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# Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Through Transformative Governance Practices and Vertical Collaboration at the National and Subnational Levels in Asia Pacific

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**Summary of the SDplanNet-Asia Pacific Regional  
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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACSC/APF	ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum	PCGG	Presidential Commission on Good Government
ADB	Asian Development Bank	PCSD	Philippine Council for Sustainable Development
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations	RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
C4D	Communication for Development	SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
CBA	Capacity Building Agenda	SACEP	South Asia Cooperation Environment Programme
CICED	Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development	SD	Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for West Asia	UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
GEF	Global Environment Fund	UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
GNH	Gross National Happiness	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ICSD	Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
IGES	Institute for Global Environment Strategies	UNEP-ROAP	United Nations Environment Program – Regional Offices for Asia and Pacific
JCSD	Japan Council for Sustainable Development	UNEP-ROWA	United Nations Environment Program – Regional Offices for West Asia
JPOI	Johannesburg Plan of Implementation		
LGU	Local Government Unit		
LUP	Land Use Plan		
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation		
MCED	Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development		
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals		
MEF	Ministry of Environment and Forests		
MTDP	Medium-Term Development Plans		
NCSD	National Council ((or Commission) for Sustainable Development		
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission		
NEASPEC	Northeast Asian Sub-Regional Program for Environment Cooperation		
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board		
NGOs	Non-Government Organization		
NPC	National Planning Council		
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy		
OWG	Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals		

## 1.0 Introduction

Twenty-two years of three blueprints for sustainable development implementation (*Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation* and *The Future We Want*) and countless initiatives at all levels have achieved substantial progress and produced remarkable results in terms of sustainable development. Notwithstanding this progress, sustainable development remains an elusive proposition. Weaknesses continue to persist, particularly in the area of convergence among sustainable development dimensions, and in the integration and harmonization of plans, policies and programs at various scales of governance.

Meanwhile, Rio+20 Summit's outcome document, *The Future We Want*, set in motion the process of developing global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that is coordinated and coherent with the formulation of the post-2015 Development Agenda. The SDGs may be a useful tool for facilitating the pursuit of sustainable development. However, developing and implementing SDGs at the national level requires new knowledge and enhanced capacities. The new challenges posed by the establishment and implementation of SDGs and the post-2015 Development Agenda on top of the still-persistent issues that hamper the success of sustainable development, all render capacity building more crucial than before. *The Future We Want*, therefore, reiterates the need to strengthen institutional capacity in planning, management, implementation and monitoring.

SDPlanNet in Asia-Pacific aims to contribute to the post-2015 Development Agenda process, particularly in terms of translating global agreements on the SDGs into meaningful policies and practices at regional, national and subnational levels. This Regional Practices Paper is prepared as spadework for the attainment of this objective. Specifically, this paper identifies the needed actions at regional, national and subnational levels, including recommending a capacity building agenda for national and subnational planners and implementers.

The paper consists of four parts. Section 1 provides an overview of SDG issue areas and emerging global goals. Section 2 discusses existing practices in four focus areas of SDplanNet, namely: multistakeholder processes and institutions; vertical integration; horizontal integration and co-benefits; and monitoring, evaluation and reporting in the Asia-Pacific region. Section 3 is a narrative on an aspirational set of national practices exemplified by a fictitious country in the future. Section 4 recommends a capacity building agenda for the Asia-Pacific region that is drawn from the gap identified between existing and aspired practices in this region.

## 2.0 Overview of SDG Issue Areas Being Discussed in the Region

This section contains a concise overview of highlighted areas for possible SDGs. These have been produced through various processes, but this overview focuses on the themes that have emerged mainly from two: (a) the Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs; and (b) national-level consultations in a number of countries as undertaken by the UN System throughout 2012 and 2013. The table below summarizes key themes as far as they have been identified in outcome documents of the consultations as well as from related work that the Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES) is undertaking to identify the positions of key countries in the OWG.

It is important to note that the summary may provide general hints as to what the countries may prioritize only because of two important factors. For one, in the OWG, countries are distributed into troikas, meaning that many statements represent what these troikas can agree to, and therefore not what a single country may choose as its main negotiation stance later on. This leads to the second factor, i.e., the OWG was not given a mandate to negotiate so member countries discuss potential thematic issues relating to the future goals only and do not negotiate their respective position. Therefore, the summarized information cannot be viewed as negotiation positions, which will emerge officially only when the real negotiations on the future SDGs will start in early 2015.

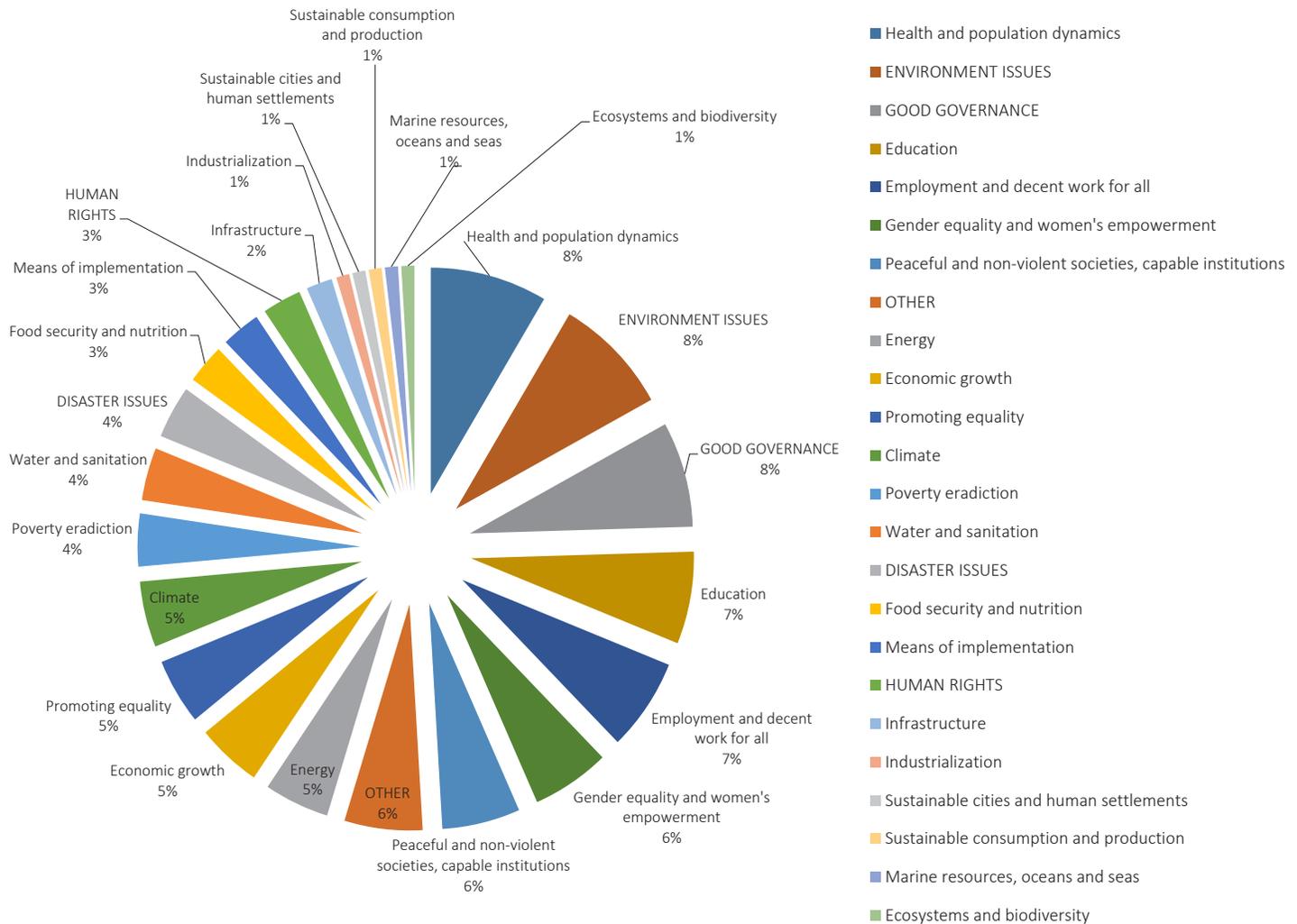
The table (Annex 1) illustrates priorities that have emerged through UN country consultations with various stakeholders, comparing them to some of the priorities that have been highlighted in country and troika statements in the OWG. The table is not exhaustive, mainly because of large discrepancies between formats and frameworks for the country consultations, as can be seen in the reports available online. Also, the collection—as available on the UN website for the OWG—is a broad mix of country and troika statements, which have been sampled for the themes highlighted. This may be helpful to get a first impression of the most important priority areas both at the country and at the UN levels but does not constitute a final position at either of these levels. Nevertheless it is possible to get a rough idea of which thematic areas some of the region's countries would like to see in the future SDG framework.

### 2.1 Difference Between Global and National Focus Areas

Employment in the focus areas lacks the environmental sustainability aspect, which has been highlighted in some national level consultations. While disasters are mentioned in water and health focus areas, there are many direct references to the importance of the concept and the need for its inclusion in a future goal framework. On education, while it is mentioned in the focus areas document of the OWG co-chairs, the connections between education and employment (and especially qualitative aspects of education) are stressed in country-level consultations. For water and sanitation, as well as in the energy sector, sustainability and access aspects are also highlighted as important in some country consultations. Green economy is also mentioned in country consultations but has not found a place in the focus areas for negotiations yet. Some respondents mentioned human security, mostly in relation to conflict and the absence of peace.<sup>1</sup>

While this very limited sample cannot be considered representative of the whole Asia-Pacific region, the trend shows that at national levels, the most important issues that respondents highlighted are (a) health, (b) environment; (c) good governance; (d) education; (e) employment and decent work; and (f) equality, in particular gender equality. Peace and climate issues also feature rather prominently. Even these issues were articulated slightly differently depending on where the consultation was conducted. For example, environmental issues were often connected with natural resource management and disaster risk reduction.

<sup>1</sup> Means of implementation is coupled with enablers, in order to capture a broader range of responses.

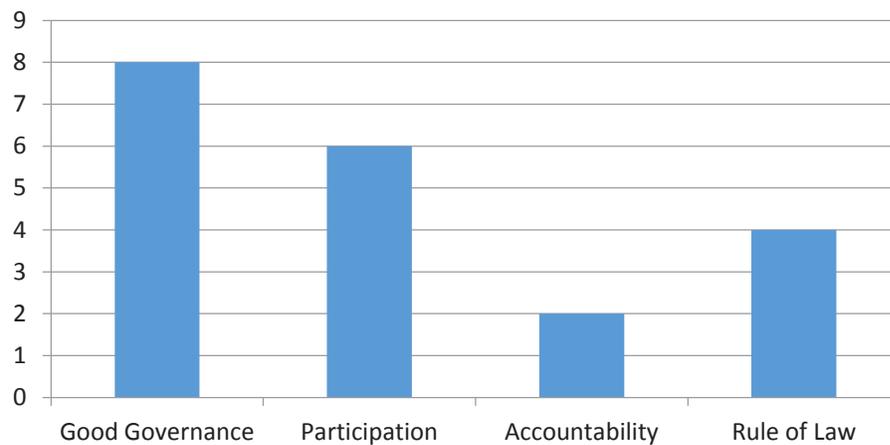


**FIGURE 1. THEMATIC AREAS AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

*n.b. Issues which are different from the international-level focus areas are in ALL CAPS.*

While the actual focus areas are somewhat different at national and international levels, the more interesting observation, which can be useful for the work of networks like SDplanNet, is that there remains a significant difference, which indicates that the links between national, regional and global development processes are still disjointed and vertical integration is still waiting to be achieved.

Governance issues have received more attention in the country consultations than in the global focus areas, but since governance is such a broad concept it is necessary to drill a bit deeper to find out what it actually means to respondents. Most respondents mention the need for “good governance” to be in the development agenda. Others are more specific about the aspects of governance that must be emphasized (Figure 2). It remains to be seen whether this priority will make it into the final intergovernmental document on the SDGs.



**FIGURE 2. ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE EMPHASIZED BY RESPONDENTS**

## 2.2 Issues Captured at ASEAN Level

Recent research (IGES, forthcoming) looked at some indications of emerging development issues at the ASEAN subregional level. The research findings show that many ASEAN member states still consider the development issues reflected in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as important. In this regard, future SDGs could be more like an MDG+ approach, albeit with some increased ambitions. Regional diversity of development is another important issue, which can be reflected at the ASEAN level in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and encourage cooperation among states to decrease development disparities among countries.

On possible future development goals, the existing ASEAN “Blueprints for Regional Integration,” which will be implemented in earnest from the end of 2015, emphasize: (a) food security, quality and sustainability of production; (b) health issues and universal health care; and (c) regional and national development gaps. Moreover, a recent experimental survey (Annex 2) indicated that, in addition to the MDGs, ASEAN countries seem interested in including thematic issues such as energy, quality of education, environmental sustainability and good governance into new SDGs. On these thematic issues ASEAN could consider (a) where there is institutional overlap and where coherence should emerge; (b) which issues are already prioritized in current regional development plans, and (c) which ones may have to be added or given more emphasis in the future.

### 3.0 Overview of Existing Practices in Asia-Pacific

This section focuses on four areas critical to the pursuit of sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, namely: (a) multistakeholder processes and institutions, (b) vertical integration, (c) horizontal integration and co-benefits, and (d) monitoring, evaluation and reporting. These focus areas are closely intertwined, one may even be considered a prerequisite to the other (i.e., multistakeholder processes and institutions with horizontal integration). Meanwhile, institutional frameworks establish practices that sometimes become embedded in processes or unwritten rules. This means that any discussion of practices necessitates the review of institutional frameworks. Taking these interlinkages into account, this section addresses institutional frameworks and practices in the four focus areas rather than following the prescribed format of discussing each focus area. It will discuss institutional frameworks at all levels, from the regional level to the subnational.

There are numerous regional and subregional subdivisions within Asia-Pacific such that sometimes the line between the two becomes hazy. In view of this, the administrative subdivisions used by the UN Regional Commissions will guide the discussion. Furthermore, most regional and sub-regional bodies were created and structured according to sectors and there has been none deliberately organized to cover all dimensions of sustainable development. For this reason, this paper will review bodies created for environmental cooperation since these are the main agencies involved in sustainable development discussions globally, as well as bodies created for overall cooperation as these address social, economic and environmental matters.

#### 3.1 The Regional Level

The Rio+20 document, *The Future We Want* (2012), reaffirms the provisions of Agenda 21 and *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation* (JPOI) that the UN Economic and Social Council remains the "...central mechanism for the coordination of the United Nations system and supervision of the Council's subsidiary bodies, in particular its functional commissions, and for promoting the implementation of Agenda 21 by strengthening system-wide coherence and coordination" (para 82). This provision is quite relevant to Asia-Pacific because, unlike Europe (which has the European Union), the region is not yet in a position to establish its own mechanism that is independent from the UN System. As such, UN bodies dominate the regional institutional framework for sustainable development of Asia-Pacific (Table 1).

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with the UN Environment Programme, through both its Regional Offices for Asia and Pacific (UNEP-ROAP) and West Asia (UNEP-ROWA), are the *de facto* regional coordinators and promoters of sustainable development in the region. Other regional UN bodies such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, and World Health Organization, support these regional commissions and programs. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) operates at the national level but often assists UNEP and the Commissions in identifying country representatives, national information, etc. In addition, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank and other bilateral development institutions support sustainable development initiatives in the region.

Table 1 shows the roles and delineation of functions among the Commissions and UNEP. The Commissions are primarily responsible for the economic and social dimensions, while UNEP focuses on the environment dimension (see focus themes). However, the Commissions also cover the environment (see for instance the support unit for SD), while UNEP tries hard to connect environmental to social and economic development. ESCAP and UNEP-ROAP cover 62 countries over a large geographical area.

The value of **multistakeholder processes and institutions** has already been firmly established and agreed upon globally. In recent years, regional initiatives have aligned with global practice as regional bodies deliberately employed stakeholder participation in their processes and established institutional mechanisms for the purpose. They now allow stakeholder groups to intervene or read statements in intergovernmental meetings. This is a big improvement from past practices where stakeholder groups met at the sidelines and merely submitted position papers to the intergovernmental meeting with the hope that these would be considered. A Civil Society or a Major Groups coordination unit also now exists within some organizations in the region (UNEP, ADB). These units have assisted stakeholder groups in many ways such as (a) building capacities through networking and exchange of experience with others, and (b) forcing stakeholder groups to establish internal processes especially for representation (through their guidelines on representation). In certain cases, these bodies have sought the participation of stakeholder groups in their programs and activities. Among the regional bodies, UNEP is the one that has firmly established these mechanisms much earlier on in the region.

In the **vertical integration** process, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNEP-ROAP and UNEP-ROWA are the links that bind the subregional and national levels with the global level. They support governments in consolidating regional positions and recommendations on national and regional issues and prepare regional plans based on national and subregional plans. In an ideal world, the regional Commissions and UNEP, along with UNDP, which operates at the national level, should bring the voices and plans of states and regional and subregional formations to the global level, while allowing information and guidance to permeate from the global level to the subregional and national levels. However, the UN setup, which is based on national membership, weakens this bridging role and limits the mode of the connections to information and dialogue. Sovereign states bring their national concerns, strategies and recommendations directly to the global level even as they also do so to the subregional and regional levels. The value of these regional bodies, therefore, lies more in determining and advocating for the resolution of numerous unique trans-national issues and programs.

ESCAP, ESCWA, UNEP-ROAP and UNEP-ROWA also facilitate **horizontal integration**, which they exercise in several ways such as by (a) coordinating efforts among their internal sector units; (b) working closely among each other and with other regional actors on programs, projects and initiatives (e.g., MDG Report with ADB); (c) consolidating national concerns and recommendations; and (d) strengthening regional cooperation through policy dialogues, information and knowledge sharing, and capacity building, etc. (Table 1). Of these, the first two have made headway but remain works in progress. As Table 1 shows, the focal points for sustainable development in these bodies are their respective environment units, which need to coordinate closely with social and economic units. At the organizational level, the UN established the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) to improve coordination among the work programs of UN regional entities and promote cooperation and collaboration between UN regional entities and their development partners in addressing regional development issues. This collaborative implementation of development approaches and programs such as Green Growth (ESCAP) and Climate Change Adaptation (UNEP) with other development partners, harnesses co-benefits more effectively.

**Monitoring, evaluation and reporting** at the regional level generally come in the forms of (a) development of indicators (e.g., *Green Growth Indicators*, 2013); (b) data and statistics that are collected and disseminated especially through their websites and publications (e.g., *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and Pacific*); and (c) sector and regional performance reports (e.g., *State of the Environment Report; Asia Pacific Regional MDG Report 2012-2013*). Reports or information also get disseminated in intergovernmental meeting side events.

**TABLE 1. COMPARATIVE PROFILES OF UN REGIONAL BODIES AND PROGRAMS OVERSEEING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

	ESCAP/ESCWA	UNDP	UNEP
Mandate/Function	Forum for governments to review & discuss economic & social issues; foster regional cooperation; promote sustainable economic & social development; strengthen institutional capacities	Advocates for change; connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources; leads programming of GEF & climate-related funds; oftentimes leads UN country teams.	Helps states translate global commitments into national action; develops & implements cleaner/safer policies that catalyze efficient use of natural assets, reduces environmental degradation and risks to humans & environment.
Focus/Priority Themes	Macroeconomic policy; social development; trade & investment; transport; environment & SD; disaster risk reduction	Governance; Poverty Reduction and MDG; Crisis Prevention/Recovery; Environment & Energy; HIV/AIDS	Climate change, sustainable consumption & production, conflicts, resource efficiency, disasters, harmful substances & hazardous waste, ecosystem management, environmental governance
Focal Unit	Committee on Environment & Development/ EDD	Regional Center; Regional Team for Environment & SD	Division of Regional Cooperation/ Regional Offices
Member countries	ESCAP – 62, of which 9 are associate members; ESCWA – 17	AP - 53; WA - 17(Covers 36 countries but has offices in only 24 countries)	Pre-Rio+20: ROAP-47; ROWA-12 Post-Rio+20: Universal membership (maybe same as ESCAP & ESCWA)
Horizontal Integration	Regional Coordination Mechanism, Special Ministerial meetings (e.g. MCED), programs and projects; Non-state actor participation	UN Development Group; Regional Coordination Mechanism; Regional Directors Team; Non-state actor participation	Regional Coordination Mechanism. Regional ministerial meetings (MCED); Environmental Policy Dialogue; direct Non-State Actor participation
Vertical Integration	<u>Upstream</u> : ECOSOC <u>Downstream</u> : Subregional bodies; states <u>Form</u> : Consultation meetings; projects via UNDP	<u>Upstream</u> : ECOSOC <u>Downstream</u> : Subregional bodies; states <u>Form</u> : Consultation meetings; projects	<u>Upstream</u> : Governing Council; <u>Downstream</u> : Subregional bodies; Environment Ministers <u>Form</u> : Projects through UNDP at country level
Stakeholder Participation/Engagement	Consultative meetings; interventions by major groups in intergovernmental meetings	Consultative Meetings with Non-State Actors; project development and implementation	Institutionalized Major Groups coordinating structure; Eco- Peace Leadership Center for CS capacity building and networking

Source: Individual websites of UN bodies

### 3.2 The Subregional Level

In view of the region's sheer size and diversity, Asia-Pacific is divided into six administrative sub-regions, namely: Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central and West Asia, and the Pacific. Except for West Asia, which is supervised directly by ESCWA, the subregions have established intergovernmental bodies for environment and sustainable development concerns that have varied tasks, purposes, subject coverage and configurations as shown in Table 2. Different facilitators created them at different times taking into account prevailing contexts, thus the variations in their profiles. The common purpose, though, is to promote international cooperation. From time to time, new bodies are formed covering a subset of countries or expanding subregional coverage to address specific issues.

**Multistakeholder processes and institutions** of the subregional bodies vary in levels of maturity and approaches. Perhaps the most developed is that of ASEAN, probably because of longevity (47 years) and varied experience, having the most communist countries transitioning towards democracy and experimenting with multistakeholder participation. Only ASEAN has a civil society accreditation process, albeit it has been found to be cumbersome by many organizations and criticized as not being applied consistently. It also has the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People’s Forum (ACSC/APF) that takes place at the sidelines of ASEAN Summit and has been the biggest event involving civil society in the subregion (about 3,000 in 2013). It employs engagement mechanisms such as councils, assemblies, conferences, consultation mechanisms, commissions and committees, interfaces and town hall meetings, etc. (Chong & Elies, 2001). SACEP takes its cue from SAARC, which has been less connected to people despite its robust and enthusiastic civil society, largely due to inadequate participation mechanisms (Pandey & Shrestha, 2012). SAARC has been learning from ASEAN’s experience. In general, stakeholder participation at the subregional level is confined to consultations, which come in the form of stakeholder/major groups meetings at the sidelines of the intergovernmental meetings.

The **vertical integration** role of subregional bodies is exercised through (a) sub-regional environment and sustainable development planning or strategy formulation (e.g., The South Asian Seas Action Plan, Framework for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region; ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy Roadmap; Regional Master Plan for the Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms in North-East Asia); and (b) consolidation of subregional concerns and positions on transboundary and global issues, both of which serve as inputs to the regional level and subsequently, global level discourses and agreement. These bodies thus act as vertical integrators or serve as links between the countries and the UN regional and global bodies. However, this vertical integration role sometimes does not function such as when national positions on issues that may not be consistent with subregional positions are directly brought to discourses and meetings of higher-level bodies. States have this right, of course, as members of the UN.

Their **horizontal integration** role is more potent and exercised through (a) planning and strategy formulation for the subregion as discussed above; (b) forging of cooperation on matters common to member countries (e.g., transboundary issues) and undertake programs and projects under said cooperation that are usually sponsored by the UN and international financial institutions (e.g., Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program of ADB; Regional Initiative on Solid Waste Management in Pacific Island Countries Project funded by Japan); and (c) facilitating dialogues (e.g., ASEAN Dialogues with partner countries; Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting among China, Japan, and Korea). All these could lead to better integration of sustainable development dimensions and promote co-benefits.

**TABLE 2. SUBREGIONAL BODIES HANDLING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA PACIFIC**

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations; ICSD - Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development; NEASPEC - Northeast Asian Sub-Regional Program for Environmental Cooperation; SACEP - South Asia Cooperation Environment Program; SPREP - South Pacific Regional Environment Program.

	<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>ICSD</b>	<b>NEASPEC</b>	<b>SACEP</b>	<b>SPREP</b>
Coverage/Level	Southeast Asia; 10 nations/Heads of States	Central Asia; 5 nations/ Heads of States	Northeast Asia; 6 nations/Senior Officials	South Asia; 8 nations Ministerial	Pacific; 25 island states Ministerial
Creator or Facilitator/Year/ Secretariat	Bangkok Declaration; 1967 ASEAN Secretariat	Agreement on Joint Actions on Aral Sea; 1993 ICSD Secretariat	ESCAP; 1993 ESCAP East and Northeast Asia Office	Member governments; Colombo Declaration 1982 Sri Lanka Government	UNEP/ESCAP; 1982 SPREP Secretariat
Objective/Function	Accelerate economic growth, social progress, & cultural development; promote regional peace & stability	Regional cooperation in environmental protection and SD; solve problems related to Aral crisis	Address environmental problems; promote policy dialogue	Cooperate in Environment in the context of SD (waste management; CC adaptation, data management)	Promote ESD in the region; focus on CC, Biodiversity, Waste Management
Vertical Integration	Country participation; representation in regional & global bodies	Country participation; representation in regional and global bodies	Participation of Environment Ministries; reports/ inputs to ESCAP	Governing Council; feed into regional and global bodies and meetings	Country participation; representation in regional and global bodies/meetings
Horizontal Integration	Regular summit & meetings of foreign ministers, standing and other functional committees	Annual meeting of heads of states	Meetings of officials; national focal points for environment	Consultation meetings among representatives of environment agencies	Annual meetings among representatives of environment agencies
Participation mechanism	Civil Society affiliation Guide (covers also business)	Consultation meetings	Limited	Consultation meetings	Consultation meetings

Source: Websites of subject subregional bodies.

Unfortunately, it is not very apparent if the co-benefits from plans, policies and programs have effectively been harnessed at the subregional level, and empirical research on such effectiveness could not be undertaken under this practices paper. The assumption is that internal coordination of strategies, policies, and programs within these and other relevant bodies would promote integration of sector concerns and harness their co-benefits and synergies. However, anecdotal evidence (e.g., participants in meetings are mostly from national environment agencies; reports are focused on environment matters, often not mentioning their implications for economic, social, cultural and other dimensions and vice versa; and impressions by some experts and government representatives) all indicate that integration remains wanting.

There are several factors that hamper horizontal integration. First, some subregional bodies tasked to handle sustainable development have an explicit environmental focus, and thus would need to closely coordinate and cooperate with their macro-level or sector-specific counterparts. For instance, SACEP must link closely with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which covers macro-level matters like peace, freedom, social justice and economic progress; and to become more effective SPREP must work closely with the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific and the latter's sector-specific member organizations. Second, sustainable development is often lodged under the mandate of an environment committee and the technical support for this committee also comes from the environment unit of the subregional body's secretariat, as in the case of ASEAN. This arrangement perpetuates the environment-based silo approach, which can only be remedied through a strong two-way coordination among relevant committees and units (e.g., sociocultural and economic units). Third, certain bodies lack political clout or financial capability to undertake meaningful coordination and integration. For instance, the North-East Asian Subregional Programme on Environment Cooperation (NEASPEC) is a forum for senior officials who have limited authority to make political and financial decisions and demand cooperation from other sectors. Most, if not all, subregional bodies have limited financial and human resources and so could not engage in more meaningful coordination and integration processes.

There are other programs and groupings of countries within the sub-regions, which can sometimes attain better effectiveness in integration and co-benefits than those mentioned above. This may be because (a) the issues they cover are more compelling; (b) the level of membership is high, hence can readily make political decisions; (c) they cover fewer countries, hence are more manageable; and (d) external resources are available. Examples of these are the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea; the Greater Mekong Sub-Regional Program, which is funded by ADB; and the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting among China, Japan and Korea (only three members as against six members of NEASPEC). Notwithstanding these, the vertical and horizontal links of these formations with subregional and regional bodies are also not readily observable.

### 3.3 National Level

Echoing Agenda 21 and *The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*, paragraph 101 of *The Future We Want* states:

We underline the need for more coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at the national, sub-national and local levels as appropriate and, to this end, we call on countries to strengthen national, sub-national and/or local institutions or relevant multi-stakeholder bodies and processes ...

For 22 years now, states have interpreted and implemented these calls in various ways, with some doing so to the letter while others do so in a token manner. To illustrate this, the following discussion will focus on the sustainable development *structure*, which makes decisions and undertakes the four focus areas of this paper; and the *substance*, which is the content of the processes undertaken under the focus areas. The structure is the multistakeholder institutional mechanism tasked with overseeing sustainable development as provided for in the quotation above and referred to here as National Council (or Commission) for Sustainable Development (NCSD), although it can have different names, legal personality and focus.

The NCSD is an important and potent mechanism for undertaking multistakeholder processes and ensuring inclusive participation. Hence, the benchmark for this paper will be the level of stakeholder participation in NCSDs and the ability of the NCSDs to promote vertical and horizontal integration and undertake M&E. The substance is the plans or strategies that promote sustainable development. The benchmark is the existence of a long-term National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) and how this is being implemented. Other plans, such as Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDP) may be discussed as necessary.

### 3.3.1 The Institutional Structure: NCSDs

The actual number of states with active NCSDs, either in Asia-Pacific or the world, is unknown. Monitoring of NCSDs has been sporadic, as it entails a lot of resources and energy to cover even just the 193 members of the UN. Only three organizations have actually undertaken NCSD situation analysis and monitoring, namely: (a) Earth Council, which has been monitoring and studying NCSDs worldwide for more than two decades, albeit intermittently due to resource constraints; (b) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), which merely relied on incomplete submissions of national reports; and (c) Stakeholder Forum, which just came recently on board when it established the Global NCSDs Network in 2012 and depends heavily on electronic surveys and inputs. All three rely greatly on the cooperation of national focal points to provide information or respond to survey questionnaires, which does not come easily. Monitoring requires accuracy and regularity.

Within the region, ESCAP and ESCWA together cover 79 states (Table 1). Of these 79 countries, very few have multistakeholder NCSDs because (a) they simply do not find a need for an NCSD since they have functioning units for the purpose within their respective government structure (e.g., Malaysia, New Zealand); (b) they encountered problems setting up their NCSDs (e.g., Indonesia, Bangladesh);<sup>2</sup> (c) non-state actors do not have the capability and enthusiasm to engage government or government does not like to engage certain non-state actors such as advocacy NGOs; or (d) they simply could not find the momentum as it takes political will to establish an NCSD and ample financial and human resources to make it work. The latter is also the reason why many NCSDs have been abolished or have faded away or become inactive over the years.

Separate surveys conducted by Earth Council-Asia Pacific in 2012 and Stakeholder Forum in 2013 updated the information on NCSDs and other national sustainable development mechanisms. Table 3 provides brief profiles of 14 NCSDs in the region, which are considered “multistakeholder” because these have members coming from both within and outside government. A closer look at these 14 reveals that the term “multistakeholder” has been loosely defined, deviating from the spirit of Agenda 21 that encourages the participation or membership of various sectors of society (business, civil society or major groups) in addition to the government. Many NCSDs (e.g., Australia,<sup>3</sup> China, Iran, Tajikistan and Thailand) have maximized the use of national and international experts or research institutions as token representation of non-state actors.

<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh and Indonesia attempted to set up their NCSDs with assistance from Earth Council, through this author, in preparation for the World Summit for Sustainable Development in 2002, but these were aborted because of issues pertaining to proposed functions and membership.

<sup>3</sup> Australia National Sustainability Council is 100% composed of experts in various fields. It complements the work of the Department of Environment, the official focal point for sustainable development.

**TABLE 3. NATIONAL MULTISTAKEHOLDER INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS**

COUNTRY	NAME AND YEAR OF CREATION OF SD BODY/ MECHANISM	CHAIRPERSON/ LEAD PERSON	ROLE/FUNCTION	SUPPORT UNIT
1. Australia	Department of Environment	Department Secretary	Implements policies on environment and heritage, and promotes a sustainable way of life	Policy and Communication Division of DSEWPC
	National Sustainability Council, 2012 (independent expert body)	Prof. John Thwaites	Provides independent advice to the Federal Government; produces public reports on M&E of Australia's sustainability performance	DSEWPC
2. Bangladesh	Sustainable Development Monitoring Council, 2009	Finance Minister (soon to become the Planning Minister)	Monitors progress of implementation of NSDS and reviews the obligations in Multilateral Environmental Agreements including UNCSD	Ministry of Finance (soon to become the Ministry of Planning)
3. China	Leading Group for SD of the National Development & Reform Commission, 1994	Minister, NDRC	Coordinates and reviews the progress of implementation of Agenda 21	LGSD Office; State Planning Commission; Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21
	Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CICED), 1992 (Not-for-profit; composed of high level Chinese and international experts)	State Council Leader	Policy adviser; conducts research, facilitates implementation of SD strategy; and exchanges successful experiences internationally	Ministry of Environment Protection
4. Fiji	National Committee on Sustainable Development, 2002	Ambassador at Large	Formulates SD strategy and provides policy advice to government	Ministry of Finance and National Planning
5. Hong Kong	Council for Sustainable Development, 2003	Hon. Bernard Charnwut Chan, GBS, JP (politician/ businessman)	Advises the Government on SD strategies and priorities, facilitates community participation and promotes public awareness on SD	Environment Bureau
6. India	Ministry of Environment and Forests (government)	Minister, MEF	Plans, promotes, coordinates & oversees the implementation of environmental and forestry policies and programs	International Cooperation and Sustainable Development
	Indian Council for Sustainable Development (ICSD), 2007 (non-governmental; international membership)	Prof. Jeffrey Sachs and Dr. R.K. Pachauri	Provides guidance on integrating environment in development; focuses on poverty eradication and equitable growth of income and wealth	Division The Energy and Resources Institute
7. Iran	National Committee for Sustainable Development. 1993	Vice President and Head of the DOE	Iran focal point for SD activities; formulate and coordinate the implementation of NSDS	Department of Environment
8. Kazakhstan	Council for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2004	Prime Minister	Promote the formation of state policy on sustainable development	Council Secretary

COUNTRY	NAME AND YEAR OF CREATION OF SD BODY/ MECHANISM	CHAIRPERSON/ LEAD PERSON	ROLE/FUNCTION	SUPPORT UNIT
9. Korea	<p>Presidential Commission for Green Growth*, 2009 (scaled down in size and power in 2013 under the new President)</p> <p>Presidential Commission for SD, 2000 (folded into PCGG in 2009)</p>	Originally Co-Chaired by the Prime Minister & Private Sector Leader. Now it has become a small unit under the PM office	<p>Deliberates and monitors national performance on policies and plans on low carbon green growth.</p> <p>Adopted a bottom-up approach by expanding contributions by scholars and civic groups.</p>	Office of the Prime Minister
10. Philippines	Philippine Council for Sustainable Development, Presidential Order No. 15; 1992	Minister, Socio-Economic Planning	Ensures the implementation of the commitments made by the Philippines in UNCED e.g. promote SD in planning, policy-making and programming	National Economic and Development Authority
11. Taiwan	National Council for Sustainable Development Network, (created in 1997; legislated in 2002)	Prime Minister, Executive Yuan	Promotes national sustainable development by garnering collective efforts from government sector, academic experts and civil organizations	Environmental Protection Administration
12. Tajikistan	National Commission for Sustainable Development, 1998	Prime Minister	Formulate the NSDS; coordinate and cooperate with ministries and organizations	
13. Thailand	<p>National Economic &amp; Social Development Board</p> <p>National Environment Board; National Environment Quality Act, 1992</p>	<p>NESDB Chairperson</p> <p>Environment Minister</p>	<p>Formulates and monitors the implementation of National Economic &amp; Social Development Plan</p> <p>Formulates policies and plan for enhancement and conservation of the environment</p>	<p>NESDB</p> <p>MONRE</p>
14. Vietnam	National Council for Sustainable Development; PM Decision 1032 in 2005	Deputy Prime Minister	Formulates and steers the implementation of the Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development	A21 Office, MPI

Source: Earth Council Asia-Pacific; Stakeholder Forum; websites of identified bodies

\*Consolidation of the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development; National Committee for Combating Climate Change, National Energy Committee

Other countries handpicked friendly non-governmental representatives (e.g., Korea<sup>4</sup>) or those that the government itself created (e.g., Vietnam) to be represented in the NCSD. All these indicate that direct engagement between governments and civil society has been limited either due to weaknesses in capacity of the former or lack of trust between the two parties or both. Lack of trust between governments and stakeholder groups used to be the major reason for the lack of participation in the past. The situation has substantially improved from no engagement to “cautious engagement” in many countries.

NCSDs that have genuine multistakeholder composition are those of Bangladesh,<sup>5</sup> Fiji, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Taiwan. Except for Bangladesh, the NCSDs of the other three are fairly mature in age and experience. The Philippine Council for Sustainable Development is the oldest at 22 years, having been the very first NCSD created worldwide. It has already been sharing its rich experience with other NCSDs (e.g., those in Mongolia, Vietnam, Korea). Japan<sup>6</sup> and Mongolia used to have truly multistakeholder NCSDs, but these got dissolved mainly due to financial constraints brought about by the practice of creating institutions through externally funded programs. For instance, Mongolia’s NCSD was created through the Capacity 21 Program of UNDP. It ceased to operate when the program ended and the NCSD, despite being high level, failed to establish its own sustainability mechanism. These countries are now grouped with those having purely governmental mechanisms since their respective environment ministries are their current sustainable development mechanisms (Table 4).

Strictly speaking, the official sustainable development focal points of Australia, China, India, Korea, and Thailand are purely governmental. These are included in the set of multistakeholder NCSDs, however, since these have parallel multistakeholder bodies that were either (a) created upon the initiative of civil society organizations and got the blessing of government (e.g., India, Korea); or (b) these have parallel bodies with token non-governmental representatives (e.g., Australia, China, Korea).

Table 4 shows the location of sustainable development coordinating mechanisms within the government structures of 10 countries. This location is either within a government ministry or in an inter-ministerial grouping. Of the 10 coordinating mechanisms, six are in environment ministries;<sup>7</sup> three are in intergovernmental bodies (Bhutan, Malaysia, Singapore); and one is in the development ministry (Brunei). Of the many countries in the region, very few, probably only the Philippines and Malaysia, placed sustainable development under the ambit of the planning ministry from the very beginning. However, the number of countries lodging sustainable development in an oversight ministry such as the planning or development ministry has been growing in recent years, albeit quite gradually, indicating recognition of its benefits. The recent additions include Bhutan and Thailand. Bangladesh contemplates expanding the functions of its NCSD beyond monitoring and moving it to the planning ministry.

<sup>4</sup> The former Korea Presidential Commission for Green Growth was mostly composed of handpicked representatives of the business sector. Its predecessor, the Presidential Council for Sustainable Development, was truly multistakeholder. The setup under the new government is still unclear.

<sup>5</sup> Current Bangladesh NCSD was created in 2009 as a monitoring body. There is a plan to establish a more encompassing NCSD to be lodged under the Ministry of Planning.

<sup>6</sup> Japan Council for Sustainable Development was a discussion forum created upon the initiative of an NGO. The official focal point for sustainable development ever since is the Ministry of Environment.

<sup>7</sup> Pakistan’s Ministry of Climate Change is included in the six.

**TABLE 4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATING BODIES/FOCAL POINTS**

COUNTRY	NAME AND YEAR OF CREATION OF SD BODY/ MECHANISM	CHAIRPERSON/ LEAD PERSON	ROLE/FUNCTION	SUPPORT UNIT
1. Bhutan	Gross National Happiness Commission	Prime Minister	Prepares long-term Strategy for GNH; coordinates the formulation of all policies, plans and programs	Gross National Happiness Secretariat
2. Brunei	Ministry of Development	Minister of Development		Department of Environment, Parks and Recreation
3. Cambodia	Ministry of Environment	Minister for Environment		Ministry of Environment
4. Indonesia	Ministry of Environment	Minister of Environment	Formulates policies and undertake coordination in the field of environment	Office of the Asst. Min. for Economy and SD
5. Japan	Japan Council for Sustainable Development, 1996 (Defunct)	Co-chair: Government, NGO, Business	Inactive (defunct)	JCSD Secretariat
	Ministry of Environment of Japan	Minister of Environment		MOEJ
6. Malaysia	National Planning Council	Prime Minister	NPC is highest policy-making body for economic and social matters	National Development Planning Committee Economic Planning Unit
7. Mongolia	Ministry of Nature, Environment, Tourism National Council for Sustainable Development (Defunct); 1996	Prime Minister	Formulated and implemented the Agenda 21 of Mongolia	Department of SD & Strategic Planning Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism
8. New Zealand	Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment	Commissioner	Serve as an Ombudsperson; conducts M&E	Staff of Commissioner
9. Pakistan	Ministry of Climate Change; 2009	Minister of Climate Change		
10. Singapore	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development 2009	Co-Chair: Ministers: National Development; Environment & Water Resources	Tasked to formulate a national strategy for Singapore's sustainable development in the context of emerging domestic and global challenges.	Ministry of Development  Ministry of Environment and Natural resources

Source: Earth Council Asia-Pacific survey, 2012; websites of identified bodies

Some NCSDs establish local branches or equivalents (Table 5). Apart from ensuring that sustainable development planning and other processes ensue at the local levels, this is also their means to strengthen **vertical (downstream) integration**. For instance, China and the Philippines organized as early as the mid-1990s local SD mechanisms and

localized the formulation and implementation of their respective Agendas 21 through these local mechanisms. Purely governmental SD mechanisms are also able to integrate vertically through their local branches, which coordinate with local government units in undertaking sustainable development planning and initiatives. However, downstream integration can only become effective if it is connected to a feedback loop or accompanied by **upstream integration**. This proceeds primarily through the consolidation of local plans and programs as inputs to national plans and programs. Planning and policy-making in most countries are interactive and follow a top-down, bottom-up approach (e.g., Malaysia, Philippines).

**TABLE 5. EXAMPLES OF VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL COORDINATION APPROACHES IN ASIAN COUNTRIES**

COUNTRY	VERTICAL
China	Localized Agenda 21 and established local Leading Groups to implement the Local Agenda 21 and action plans and to incorporate the SD concept into local economic/social/regional plans.
Korea*	Established Local Committees on Green Growth under the Mayor/ Governor and these report to PCGG then the National Assembly. The LGUs and PCGG monitor progress.
Malaysia	Employs bottom-up (micro-level programs to macro-level plans) and top-down (macro parameters) interactive planning process
Mongolia	Undertakes Aimag (local) level planning & implementation
Philippines	Localized Philippine Agenda 21 and established local SD councils to formulate/implement LA 21. PCSD reports to the President and UNCSD; planning employs bottom-up, top-down approach.
Thailand	Subnational development planning and implementation
Country	Horizontal
Australia	Incorporation of ESD principles in existing institutional arrangements in government; and better intra- and intergovernmental integration of policy and decision making.
China	Deliberations by members of the Leading Group with inputs from the CICODE
India	Inputs from various parties through seminars, workshops, discussions
Malaysia	Inter-Agency Planning Committees with inputs from private sector at all levels
Philippines	Membership and participation of sector ministries and wide variety of stakeholders in PCSD; creation of planning committees and conduct of consultations. PCSD decides by consensus
Singapore	Inter-ministerial collaboration and decision making
Vietnam	Membership of various sector ministries and leaders of major groups. Majority voting.

\* This was the setup before PCGG was downscaled by the new government. Current set up is still unclear.

Source: Earth Council Asia-Pacific survey of NCSDs and other SD mechanisms

**Horizontal integration** is accomplished through (a) coordination of sector plans, policies and programs; and (b) membership or representation of stakeholder groups and sector ministries in the SD mechanism, which is actually a means to strengthen coordination and cooperation. Coordination is crucial in horizontal integration but it is harder to achieve when representatives of key sectors are not able to directly participate in planning and programming processes. Co-benefit issues such as the stiff competition on use of surface water among agriculture (irrigation), power generation and health and sanitation, require coordination and dialogue among relevant agencies and stakeholders. A multistakeholder mechanism is best placed to handle such competing and co-benefit issues.

A key element to achieving horizontal integration is the strong technical competence and administrative capacities of the secretariats of the sustainable development mechanisms. An effective secretariat could (a) undertake necessary

technical research and analysis; (b) coordinate closely with other sector agencies and help find synergies and common grounds among them; and (c) recommend, based on solid review of alternatives, the most appropriate and feasible means to address certain issues/conflicts. It would also help if the secretariat has an oversight role and macro-view of issues. Note from tables above, however, that the secretariats of most mechanisms are lodged in a sector agency, usually the environment ministry.

All the sustainable development mechanisms cited in above discussion, whether multistakeholder or purely governmental, undertake some form of **monitoring, evaluation and monitoring**. Some do this quite deliberately such as in the case of Bangladesh wherein the NCSD was created specifically to undertake M&E. Most others have some difficulty undertaking M&E because of inadequate capability to generate appropriate data in a timely way and in analyzing these data well; and to establish appropriate indicators. There is actually a difference in the ease of undertaking M&E between an NCSD and a governmental entity. Multi-stakeholder mechanisms would normally have less difficulty because the stakeholder partners can assist in generating and analyzing data from different perspectives, and help disseminate and explain the results of M&E. A report produced by a multi-stakeholder group usually has credibility and readily gains wide support. However, disagreements or conflicts among stakeholder groups in certain aspects of data analysis and reporting could retard these processes. The M&E process of governmental bodies is insulated from conflicts but could take a longer period to carry out due to bureaucratic hurdles. The resulting reports are almost always doubted and contested.

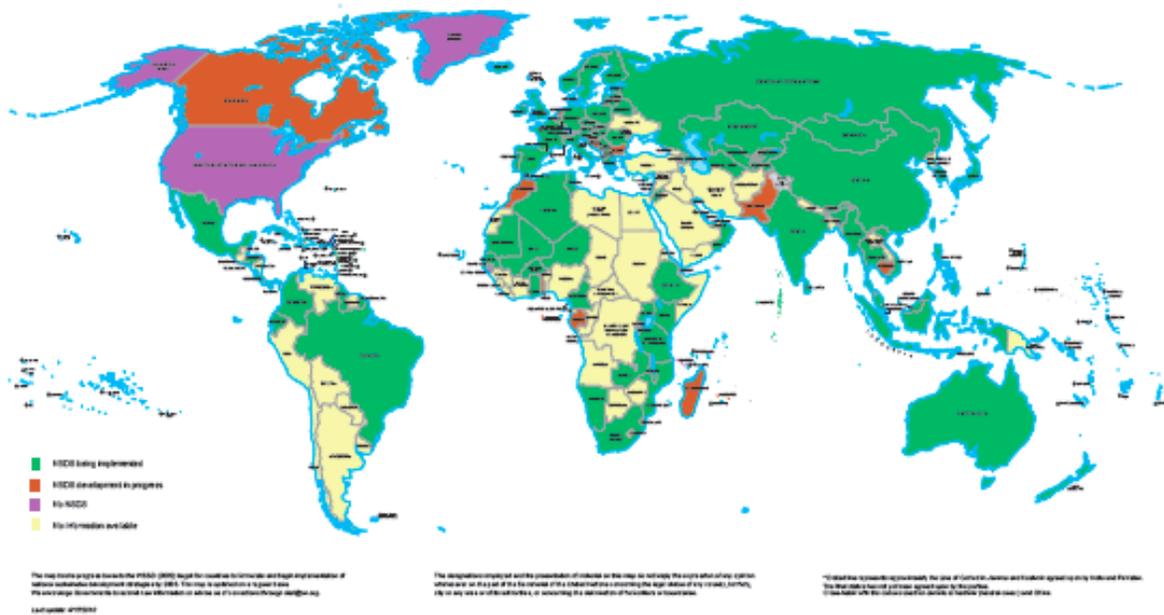
### 3.3.2 The Substantive Content: NSDS and other Plans

Almost all countries in the region already have an NSDS as shown in the NSDS map (Figure 3) below. Except for North Korea, the author has confirmed that those countries marked as having no information have actually produced their NSDS. Bangladesh completed its NSDS in 2013. Lao PDR produced its NSDS in 2008 through a project implemented by the Regional Resources Center for Asia Pacific at AIT. The NSDS, as prescribed by Agenda 21, must be the long-term strategic framework that integrates at the very least, the three dimensions of sustainable development. Most, if not all, developing countries have MTDPs.

The existence of an NSDS, however, is not a guarantee that sustainable development would readily proceed. At least two elements must be present: (a) quality and suitability of the NSDS, and (b) effective implementation and M&E of the NSDS. The quality of the NSDS is usually a manifestation of the quality of the process it undertook and the extent to which integration has been accomplished. In other words, a participatory planning process that has embedded a mechanism that integrates the three development dimensions and was produced with strong technical support has a high probability of producing good quality plans. This is the essence of the relevant provisions of the three outcome documents of conferences on sustainable development. It is encouraging to note that at least in the past 10 years, most countries in the region have taken some level of effort to make their planning processes consultative regardless of the presence or absence of multistakeholder institutions. Nonetheless, a large number of NSDS were prepared by or through national environment ministries, and a good number of these NSDS are environment-oriented, such as the Basic Environment Plan<sup>8</sup> of Japan. In the absence of any empirical study, this paper is not prepared to say that environment-oriented NSDS have lower quality or cannot guide the attainment of sustainability. The fact that the Basic Environment Plan, which has been in existence since 1994 and was already updated twice (2000 and 2006), may be an indication that it is working well in Japan's context.

<sup>8</sup> The Basic Environment Plan is Japan's NSDS according to its reports to UNDESA.

### National sustainable development strategies: The global picture 2010



**FIGURE 3. STATUS OF FORMULATION OF NSDS, 2010**

Similarly, some countries consider their MTDPs as their NSDS (e.g. Thailand). However, the MTDP covers a shorter period (5-6 years against 10-30 years of a typical NSDS) and is more oriented towards social and economic development so it is not quite like the NSDS defined in Agenda 21. However, the MTDPs in the region are usually adequately consulted. Again, this paper reserves judgment on the advisability of substituting the NSDS with the MTDP until an empirical study proves otherwise. The intent of this paper is not to cast shadows on these practices as these may be the best that countries can do within their specific contexts. This paper is merely echoing the advisability of adopting strong **multistakeholder processes and institutions** to produce strategic frameworks or plans that possess higher integrity and quality. However, it is respectful of the decisions of countries as these may be the best for their circumstances.

Vertical and horizontal integration processes largely occur in the NSDS formulation process, usually through multistakeholder processes and institutions. Assuming these processes were all in place and produced a suitable and good quality NSDS, the second element needed for ensuring effective implementation is an operational **system of monitoring, evaluation and reporting**, which should be spelled out in the plan document, including responsible entities and schedule. It is important to ensure that the NSDS is resulting in desired outcomes or bringing about the hoped-for sustainable development conditions. Should there be deviations, the necessary corrections or revisions may readily be instituted with an organized M&E system.

### 3.3.3 Conclusions

Several conclusions may be drawn from the above discussions.

- *First*, multistakeholder processes and institutions, despite some headway, remain inadequate. For sure, all the bodies discussed above will argue that their processes are consultative even if they do not have multistakeholder institutions. While this argument is valid, direct involvement remains a better means to achieve meaningful participation, forge cooperation and teamwork, and comply with the prescriptions of Agenda 21.
- *Second, lack of participation* could be traced to poor access to information, hence low public awareness; inadequate capability of non-state stakeholders to engage government and influence policy-making; and aversion of some governments to participation by other stakeholders.
- *Third*, coordination and integration require further attention and strengthening. The environment ministry continues to be the overseer of sustainable development in many countries, even in those with NCSDs. More deliberate efforts to coordinate with other agencies of government are imperative in order to tighten horizontal integration and maximize co-benefits. These obviously have not been happening well enough since many continue to raise lack of such coordination and silo thinking as persistent issues.
- *Fourth*, vertical integration is a loop; both downstream and upstream links at all levels must be strengthened.
- *Fifth*, making valid and timely data available needs extra attention and resources. The capability to analyze and communicate the results of analysis needs strengthening.
- *Sixth*, secretariats or technical support units to SD mechanisms have not been given adequate attention. These could be the lynchpin to effective coordination and integration.
- *Seventh*, notwithstanding Agenda 21 prescriptions, practices and decisions of sovereign countries, which are generally influenced or constrained by their contexts and situations, must be respected. However, efforts to help them move towards proven correct approaches must be exhausted. Empirical studies that would establish a better approach may help.

## 4.0 Narrative on Future Regional Practices (2030)

Ecotopia is a fictitious country that exemplifies the ideal sustainable development practices in a future aspired to by the representatives of Asia-Pacific countries that gathered in Incheon, South Korea on April 7-12, 2014 for the regional and global Sustainable Development Transition Forums. These practices are described hereunder according to the four key areas under review.

### 4.1 Multistakeholder Processes and Institutions

Ecotopia has a dedicated multistakeholder mechanism for sustainable development called the National Council/Commission for SD (or NCSD). Ecotopia's constitution provides for the NCSD's creation as a body that is independent especially from government and insulated from party politics. Its operating law provides that that Ecotopia's NCSD must: (a) be chaired by a well-respected and qualified person who is able to maintain the NCSD's independence and promote and implement sustainable development concepts, policies and programs; (b) the membership must consist of high-level elected government officials having oversight (e.g., planning, finance) and sector-specific functions, and respected and capable representatives of the industry and business and civil society organizations (e.g., NGOs, academia, youth); (c) have sustained, adequate funding; and (d) be technically and administratively supported by a highly capable secretariat.

The NCSD meets quarterly and has so far produced a broad vision for medium- and long-term national sustainable development. It is in the process of causing the formulation of detailed short-term action plans by relevant government institutions in cooperation with business and civil society. The NCSD shall ensure the faithful implementation of these action plans through regular monitoring and evaluation. The NCSD's M&E system was designed such that the government, business sector and CSO are active partners in its implementation.

### 4.2 Integrated Development Planning

The success of Ecotopia's smooth journey towards the desired future is, in large part, attributable to its ability to formulate and implement a set of necessary plans that cover the various sectors/dimensions of development and at all administrative levels. These plans, which complement and support rather than duplicate and conflict with each other, include the following:

- *National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS)*, the overarching long-term integrated strategic framework that covers 30 years. It provides a broad framework and directs the path towards the Ecotopians' sustainable development vision, goals and objectives. It is founded on the nation's physical attributes, particularly natural resource endowments, and land use, among others. The NCSD led and coordinated its formulation in a participatory manner.
- *Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP)* whose effective period coincides with the term of office of Ecotopia's Head of Government (five years). It is more specific and detailed, and based on and supportive of the goals and objectives of the NSDS. It is complete with a Medium-Term Investment Program, a Legislative Agenda and Implementation Matrix, i.e., one that identifies the specific programs and projects that must be implemented within a certain timeframe; the government unit or body responsible for its implementation; and the implementation timeframe and indicative budget.

- *Annual Implementation Plan*, which is similar to the Implementation Matrix but focuses on the prevailing year's activities and their corresponding financial requirements, i.e., budgets and external assistance, should the latter becomes necessary.
- *Sector and Thematic Plans* are prepared using the NSDS as framework and the Medium Term Development Plan as guides. Their preparation is coordinated by sector ministries/agencies in close cooperation and active participation of other stakeholder groups.
- *Local Development Plans*, the localized versions of the NSDS and MTDP. The multistakeholder local SD councils (local version of NCSD), in partnership with the local government units (LGUs) undertake local planning with community participation.

Ecotopia produced all these plans using a participatory and integrated approach that has the following features:

- *Top-down, bottom-up interactive process*. Planning in Ecotopia is a virtuous circle. It starts with a general planning guidance from the national government through a set of guidelines that provides the parameters for the planning content and process. The content parameters (e.g., national priorities and key targets) take into account the national situation, resource endowments and capacity (including financial and human), national macroeconomic variables and national priorities, all of which are largely determined from results of M&E of previous plan implementation, local data and information, prospects and projections at both national and international levels over the period of the plan, international commitments, etc. Actual plan formulation starts from the bottom, i.e., from the subnational and sector levels using the planning guidelines. These plans, along with national and international considerations, become the foundation for the formulation of the national plan.
- *Coordinated planning and consistent plans*. The guidelines also include harmonization and consistency check among the plans. An interactive process ensures that there is consistency among the plans but does not necessarily ensure that the plans have internal consistency. Ecotopia has thus undertaken harmonization and consistency checking through inter-sectoral participation and coordination. These are achieved in two ways: creation of inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder planning committees that prepare specific parts of the plans; and having the national and local SD councils, through the national and local government planning bodies, take an over-all review of the plan.
- *Financed plans*. Ecotopia ensures that the plans are financed through the formulation of a rolling three-year financing program that is based on the MTDP and consistent with the Annual Implementation Plans. The financing program indicates specific activities and their financing levels. Financing in this regard refers to the firm budget and external assistance for the first year and prospective budget and external assistance levels for the next two years.
- *Guided by planning tools*. Planning necessarily involves prioritization since resources and capacity are always limited. It is also faced with risks and uncertainties, which grow as the plan period becomes longer. To help manage these concerns, Ecotopia has been employing a number of appropriate tools that include, among others:

- Scenario building for the long-term NSDS
  - Forecasting and projection for the MTDP
  - Multi-criteria analysis, e.g., matrix approach to sectoral goal setting and resource allocation of resources
  - Cost-benefit analysis
  - Sensitivity analysis
  - Vulnerability and risk assessment tools
- *Communication for Development (C4D)*. Ecotopia's key success factor in its inclusive planning process and effective plan implementation is the buy-in of its citizens, which is largely made possible by its comprehensive C4D program. Among other things, the program ensures (a) that everybody concerned has working knowledge and appreciation of the bases for planning, including the results of assessments of the previous plan's outcomes and impacts; (b) the substantive content of the plan being formulated; and (c) the process it is undergoing, particularly how and why the priorities are set, which have implications on how the input and concerns of the citizens are handled/incorporated in the plan. For this purpose, Ecotopia has actively engaged the media and other C4D agents such as stakeholder groups and academia. Information and knowledge facilitate the active and substantive participation of Ecotopia's citizens in all the steps and aspects of planning, and ensured transparency, accountability and integrity in the process.

### 4.3 Co-Benefit Policies and Programs

Plan formulation and implementation in Ecotopia utilize a crosscutting portfolio approach to draw out co-benefits and ensure synergy among individual policies and programs. For instance, health outcomes (e.g., a healthy population) are based on food for all and self-reliance in food, and natural resources conservation and natural capital accounting are considered in national accounting. Other examples of these co-benefit types of policies and programs that Ecotopia put in place include the following:

- Strong water resource management by protecting recharge areas (e.g., use rain and surface waters more than groundwater, minimize impervious pavement of lands); water recycling, ensuring consistent water quality standards, etc.
- Organic certification and farmer information on unsustainable agriculture.
- Food labeling.
- Strict enforcement of rules governing solid waste and wastewater discharge.
- Strengthening the value chains, e.g., through farm-to-market roads, financing, market access, to increase incomes and productivity of marginalized groups such as farmers and fisher folks.
- Move from exploitation to conservation of natural resources.
- Promote green technology to improve efficiency and optimize use of natural resources.
- Maximize use of renewable energy through, among others, tax incentives.
- Fuel subsidy but only for the poor and must be time bound.
- Employ consumption-based taxation.
- Use of assessment and prioritization tools such as carrying capacity assessment, GIS, SEA, CBA and natural resources accounting.

- Remediation of mining damage.
- Education on SD at all levels and strengthen industry-academia linkages.
- Mainstream disasters risk and management development planning.
- Land-use policy and zoning ordinance.

#### 4.4 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (M&E)

M&E closes the planning loop. It provides feedback on level, quality (outcomes and impacts) and timeliness of planning implementation to determine, among others, if mid-term corrections or redirection would be needed and to inform the next planning cycle. Cognizant of the importance of M&E, Ecotopia established an M&E System that has the following features:

- Composed of a small number of carefully selected outcome indicators that can inform about co-benefits and impacts of policies and programs.
- Use of real-time and accurate set of data that Ecotopia government generates with help from citizens and also makes available and accessible to public
- Undertaken annually by concerned agencies in cooperation with stakeholders and regularly (every two to three years) by an independent organization.
- Regularly and immediately report the results of M&E to the NCSD, policy-makers, and general public through various forms of media, e.g. forums, Internet, radio and television.
- Has flexibility to change indicators if necessary.

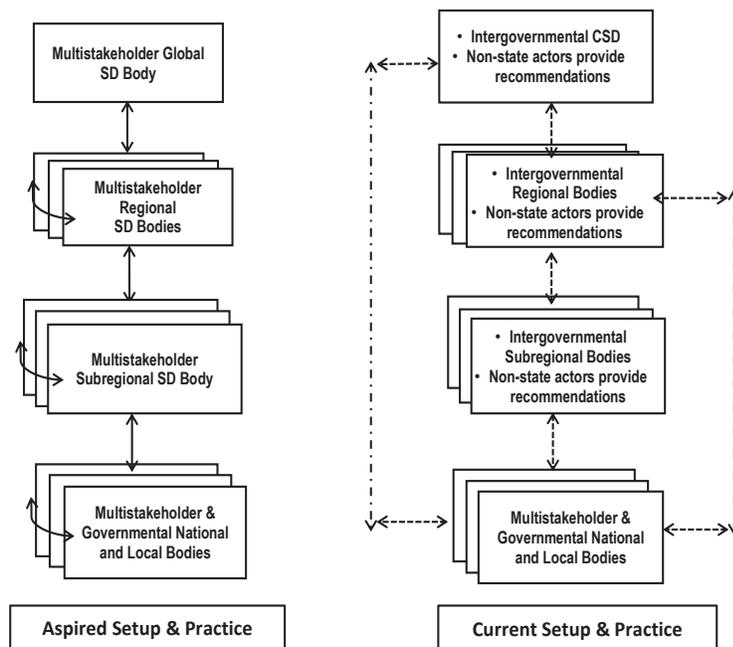
## 5.0 A Capacity-Building Agenda for 2014–2015

Ecotopia has set the bar for Asia-Pacific. Getting to that level would require several sets of interventions, not the least of which is capacity building. This section will analyze the areas needing strengthening from which a capacity building agenda for 2014–2015 will be drawn.

### 5.1 Finding the gaps

The “Current Set-Up” (Figure 4) schematically describes the existing institutional practices and arrangements in Asia-Pacific, which are characterized by:

- Weak vertical coordination and communication (broken lines from top to bottom and bottom to top).
- Inadequate horizontal integration (bodies at each level have minimal or nonexistent connections).
- Low stakeholder participation (mechanisms are generally intergovernmental and stakeholders submit recommendations).
- Low regard for subsidiarity (e.g., direct but intermittent lines between higher-level (global or regional) and lower-level (national or subregional) bodies).



**FIGURE 4. COMPARATIVE DIAGRAM OF CURRENT AND IDEAL INSTITUTIONAL SETUP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM LOCAL LEVEL TO GLOBAL LEVEL**

Source: Antonio (2014).

On the other hand, the setup aspired to by the participants as exemplified by Ecotopia is described as follows:

- Strong vertical and horizontal linkages and integration (solid connections).
- Strong coordination, integration and synergy (solid connections among bodies).
- Meaningful participation and contributions of stakeholders being co-equal members of the NCSD.
- Optimized use of existing institutions and bodies because there are no extraneous processes and institutions.

The same figure could illustrate the ideal and current setups in planning at any level by merely changing “bodies” to “planning process.”

The gaps, therefore, lie in the degree to which the current practices differ from the setup aspired for in the region. The capacity interventions must thus address the weaknesses of the current set-up to make it move closer to the Ecotopia setup.

## 5.2 Closing the Gaps Through Capacity Building

Representatives of the 11 Asia-Pacific countries that participated in the Sustainable Development Transition Forum identified a number of capacity-building areas and indicated their top three individual priorities as shown in Table 6. Judging from the number of countries that identified a skill area as priority (those that garnered four to seven votes and highlighted in green), regardless of priority level, the areas needing immediate capacity building were found to be in the following areas:

1. Planning based on eco-regions
2. Long-term planning (include resilience and scenarios)
3. Sector analysis and inter-sectoral linking (integration)
4. Connecting strategies and budget
5. Building capacities for developing subnational plans
6. Local government capacity to implement policies
7. Interactive top-bottom/bottom-top process tools
8. Data quality and statistical validity
9. Capacity to collect and use relevant data
10. Improving transparency and accountability

This list informs that perceived weaknesses are generally in the following:

- Formulating a long-term and integrated sustainable development plan or NSDS, which implies that participants see the need to improve existing strategies.
- Harmonizing/integrating and maximizing co-benefits from sector strategies, policies and programs, which is consistent with the finding that horizontal integration remains weak.
- Vertical integration and coordination, indicating weaknesses in these areas.
- Planning and implementation capabilities at the subnational levels, which also indicates the inadequacy of vertical integration.
- Connecting strategies with budgeting or financing the plan.
- All aspects of M&E especially data collection, analysis/interpretation and results reporting to promote transparency and accountability.

**TABLE 6. PRIORITY CAPACITY-BUILDING AREAS OF 11 ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT**

MULTISTAKEHOLDER PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS	BANG- LADESH	BHUTAN	CAM- BODIA	INDIA	INDO- NESIA	MYAN- MAR	MON- GOLIA	NEPAL	PHILIP- PINES	THAI- LAND	VIET-NAM	NO. OF VOTES
Planning based on eco-regions			1				3		2	1		4
Improving transparency and accountability		3	2		1			3	3	2	3	6
Having a complete and reliable information database				1	2					3		3
Training on multi-stakeholder participation			4		3		2					3
Region based M&E								2				1
Tools for developing long-term planning					4		1					2
Having an overarching planning institution			3									1
Long-term planning (include resilience and scenarios)		1		2					1		1	4
Institutional capacity in terms of human resources								1				1
Building capacities for developing subnational plans		2				3		4			2	4
Strengthening national & subnational coordination				3								1
Building capacities for developing sector plans		2						4			2	3
Understanding inst. Arrangements for implementation						2						1
Finalizing draft NSDS						1						
INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	BANG- LADESH	BHUTAN	CAM- BODIA	INDIA	INDO- NESIA	MYAN- MAR	MON- GOLIA	NEPAL	PHILIP- PINES	THAI- LAND	VIET-NAM	NO. OF VOTES
Better clarity of goals and understanding			1								1	2
Setting of specific and achievable objectives		3						1		1		3
Allow for planning at different levels										2		1
Prioritization of subnational & regional aspirations/goals				1								1
Strategic Environmental Assessment				2								1
Prepare plans at all levels	1											1
Developing the capacity and tools for interactive linking			3									1
High level plans should reflect lower level reality			2					2				2
Commune land use planning to cover the whole country			4									1
Having clear planning guidelines		1									2	2
Sectoral analysis and inter-sectoral linkages		2					4	3			3	4

Interactive top-bottom/bottom-top process tools		2					1		1		4	4
Adapt Bhutan's policy screening system							3					1
tools and examples of trade-off assessments						4	2			3		3
<b>POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR CO-BENEFITS</b>	<b>BANG-LADESH</b>	<b>BHUTAN</b>	<b>CAM-BODIA</b>	<b>INDIA</b>	<b>INDO-NESIA</b>	<b>MYAN-MAR</b>	<b>MON-GOLIA</b>	<b>NEPAL</b>	<b>PHILIP-PINES</b>	<b>THAI-LAND</b>	<b>VIET-NAM</b>	<b>NO. OF VOTES</b>
Sensitivity analysis				1								1
Political pressure for unviable policies		3								3		2
Connecting strategies and budget	2							2	2	1		4
Local govt. capacity to implement policies	1		1				1	1		2	1	7
Screening of SD dimensions of policies				2					1			2
Cross sectoral implication analysis				3								1
Capacity to collect and use relevant data		1	2					3			2	4
Look for capacity to implement policies		2						4			3	3
Modeling of economic and other policy impacts		2							3			
<b>MONITORING, REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	<b>BANG-LADESH</b>	<b>BHUTAN</b>	<b>CAM-BODIA</b>	<b>INDIA</b>	<b>INDO-NESIA</b>	<b>MYAN-MAR</b>	<b>MON-GOLIA</b>	<b>NEPAL</b>	<b>PHILIP-PINES</b>	<b>THAI-LAND</b>	<b>VIET-NAM</b>	<b>NO. OF VOTES</b>
Data quality and statistical validity			2				1		2	1		4
Monitoring of policy impact	1	3	1				2	1	3	2		7
Regional harmonization of data information			3							3		2
Local government capacity to implement policies												0
Creating feedback links from M&E to policy making				2								1
Single window for data needed			4								1	2
Harmonization of targets between different sectors								3				1
Independent agencies to conduct evaluations			5									1
Contextualizing local conditions and knowledge		1									2	2
Availability of functional data and capacity to use		2					3	2				3
Human resource and institutional development	2	2										2
Disaggregated data especially at local levels				1					1			1

Legend: 1 - top priority; 2 - second priority; 3 - third priority. Grey highlight: Collective priorities of 11 countries (four to seven votes)

Having identified the weaknesses and gaps, the Asia-Pacific Capacity Building Agenda (CBA) for 2014-2016 to prepare for and implement

the SDGs and post-2015 Development Agenda is presented and discussed hereunder. The CBA took into account the workshop participants' desired future as showcased by Ecotopia, the identified capacity building areas identified by workshop participants (Table 6), and the results of additional assessments undertaken by the authors. The CBA is classified according to the four focus areas of this paper. However, since these four areas are inter-related, the capacity-building requirements under each area may also appear in another area. For the same reason, the sub-agenda under each focus area are mutually inclusive and complementary.

The CBA is further classified according to the kind of capacity building needed, i.e., either skills development or institutional strengthening. In general, skills development, which is focused on individuals, could readily be carried out through training programs that engage experts as trainers. On the other hand, institutional strengthening is collective or focused on the organization along with the group of people constituting it as well as on other organizations and groups of people that constitute a system. It is often more complicated and requires the strong cooperation and commitment among stakeholders, particularly government, which is at the center of the development process. It will require a longer period to undertake and much more technical and financial inputs. Hence, while the CBA may be initiated quickly, its outcomes may take some time to realize.

### 5.3 Multistakeholder Processes and Institutions

Curiously, multistakeholder processes and institutions do not appear in the list of the most voted capacity-building areas. Possible reasons are (a) countries perceive these to be already adequate in their contexts; (b) these are inherent in other identified capacity building areas so they need not be mentioned or specified; and (c) these are not top priority for countries represented. Whatever the reasons are, the importance of multi-stakeholder processes and institutions has long been established and these are seen as critical in planning and post-2015 Agenda implementation. Many studies, including this assessment, have also established that many countries remain weak in these areas. Thus, multistakeholder processes and institutions must be given priority attention and integrated in all capacity-building activities.

Managing multistakeholder processes is an area needing capacity-building attention (Table 7). While there is growing adoption of multistakeholder participation, many countries find the need for training in running the process more effectively. To ensure wider and genuine participation (as opposed to consultation), stakeholders need to be equipped with knowledge on the substance of the plan (e.g., sector issues) and ability to participate in planning such as in the use of appropriate media (e.g., radio, town hall meetings) and language (e.g., use of the vernacular or youth lingo). The community-driven development approach ensures participation by the members of the community in development processes, i.e., from planning to M&E. Adopting it to local programs and projects maximizes participation and builds capacity hands-on.

Government has traditionally led planning exercises and merely consults with other stakeholder groups. Planning is just one of its many tasks and one that does not usually get priority attention since it is abstract and hence not readily appreciated, unlike infrastructure projects. Government also does not have the monopoly on knowledge and perspective and has limited resources to handle a genuine participatory process. For these and many other reasons, a multistakeholder coordinating mechanism at all levels has been recognized as necessary and useful.

**TABLE 7. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STRENGTHENING MULTISTAKEHOLDER PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS**

<b>PROCESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS</b>
1. Participation tools (e.g., Technology of Participation) and methods (e.g., town hall meetings, FGD)
<b>CONTENT ENHANCEMENT SKILLS</b>
2. Strengthening engagement capacities of stakeholders
3. Adopting community-driven development
<b>INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING</b>
4. Strengthening multistakeholder institutional mechanisms at all levels.
5. Enhancing the attractiveness of establishing "NCSDs" by showcasing successful cases
6. Strengthening the usefulness and value of NCSDs
7. Strengthening coordination among national & subnational institutions

As earlier discussed, the countries with working multistakeholder mechanisms or NCSDs are a minority in the Asia-Pacific region. This needs to change if sustainable development is to proceed faster. Countries without NCSDs must be encouraged to set one up by providing them the opportunity to learn about and from successful NCSDs, and thus appreciate its usefulness. Meanwhile, existing NCSDs, particularly those that have remained weak, must be strengthened so that these may become more potent tools for attaining sustainable development and becoming showcases for those without NCSDs. Furthermore, NCSDs have almost always been the recipient of political fallout or have been abolished with leadership changes when financial cuts become necessary. Improving their usefulness and value to any political administration and the people at large could help them become more stable. An effective way of making them valuable is to strengthen the technical and administrative capabilities of their secretariats because an NCSD is only as good as its secretariat.

## 5.4 Integrated Development Planning

Development planning is already a complex task in itself. Planning for sustainable development is even more complex since the period covered is longer; has far greater uncertainty and risk; the process needs to be participatory; and the development dimensions of the plan need to be integrated and harmonized. It is not surprising, therefore, that the list of capacity building areas for this category (Table 8) is the longest and covers the whole plan formulation process.

In terms of process, there were questions on how planning may be initiated, particularly on how to prepare appropriate planning guidelines. Along with this, there were questions about the way to undertake integrated top-down, bottom-up planning and what this entails. Meanwhile, there was a felt need for capacity building for long-term strategic planning considering that the long-term future is not easy to predict and full of risks and uncertainties. In the face of climate change, the impacts over the long-term are factors that must be considered in planning. For this purpose, scenario building/planning was identified as a specific area of training needs.

Further into the plan formulation process, governments gather inputs from sectors, stakeholders and other government instrumentalities. Consolidating these inputs into a coherent whole is seen as an area for skills upgrading. Often, these inputs contain strategy, policy and program proposals, which need to be prioritized because of their sheer number and costs requirements. For this, prioritization tools need to be explored and explained.

Many countries complain of too many plans (e.g., NSDS, MTDP, Land-Use Plans, etc. in addition to sector and local plans) some of which may be redundant such as the overlapping MTDPs and Country Assistance Strategies

of development institutions. In many cases, however, many of these are necessary as they serve different purposes. The important points to consider are that the functions of each plan are clearly understood, their contents are not redundant, and each one is consistent with or supportive of the rest. The process of appreciating the roles of each plan, delineating the different plans and weeding out redundant plans is viewed as needing skills upgrading.

**TABLE 8. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ENHANCING INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

<b>PROCESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS</b>
1. Initiating and managing planning
2. Promoting interactive top-down/bottom-up process and coordination
3. Long-term strategic planning methods/tools
4. Art and technology of consolidation, prioritization and allocation
<b>CONTENT ENHANCEMENT SKILLS</b>
5. Understanding and delineating or integrating different plans
6. Planning based on eco-regions (ecosystem)
7. Setting the Vision, Mission, Goals/Objectives
8. Harmonization of targets between different sectors
9. Sector analysis and inter-sectoral integration
10. Contextualizing local conditions and knowledge
11. Community-Driven Development
12. Connecting strategies and budget
<b>INSTITUTIONAL SKILLS/CAPACITY BUILDUP</b>
13. Data quality and timeliness, statistical validity
14. Inter-sectoral and multistakeholder planning structure
15. Building capacities for developing subnational plans

Planning in many countries is based on administrative/political subdivision, which is primarily based on political considerations. There has been recent realization that to achieve sustainable development, planning must be based on ecosystems or natural resource endowments of a specific area, regardless of political subdivision. The country representatives indicated interest in being trained in this area.

There were suggestions to include in the capacity building list the setting of clear and achievable plan goals and objectives; iterative prioritization of subnational and national priorities; and harmonization of targets of different sectors covered by planning. In sustainable development, integration is a key task; hence, sector analysis and inter-sectoral integration are priority concerns. Localization of plans and financing plan implementation are also considered important. There is strong interest in learning the Community-Driven Development approach, which features participatory planning that is linked to budgets.

The institutional capacity-building requirements in planning includes ensuring statistical quality, timeliness and validity; establishing an appropriate planning structure that ensures the participation of sector representatives and stakeholder groups; and equipping governments, especially those at the local level, with additional planning skills.

## 5.5 Policy-Making and Programming for Co-Benefits

Harnessing co-benefits requires good skills in integration, harmonization and prioritization of policies and programs. This is relatively easy when sector policies and programs are complementary and do not adversely affect certain, usually powerful, segments of society. Often, however, there are conflicts among policies, and trade-offs become necessary. It is in these cases when tools for making the case for a decision on priorities or conflicts become very useful. In this regard, Asia-Pacific countries would like to know what these tools are and how these may be used. Among the tools identified are Strategic Environmental Assessment, Natural Resource Accounting, and Cost-Benefit Analysis (Table 9).

**TABLE 9. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY-MAKING AND PROGRAMMING FOR CO-BENEFITS**

<b>PROCESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS</b>
1. Screening and prioritization tools
2. Tools/Approaches for avoiding/settling policy/program conflicts
<b>CONTENT ENHANCEMENT SKILLS</b>
3. Integration tools and approaches
4. Enhancing co-benefits of SD policies
<b>INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY UPGRADING</b>
5. Capacity to collect and use relevant data
6. Local government capacity to implement policies

Integration of the various dimensions of sustainable development in policies and programs remain a key challenge to many countries. Again, training on use of tools that will facilitate integration and enhance co-benefits such as multi-criteria analysis with sensitivity analysis and policy action-impact matrix would be useful and actually desired.

The upgrading of capacity to expediently collect and use relevant data came out strongly from represented countries. Timeliness and accuracy of data are indeed very important for all the processes. However, determining which data are relevant and useful for issues at hand is also an observed weakness. Similarly, capacity building for local governments was a popular suggestion. For this section, this capacity building is focused on the formulation, prioritization and implementation of policies.

## 5.6 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

M&E is an area needing stronger capacity-building attention, next to plan formulation. The preparation and implementation of a good plan are largely dependent on a systematic M&E that provides an accurate picture of the situation. Unfortunately, many countries are hampered by inadequate capability to generate, appropriately process and analyze data so that the results could sufficiently inform planning and policy-making and generate enough energy to move people to action. Meanwhile, a useful M&E system requires a set of indicators that can be easily managed, and could readily provide the pieces of data and information that could make the picture whole. The selection of appropriate indicators for measuring progress and impacts of a complex system called sustainable development and the generation of accurate data for said indicators have been the weakest points in most M&E systems in the region. These must be given priority (Table 10).

The government has traditionally assumed the M&E function. Notwithstanding this, many government agencies in

many countries do not have dedicated M&E units. They employ various forms of M&E institutional arrangements (e.g., inter-unit groups) but they often struggle with coordination and other issues. The strengthening of M&E institutional arrangements would thus be very useful both in enhancing M&E effectiveness and in promoting transparency and accountability through accurate and timely reporting.

**TABLE 10. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MAXIMIZING BENEFITS FROM MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING**

<b>PROCESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS</b>
1. Monitoring progress and performance
2. Strengthening the feedback loop to enhance policy-making
3. Spurring needed action on results of M&E
<b>CONTENT ENHANCEMENT SKILLS</b>
4. Indicators development and selection
5. Data quality and statistical validity
6. Undertaking evaluation or analyzing monitoring data and assessing outcomes and impacts
<b>INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING</b>
7. M&E institutional arrangements
8. Improving transparency and accountability

## 5.7 Next Steps

In the remaining months of 2014 up until 2015, the following steps may be undertaken by SDPlanNet Asia-Pacific in order to help prepare the region for the implementation of post-2015 Agenda and localization of the SDGs:

1. In the next couple of months, the CBA may be refined and should there be an opportunity (e.g., High Level Panel's Forum on SD for Asia-Pacific on May 19–21, 2014), further consult other countries.
2. Scan likely providers of training programs related to those identified as skills upgrading areas in the CBA. Refer countries to these programs or check possibilities of partnerships with these providers to minimize resources requirements.
3. Mobilize resources for the CBA using the Program as basis for costing.
4. Prepare a Capacity-Building Program that will provide specifics on the capacity-building areas identified in the CBA, turning these into specific training module/s or institutional upgrading program/s. It may identify the modalities or approaches to be used and estimate the costs.
5. Implement the Capacity Building Program.

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## Annex 1: Table Comparing National Level Consultations with Highlights at International (Global) Level

COUNTRY COMMENTS	ISSUES AND THEMES HIGHLIGHTED AT NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS <a href="http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sitemap">HTTP://WWW.WORLWDEWANT2015.ORG/SITEMAP</a>	ISSUES AND THEMES HIGHLIGHTED AT OWG - (EITHER AS COUNTRY (FIRST PRIORITY), OR AS TROIKA (SECOND PRIORITY) <a href="http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1573&amp;start=0">HTTP://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/INDEX.PHP?MENU=1573&amp;START=0</a>
<b>Bangladesh</b>  In troika with Republic of Korea and Saudi Arabia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure economic growth that is inclusive, reduces poverty and inequality, creates sufficient numbers of decent jobs and is environmentally sustainable;</li> <li>• Ensure sustainable food security and good nutrition;</li> <li>• Reduce social inequality, particularly among marginalized groups and improve living conditions;</li> <li>• Achieve equality between women and men;</li> <li>• Ensure health for all;</li> <li>• Provide high quality basic education;</li> <li>• Reduce social risks and vulnerabilities;</li> <li>• Ensure inclusive environment and natural resources management that promotes sustainable eco-systems, development and green growth, livelihoods and health;</li> <li>• Reduce risk and build resilience to disasters and climate change with a focus on adaptation;</li> <li>• Improve diversity of, and access to, clean and more efficient sources of energy;</li> <li>• Improve accountability of public institutions for equitable public service provision for all communities;</li> <li>• Ensure equal participation and effective representation of marginalized groups, thereby strengthening inclusive democratic governance;</li> <li>• Strengthen rule of law, access to justice and promotion and protection of human rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty as overarching goal</li> <li>• Education, employment, economic growth;</li> <li>• Equality and social equity as part of empowerment of people;</li> <li>• Stand-alone goal on gender equality;</li> <li>• Oceans, forest and biodiversity mainstreamed into other goal areas;</li> <li>• Climate change and disaster risk reduction;</li> <li>• Slums and cities;</li> <li>• SCP - developed countries take the lead;</li> <li>• Universal access to safe drinking water;</li> <li>• Integrated water resources management;</li> </ul> <p><u>Enablers and crosscutting issues to be embedded in goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule of law and good governance;</li> <li>• ODA, trade, debt relief</li> <li>• Transparency and accountability;</li> <li>• Peace and security overarching but too large to add into limited number of goals</li> </ul>
<b>Bhutan</b>  In troika with Thailand and Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity and Support for Vulnerable People</li> <li>• Equitable and Sustainable Development</li> <li>• Good Governance</li> <li>• Universal Responsibility</li> <li>• Holistic Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty as overarching goal;</li> <li>• CBDR;</li> <li>• SDGs should build upon MDGs;</li> </ul> <p>See troika statements in Thailand row (below)</p>
<b>Cambodia</b>  Not in OWG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Private sector</li> </ul>	
<b>China (G77)</b>  In troika with As OWG Indonesia and Kazakhstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Women</li> <li>• International development coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multidimensional character of poverty;</li> <li>• Atmosphere and climate change,</li> <li>• Forests, oceans and seas,</li> <li>• Water, biodiversity,</li> <li>• Sustainable cities and settlements, Sustainable consumption and production;</li> </ul>

COUNTRY COMMENTS	ISSUES AND THEMES HIGHLIGHTED AT NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS <a href="http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sitemap">HTTP://WWW.WORLDEWANT2015.ORG/SITEMAP</a>	ISSUES AND THEMES HIGHLIGHTED AT OWG - (EITHER AS COUNTRY (FIRST PRIORITY), OR AS TROIKA (SECOND PRIORITY) <a href="http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1573&amp;start=0">HTTP://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/INDEX.PHP?MENU=1573&amp;START=0</a>
<b>India</b>  In troika with Pakistan and Sri Lanka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger should be given the highest priority;</li> <li>A new global goal that links growth and decent work;</li> <li>Eliminate gender inequality through targets on women's social, economic and political empowerment;</li> <li>Guaranteeing universal access to quality healthcare and basic education;</li> <li>A new goal guaranteeing sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation;</li> <li>A new integrated goal linking sustainable water use and food security;</li> <li>A new goal on universal access to sustainable energy;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity and fairness;</li> <li>SCP at the heart of SDGs;</li> <li>Climate change important but not mandate for negotiation by OWG;</li> <li>Importance of economic growth (India)</li> <li>Economic growth;</li> <li>Access to energy;</li> <li>Poverty as overriding goal to be addressed through inclusive growth, employment;</li> </ul> Principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inter-and intra-generational equity (India)</li> <li>CBDR</li> </ul>
<b>Indonesia</b>  In troika with China and Kazakhstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green Economy;</li> <li>SCP;</li> <li>Sustainable cities, human settlements, transportation;</li> <li>Forests, Biodiversity, land degradation;</li> <li>Water, human health and pollution;</li> <li>Health;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity and CBDR;</li> <li>Poverty eradication</li> <li>Desertification, land degradation and drought</li> <li>Food and agriculture</li> <li>Water and sanitation;</li> <li>Inequality and social inequity;</li> <li>Food security;</li> <li>Land degradation;</li> </ul>
<b>Islamic Republic of Iran</b>  In troika with Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan and Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bottom-up participation;</li> <li>Better evidence base: for country level work;</li> <li>Need for local and</li> <li>Regional indicators:</li> <li>Address basic minimum needs:</li> <li>Importance of justice, equity</li> <li>And rule of law:</li> <li>Importance of the family;</li> <li>Responsive governance,</li> <li>Human dignity and human rights:</li> <li>Empowerment of women, children, youth:</li> <li>Role of education:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate change and disaster concerns as integrated into other goals, but supportive;</li> <li>Need to highlight core targets such as infrastructure and other access issues related to urbanization that are not covered by other SDGs; - no separate goal on urban issues but relevant targets;</li> <li>Means of implementation;</li> <li>Poverty reduction (employment; decent work);</li> <li>Social protection;</li> <li>Culture as crosscutting element;</li> <li>Universal access to education;</li> <li>Population dynamics;</li> <li>Global agenda but national level differentiation;</li> </ul>
<b>Pakistan</b>  In troika with India and Sri Lanka)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peace, Justice and Human Security;</li> <li>Governance;</li> <li>Energy, Environment and Disaster Mitigation;</li> <li>Inclusive Economic Development;</li> <li>Inclusive Social Development;</li> <li>Population Dynamics and Capturing the Demographic Dividend.</li> <li>Gender Equality</li> <li>Marginalized Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desertification, land degradation and drought;</li> <li>Employment;</li> <li>Disaster resilience</li> <li>Food and agriculture;</li> <li>Poverty alleviation remains the overarching challenge, addressed through rural development (Sri Lanka);</li> <li>Economic growth</li> <li>Industrialization</li> <li>Infrastructure</li> <li>Fair trade</li> <li>Employment</li> <li>Food security - addressing malnutrition;</li> <li>Addressing food waste;</li> </ul>

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<b>PNG</b>  In troika with Nauru Palau. Also represented in PSIDS and Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth and employment</li> <li>• Peace and safety</li> <li>• Civil engagement</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Public administration</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Food security and nutrition</li> <li>• Inequalities</li> <li>• Energy</li> <li>• Environment and sustainability</li> <li>• Population dynamics</li> <li>• Conflict and fragility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oceans and Seas</li> <li>• Acidification</li> <li>• Biodiversity;</li> <li>• Climate change as cross-cutting issue;</li> <li>• International partnership and cooperation;</li> <li>• Marine resources;</li> <li>• Fisheries to be addressed as part of food security;</li> <li>• Adequate means of implementation (through international support);</li> <li>• Access to energy (energy security);</li> <li>• Governance and institutions;</li> <li>• Separate goal on health incorporating crosscutting issues (climate, environment, marginalized people etc.);</li> <li>• SDGs must address the root causes of water insecurity and poor sanitation</li> </ul>
<b>Philippines</b>  Not in OWG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty reduction and social inclusion;</li> <li>• Environmental sustainability, climate change and disaster risk management;</li> <li>• Accountable, responsive and participatory governance</li> <li>• Fair and stable order based on international rule of law</li> <li>• Peace and security</li> </ul>	(Not in OWG)
<b>Samoa</b>  Not in OWG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1. Building resilience;</li> <li>• 2. Growing inequality</li> <li>• 3. Economic insecurity and heightened vulnerabilities;</li> <li>• Mainstreamed disaster risk reduction and climate change</li> </ul> <p><u>These emerging issues are dealt with by following enablers:</u></p> <p>A. Coordinated investment in inclusive development.;</p> <p>B. Coordinated economic management;</p> <p>C. Sustainable resource management;</p>	(Not in OWG)  Main development objectives are seen in the light of how they contribute to resilience
<b>Solomon Islands</b>  Not in OWG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Employment;</li> <li>• Health, Water Supply and Sanitation;</li> <li>• Sustainability of Livelihood and Access to Basic Infrastructure and Services;</li> <li>• Good Governance and Leadership at all levels;</li> <li>• Environment Protection and Resource Management;</li> <li>• Law and Order and Peaceful Country,</li> <li>• Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management,</li> </ul> <p>A. <u>Gender Equality, People with Disabilities and Youth as important crosscutting issues to the above themes.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oceans and Seas</li> <li>• Acidification</li> <li>• Biodiversity;</li> <li>• Climate change as cross-cutting issue;</li> <li>• International partnership and cooperation;</li> <li>• Marine resources;</li> <li>• Fisheries to be addressed as part of food security;</li> <li>• Adequate means of implementation (through international support);</li> <li>• Access to energy (energy security);</li> <li>• Governance and institutions;</li> <li>• Separate goal on health incorporating crosscutting issues (climate, environment, marginalized people etc.);</li> <li>• SDGs must address the root causes of water insecurity and poor sanitation</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Thailand</b></p> <p>In troika with Bhutan and Vietnam</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>People should be placed at the centre –</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Human development;</li> <li>o Human rights and human security concerns;</li> <li>o Efforts to end discrimination in access to social services and welfare;</li> <li>o Guarantee a minimum social protection for all;</li> <li>o Promote caring society;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Targeting ‘Social Equality’ –</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Basic welfare and quality services should be available to all;</li> <li>o Provide equal opportunities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Promote bottom-up policy-making</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Participation of targeted beneficiaries in development policy-making process</li> <li>o Global and national development agendas need to be contextualized through local engagement</li> <li>o Nurturing local associations and setting up open ‘policy platforms’.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Focus on ‘Sustainable Development’ which builds on local knowledge and ensures a balanced society-nature approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Taking into account all dimensions of society, including gender, private/public sector, civil society, and community/individual rights.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oceans and Seas</li> <li>• Acidification</li> <li>• Biodiversity;</li> <li>• Climate change as cross-cutting issue;</li> <li>• International partnership and cooperation;</li> <li>• Marine resources;</li> <li>• Fisheries to be addressed as part of food security;</li> <li>• Adequate means of implementation (through international support);</li> <li>• Access to energy (energy security);</li> <li>• Governance and institutions;</li> <li>• Separate goal on health incorporating crosscutting issues (climate, environment, marginalized people etc.);</li> <li>• SDGs must address the root causes of water insecurity and poor sanitation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Timor L’este</b></p> <p>In troika with Bhutan and Thailand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality, including gender equality;</li> <li>• Vulnerability and social inclusion:</li> <li>• Governance and participation:</li> <li>• A demographic shift:</li> <li>• Universal access to quality and affordable health care:</li> <li>• Quality employment and a new growth model:</li> <li>• Education and vocational training:</li> <li>• A cleaner environment:</li> </ul>	<p>See row on Thailand (above);</p>

## Annex 2: Jakarta Statement (result of mock negotiation exercise held at a workshop in Jakarta in September 2013)

### Jakarta Statement on the ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

We, the representatives of ASEAN Member States, participating in the Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 2 to 4 September 2013;

Recalling the resolve of the ASEAN Member States as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Roadmap for the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by ASEAN Leaders at the 19th ASEAN Summit in November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia, and other relevant ASEAN documents, to “ensure sustainable development for the benefit of the present and future generations to place the wellbeing, livelihood and welfare of the peoples at the center of ASEAN community building process”;

Recalling the outcome document of the General Assembly on the MDGs in 2010, entitled “Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the MDGs”, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, with the outcome document entitled “The Future We Want”;

Reiterating the importance of peace and security as the fundamental condition to attain sustainable development in the region;

Recognizing the need to strengthen cooperation among ASEAN Member States, we are committed to pursue the following ASEAN Sustainable Development Goals:

1. *Reaffirm our commitments to reduce poverty in the region as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.*
2. *Emphasize the need to secure sustained access to nutritious food through increased in productivity of food production as well as limit the negative impacts of food production.*
3. *Reaffirm the importance of universal access to quality education.*
4. *Recognize the importance of access to health care and health services for all.*
5. *Advance environmental sustainability, improve disaster risk reduction management, as well as minimize the impacts of climate change.*
6. *Recognize the need to ensure sustained supply of energy through, inter alia, the promotion of the use of renewable energy.*
7. *Endeavor to narrow the development gaps, both at the regional and the national level.*
8. *Enhance good governance through improved transparency and accountability, as well as increase efforts in strengthening capacity in monitoring and performance evaluation.*
9. *Establish an ASEAN sustainable development goals (SDGs) fund.*
10. *Extend our deep appreciation to the Government of the French Republic for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting.*

Recognize the value of the process of developing targets and indicators and commitments of countries.



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