignment for sustainable development. Whereas some countries are already embracing this model, its relative novelty will call for a shift in the planning culture and will require capacity building, financial and human resources (especially domestic resources) and information flows to enable effective policy formulation, program development and monitoring and reporting at the national and subnational levels.

Crucial to the sustainability of the SDplanNet-Africa will be the extent to which support can be harnessed from national governments to maintain momentum for the sustainable development agenda. There has been considerable dialogue about the SDGs following the summit in Rio+20, and there is now a move into a stage of negotiation of the SDGs: one of the objectives of this network is to work jointly to identify regional approaches to SDGs and feed that into the negotiation process so that knowledge generated from experts and practitioners is incorporated into the SDGs as negotiation continues into 2015.

Sustainable development must be viewed as a commitment to a transitioning process, one in which economic, social and ecological goals are increasingly integrated by way of politics, technology, organizations, planning, administration, communication etc. It is a way of travelling, not the final destination. It is a long-term feature of systems behaviour that cannot be understood over months (or even a few years) of development planning. It involves fostering values such as equality, capability to survive, democracy and global responsibility towards a sustainable world.

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