



United Nations

From this continent, the cradle of humanity, we declare, through the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the present Declaration, our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life and to our children.

(Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, para. 6)



Sustainable



Development



WHO WE ARE

The **United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (DSD)** is a part of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, located in New York. The Division promotes sustainable development as the substantive secretariat to the **UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)** and through technical cooperation and capacity-building at the international, regional and national levels.

CSD is a high-level forum on sustainable development which reviews progress and monitors and reports on implementation of Agenda 21, the **Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA)** and the **Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI)** at the national, regional and international levels. The Commission meets annually, in New York, in a two-year cycle of review and policy.

1992 | The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Earth Summit) (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) establishes linkages among economic and social development and environmental protection and adopts **Agenda 21** and the Rio Principles. December 1992 — The UN General Assembly creates the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to ensure effective follow-up to UNCED.

1994 | The Global Conference on Sustainable Development of **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** (Bridgetown, Barbados) adopts the **BPOA**, which sets forth specific actions and measures for the sustainable development of SIDS.

1997 | The special session of the General Assembly **Earth Summit + 5** (New York) adopts the **Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21**, including a programme of work of CSD for 1998-2002.

2002 | The **World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)** (Johannesburg, South Africa) evaluates obstacles to progress and results achieved since the 1992 Earth Summit. WSSD adopts the **JPOI**, which provides for a more focused approach, with concrete steps and quantifiable and time-bound targets and goals.

2005 | At the 10-year review of the **Barbados Programme of Action** for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Port Luis, Mauritius), States adopt the **Mauritius Strategy** for the Further Implementation of the BPOA.



WHAT WE DO

As secretariat to CSD, the Division for Sustainable Development facilitates and manages the CSD process, including the CSD sessions, the meetings of the CSD Bureau and other intersessional activities, and it prepares the reports of the Secretary-General and background documents for the CSD sessions. In addition to the engagement of the Member States, key to the CSD process are the participation of the major groups, partnerships and the Learning Centre.

Agenda 21 recognizes that broad public participation in decision-making is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development, and identifies specific roles and responsibilities for nine **major groups** of civil society: women, children and youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities, and farmers. The Division supports the participation and contribution of the major groups to the CSD process and facilitates their interactive participation in official sessions of CSD.

Partnerships for sustainable development are voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiatives that contribute to implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development goals. More than 200 partnerships were launched during the WSSD process and the number continues to grow. Partnerships Fairs at CSD sessions offer a venue for showcasing progress in existing partnerships, launching new partnerships and networking among partners. Partnerships may be registered through the DSD website.

The **Learning Centre** provides training on a practical level on CSD issues. A variety of courses are offered during each CSD session by distinguished professors and practitioners.

The substantive work of the Division largely corresponds to the multi-year Programme of Work adopted by CSD at its 11th session in 2003. Based on two-year cycles of review and policy years, the current programme of work extends from 2004 to 2017, and is organized around clusters of issues.

- **2004-2005:** Water, sanitation and human settlements
- **2006-2007:** Energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change
- **2008-2009:** Agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa
- **2010-2011:** Transport, chemicals, waste management, mining and 10-year framework of programmes on consumption and production patterns
- **2012-2013:** Forests, biodiversity, biotechnology, tourism and mountains
- **2014-2015:** Oceans and seas, marine resources, small island developing States, and disaster management and vulnerability
- **2016-2017:** Overall appraisal of implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the JPOI



SELECTED KEY ISSUES

DSD has special responsibility for small island developing States, National Sustainable Development Strategies, indicators for sustainable development, water, energy, consumption and production patterns and such cross-cutting issues as resource mobilization and other means of implementing the Rio and Johannesburg commitments. It also serves as secretariat for the UN system-wide coordination mechanisms UN-Water and UN-Energy and plays an active role in UN-Oceans.

• SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)

SIDS are particularly vulnerable because of their small population and economies, weak institutional capacity in both the public and the private sectors, remoteness from international markets and susceptibility to natural disasters and climate change. In 1995, the UN created a special unit for SIDS within DSD to facilitate follow-up to the broad range of actions called for in the 1994 BPOA. To support the work of the SIDS Unit, DSD administers the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET), which connects 43 island nations of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans and the Caribbean, Mediterranean and South China Seas.

• NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Sustainable development requires looking at the totality of social, economic and environmental concerns. It also needs the involvement not only of Governments but also of civil society and the private sector. For these reasons, global conferences, including the 1992 Earth Summit and WSSD, have repeatedly called on Governments to develop and implement integrative and participatory National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS).

DSD supports States in developing and assessing their NSDS through technical guidance and capacity-building programmes, workshops, shared learning and strategy reviews.

• INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

States need to assess and evaluate their policies to ensure that their impacts are as intended. This requires the use of indicators that reflect countries' concerns and priorities as called for in Agenda 21. In 1992, at the time of the Earth Summit, indicators for sustainable development (ISD) had not yet been developed or tested.

DSD began its programme of ISD in 1994. In cooperation with other organizations, it has developed a core set of ISD for use at the national level, which it continues to review and revise. The Division also supports States in developing their own national ISD programmes through workshops and capacity-building projects. DSD contributes as well to the indicators that have been developed for the Millennium Development Goals. Guidelines and methodological descriptions are available on the DSD website.



• ENERGY

Energy use is necessary for socio-economic development; yet it is associated with adverse environmental impacts. This dilemma poses an ongoing challenge for countries around the world. States agreed at WSSD that action should be taken to improve access to reliable and affordable energy to facilitate the goal of halving the proportion of people living in poverty and as a means of generating other important services to mitigate poverty. States also decided to take action to improve energy efficiency, increase the use of renewable energy, utilize advanced and cleaner energy technologies, implement transport strategies for sustainable development, reduce harmful subsidies and market distortions, and promote the use of cleaner fuels.

DSD provides advisory services and technical assistance in the field of energy to build capacity, strengthen institutions, promote increased energy investments and encourage the involvement of all stakeholders in implementing Agenda 21 and the JPOI. Key focus areas are energy efficiency, renewable energy, transport, gender and energy, and energy access.



• WATER

Access to safe water is fundamental to life. This is emphasized in Agenda 21 and reiterated in the JPOI, which endorsed the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. The General Assembly gave special recognition to the importance of freshwater when, on 22 March 2005, it launched the International Decade of Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015.

DSD provides both technical assistance and policy advice to countries to assist them in meeting the 2015 targets on water and sanitation, and to promote and support integrated water resources management.

• PROMOTING MORE SUSTAINABLE PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION – THE MARRAKESH PROCESS

Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production is one of the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development, as recognized by WSSD. The Summit called for the development of a 10-year framework of programme in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production. The first international expert meeting on this framework was held in June 2003 in Marrakesh.

DSD is responsible for facilitating the Marrakesh Process, which includes regular global and regional meetings, informal expert task forces and round tables to promote progress on the 10-year framework. In the Division, particular focus is currently given to environmental management accounting, sustainable public procurement and clean technology strategies.

Far from being a burden, sustainable development is an exceptional opportunity — economically, to build markets and create jobs; socially, to bring people in from the margins; and politically, to give every man and woman a voice, and a choice, in deciding their own future. — UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan



• MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND OTHER CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The achievement of sustainable development objectives requires strong political will, sound policies, institutions and governance, and effective international cooperation. Open and equitable multilateral trading and financial systems are essential, including market access to products of interest to developing countries. The challenges facing Africa deserve particular attention, including the crucial link between health and sustainable development.

The Division undertakes analysis of the key cross-cutting issues enumerated in the JPOI, with particular attention to the challenges of resource mobilization, including through development of innovative financing arrangements and mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

The Division prepares substantive reports for CSD, publishes technical publications dealing with key issues of sustainable development, and produces newsletters on energy and on international rivers and lakes. DSD also publishes the *Natural Resources Forum*, a quarterly journal that explores innovative approaches to integrating and balancing social, economic and environmental priorities. The DSD website has extensive information on the activities of the Division and CSD. It also has searchable database for Partnerships and for Sustainable Consumption and Production, including an online registration and information system.

Contact information

General queries

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Sustainable Development

Tel. : 212-963-8102

Fax: 212-963-4260

E-mail: dsd@un.org

DSD website: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/>

SIDSNET website: <http://www.sidsnet.org>

Media queries

United Nations Department of Public Information
Strategic Communications Division

E-mail: mediainfo@un.org



United Nations