

# BellagioSTAMP:



SUSTAINABILITY  
ASSESSMENT  
AND  
MEASUREMENT  
PRINCIPLES

**iisd** International Institute for Sustainable Development Institut international du développement durable

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# Threats are emerging that jeopardize the sustainability of entire communities, regions, countries and the planet itself

As sustainability experts become more aware of the interactions between the environment, the economy and society—people everywhere are growing increasingly concerned about the trends they see. Unprecedented and concurrent crises are now unfolding at a rapid rate—including climate, food, health, security, energy and the economy. Human ingenuity and resilience are hard-pressed to cope. The public debate about new policies and governance models offers an historic opportunity to put sustainable development at the centre of decision-making.

## ***Seizing this opportunity demands accurate information***

Current progress and future trends must be carefully assessed against reliable measures if we are to know where to focus our efforts. The assessment results must be properly interpreted and communicated to the public and decision-makers.

Despite numerous assessments over the years and our increased understanding of the threats to sustainability, much remains unknown and little is quantified. Policy-makers and the public need sound guiding principles to establish a common basis for assessing sustainability. These will help produce results that are comparable at local, regional, national and global scales.

*BellagioSTAMP is a new set of guiding principles to measure and assess progress towards sustainability. They respond to widespread calls for greater harmony with the natural environment and for measures to secure the wellbeing of current and future generations.*



# BellagioSTAMP will guide the totality of the sustainability assessment process

This includes the choice and design of indicators, and how they are interpreted and communicated.

These Principles are designed to help any group assessing societal progress, considering policy options or advocating change: community bodies, academics, non-governmental organizations, corporations, governments and international institutions.

***BellagioSTAMP will help realize the full potential of sustainability assessments by guiding them in these areas:***

- ▶ **Content** – Questions that should be answered in assessments
- ▶ **Process** – The way in which assessments should be carried out
- ▶ **Scope** – Range of assessments across the dimensions of time and geography
- ▶ **Impact** – The way to maximise the impact of assessments on the public and policy makers

These principles are interrelated and are intended to be used as a complete set.

*A set of Bellagio Principles for assessing progress toward sustainability was first published in 1996 and was subsequently used by local and international organizations in sustainability assessments.*



(Back Row, Left to Right)

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Though successful, new assessment methods and sustainability challenges overtook the original Principles. A revised set has, therefore, been prepared—re-establishing the Principles as a fundamental basis for assessment. As with the original, **BellagioSTAMP** has been established by a group of international experts meeting in Bellagio, Italy.

***BellagioSTAMP replaced the original Bellagio Principles in 2009. Participants at this meeting included those as shown in the above photo.***

## 1 Guiding Vision

Assessing progress towards sustainable development is guided by the goal to deliver well-being within the capacity of the biosphere to sustain it for future generations.

## 2 Essential Considerations

Sustainability Assessments consider:

- ▶ The underlying social, economic and environmental system as a whole and the interactions among its components
- ▶ The adequacy of governance mechanisms
- ▶ Dynamics of current trends and drivers of change and their interactions
- ▶ Risks, uncertainties, and activities that can have an impact across boundaries
- ▶ Implications for decision making, including trade-offs and synergies

## 3 Adequate Scope

Sustainability Assessments adopt:

- ▶ Appropriate time horizon to capture both short and long-term effects of current policy decisions and human activities
- ▶ Appropriate geographical scope ranging from local to global

## 4 Framework and Indicators

Sustainability Assessments are based on:

- ▶ A conceptual framework that identifies the domains that core indicators have to cover
- ▶ The most recent and reliable data, projections and models to infer trends and build scenarios
- ▶ Standardized measurement methods, wherever possible, in the interest of comparability
- ▶ Comparison of indicator values with targets and benchmarks, where possible



## 5 Transparency

The assessment of progress towards sustainable development:

- ▶ Ensures the data, indicators and results of the assessment are accessible to the public
- ▶ Explains the choices, assumptions and uncertainties determining the results of the assessment
- ▶ Discloses data sources and methods
- ▶ Discloses all sources of funding and potential conflicts of interest

## 6 Effective Communication

In the interest of effective communication, to attract the broadest possible audience and to minimize the risk of misuse, Sustainability Assessments:

- ▶ Use clear and plain language
- ▶ Present information in a fair and objective way, that helps to build trust
- ▶ Use innovative visual tools and graphics to aid interpretation and tell a story
- ▶ Make data available in as much detail as reliable and practical



## 7 Broad Participation

To strengthen their legitimacy and relevance, sustainability assessments should:

- ▶ Find appropriate ways to reflect the views of the public, while providing active leadership
- ▶ Engage early on with users of the assessment so that it best fits their needs

## 8 Continuity and Capacity

Assessments of progress towards sustainable development require:

- ▶ Repeated measurement
- ▶ Responsiveness to change
- ▶ Investment to develop and maintain adequate capacity
- ▶ Continuous learning and improvement





# Established in 1990, the International Institute for Sustainable Development

(IISD) is a non-partisan, charitable organization specializing in research, analysis and information exchange. Through our Head Office in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada and our branches in Ottawa, New York and Geneva, we apply human ingenuity to improve the well-being of the world's environment, economy and society. The Institute is dedicated to ongoing communication of its findings as we engage decision-makers in government, business, non-government organizations and other sectors in the development and implementation of policies that are beneficial to the world's economy, environment and social well-being.

## ***The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)***

is a forum where its member countries work with other nations and communities to champion higher standards by benchmarking how well society is working.

The OECD's analyses and performance comparisons are the tools it uses to recommend policies designed to help individual nations and global communities prosper. The impartiality that characterizes its reviewing process leads to objective standards for governments to aspire to and encourages them to adopt policies that are in the best, long-term interests of their citizens.

The OECD is proud to have joined the IISD as a co-organizer of the workshop at which the Bellagio STAMP principles were developed and also to have been represented in the group of people who drafted the principles.

***For more information about the IISD Measurement and Assessment program, please visit: <http://www.iisd.org/measure/> or please write:***

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