



ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Enhancing Arab regional institutions for sustainable development: enhancing integration and accelerating implementation

30 May 2013

Sustainable Development and Productivity Division
UNESCWA



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IFSD in “The Future We want”

The outcome document of Rio+20 Conference “The Future We want” underscores the importance of **a strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development at the national and regional levels** which:

- ❑ Integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner
- ❑ Responds to current and future challenges
- ❑ Bridges gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda

Regional frameworks can complement and facilitate effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at the national level

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Rio+20: enhancing global-regional-national inter-linkages

Global Governance	Regional Governance
● HLPF to be responsible for follow-up on the implementation of sustainable development ● OWG established in Jan 2013 with 30 representatives to work on thematic SDGs ● SDGs to replace MDGs	● Supported development of RSDS ● Identified the need for Long term political Commitment ● Emphasised more coherent & Integrated Planning

● **National Governance**

- Emphasised the need for NSDS
- Allowed for flexible institutional arrangements
- Highlighted importance of Local sustainable development strategies
- Emphasised coherent & Integrated Planning

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Rio+20: global-regional inter-linkages

- ❑ Arab Region to **take stock** of the emerging international framework for sustainable development and the opportunities and challenges it presents for the region
- ❑ Arab Region to **remain engaged** in international negotiations and processes that are shaping these key outcomes
 - ✓ CSD-20
 - ✓ HLPF
 - ✓ Open Working Group (OWG) for the development of the SDGs
 - ✓ Intergovernmental committee for developing the financing strategy

Challenge: the coordination of Arab regional input into these processes

- ✓ Options for strengthening coordination to ensure the perspective and position of the Arab region are adequately reflected

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Rio+20: regional-national inter-linkages

- ❑ Arab Region to **review its institutional arrangements and priorities** for sustainable development in the context of the Rio+20:
 - ✓ How regional institutions can best support Rio+20 follow-up and review progress in the context of the HLPF and SDGs
 - ✓ How the institutional arrangements in the Arab region at both the regional and national levels can best facilitate enhanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development
 - ✓ How can green economy best be used in the region to achieve sustainable development and what institutional arrangements might facilitate this.

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SD Implementation in the Arab Region – progress to date

□ The various Rio summits have resulted in a significant increase in the environmental commitment of most Arab countries including:

- ✓ The information exchange
- ✓ The ratification of multilateral and regional environmental agreements and enactment of numerous laws
- ✓ Establishment/restructuring of environmental institutions
- ✓ The formulation of environmental strategies and action plans
- ✓ The establishment of regional institutions and mechanisms for enhanced coordination and regulations in support of environmental policies

Challenge: a significant gap still remains in developing a fully integrated approach to environmental, social and economic policy-making and decision making

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SD Implementation in the Arab Region: Regional institutions and mechanisms

• **LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES:**

- CAMRE
- CEDARE
- AMCE
- AEF
- JCEDAR
- AWC

• **UN SYSTEM:**

- UNESCWA
- UNEP (UNEP/ROWA)
- UNDP (CO)
- RCM & WORKING GROUPS

• **JOINT LAS – UN INITIATIVES:**

- SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (SDIAR)
- TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT TO SUPPORT JCEDAR
- REGIONAL COORDINATION MEETINGS
- REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING IN SUPPORT TO RIO+20

• **NGOs:**

- AFED
- RAED

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SD Implementation in the Arab Region: Regional challenges

- ❑ Responsibilities for promoting and implementing sustainable development rest primarily with environmental institutions
 - ✓ **Challenges** with regard to integrated decision-making across the three dimensions
 - ✓ Environmental institutions **do not have the unilateral mandate** to address cross-sectoral issues such as poverty, trade, education and shared resources
- ❑ CAMRE and JCEDAR have sought to provide forums for discussion on sustainable development
 - ✓ **Challenge:** their limited membership and the focus of their mandates on environmental affairs have prevented them from becoming effective institutional mechanisms for deliberating and issuing regional policies on sustainable development
 - ✓ Difficulty in coordinating sustainable development policies across sectors and ministries at a national level
- ❑ The SDIAR has provided the main regional mechanism for implementing sustainable development programs
 - ✓ **Challenge:** no measurable goals, targets or indicators, no funding

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SD Implementation worldwide: Regional experiences

- ❑ **Europe**
 - ✓ **Regional institutions** for SD: responsibility for SD at the highest political level within the EU framework; UNECE coordinates meetings under CSD.
 - ✓ **Mechanisms:** regional SD Strategy; regional Development Strategy (Europe 2020); regional green economy roadmap (Resource Efficient Europe) – includes regional targets.
 - ✓ **Monitoring progress:** consistent regional framework of SD indicators; progress is reviewed every two years at highest political level
 - ✓ **Stakeholder participation:** regional advisory councils and networks to engage major groups.
- ❑ **Latin America and the Caribbean**
 - ✓ **Regional Institutions:** regional Forum of Ministers of the Environment of LAC; technical committee of UN agencies; UNECLAC coordinates meetings under CSD framework;
 - ✓ **Mechanisms:** regional SD Initiative, however now outdated
 - ✓ **Monitoring progress:** consistent list of reference indicators, however limited evaluation and monitoring.
- ❑ **Asia-Pacific**
 - ✓ **Regional Institutions:** Ministerial Conference on Environment & Development through ESCAP, ADB and UNEP
 - ✓ **Mechanisms:** focus shifted to green growth; regional Green Growth Roadmap

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Regional Institutions: Conclusions & lessons learned

- ❑ Responsibility for SD should be at the highest political level within regional institutions
- ❑ Regional environmental institutions have played leading role, but have limited influence
- ❑ UN Regional Commissions and other UN agencies (UNEP) and BWI have led coordination in all regions under the CSD framework – could better link with regional intergovernmental institutions
- ❑ Regional SD initiatives have had some success, but overall limited impact due to lack of follow-up.
- ❑ Regional roadmaps for green economy have been developed in some regions (Europe, Asia-Pacific)
- ❑ Consistent regional indicators for SD and regular monitoring of progress have been important success factor for regional strategies.

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SD Implementation in the Arab Region: National institutions and mechanisms

- ❑ In 2002, Arab countries agreed on the creation of some form of national council or institution for sustainable development in member countries
 - ✓Environmental laws have facilitated the creation of institutions responsible for coordinating, supervising and monitoring environmental management in Arab countries
- ❑Recommended establishment of National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSD) and the preparation of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) to strengthen the integration of all three dimensions of sustainable development into government policy-making
 - ✓Only 7 out of 17 countries in the Arab region reported to the CSD that they were implementing a NSDS
 - ✓Several Arab countries have created some form of NCSD, but remained ad hoc in nature and most had either ceased to exist or had little influence (e.g. Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Yemen)

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SD Implementation in the Arab Region: National challenges

- ❑ National environmental agencies are generally responsible for sustainable development policy formulation and implementation
 - ✓ **Challenge:** more influential social and economic ministries less engaged and committed to sustainable development goals
 - ✓ Lack of unilateral mandate to address multi-sector approach to SD
 - ✓ Weak integration of the three dimensions of SD
- ❑ Where implemented NSDS often suffered from:
 - ✓ Inadequate cost benefit, trade offs and policy analysis,
 - ✓ Lack of selection criteria for prioritizing policies,
 - ✓ Limited engagement of stakeholders and poor coordination
 - ✓ Lack of resourcing and follow-up
 - ✓ Inadequate assignment of institutional responsibilities for implementation
 - ✓ Lack of synchronization of measures to be implemented by different institutions

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National Institutions: Conclusions & lessons learned

- ❑ Reviews and policy guidelines developed by UNDESA and OECD to enhance the design and implementation of NSDS
 - ✓ A key **challenge** is that most NSDS remained at the periphery of government decision making and failed to engage finance ministries and central planning agencies in the strategy development process
 - ✓ They failed to integrate the objectives of sustainable development with fiscal priority setting and national expenditure and revenue generation
- ❑ Review of ten recent Green Economy strategies
 - ✓ Need for political leadership at the most senior level (i.e. Prime Minister's office or equivalent)
 - ✓ Engagement of financial and economic planning ministries
 - ✓ Institutional arrangements for facilitating cross-sectoral coordination across the various line ministries

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Recommendations for the Arab Region: Regional institutions

□ Enhanced engagement in international processes (global-regional)

- ✓With the establishment of the HLPF, regional preparatory meetings should continue to be coordinated by ESCWA with its partners LAS and UNEP, building on past experiences and failures of CSD and regional implementation meetings
- ✓Regional meetings and processes should be linked closely to the regional institutional framework provided by LAS.

□ Enhanced regional implementation of sustainable development and integration (regional-national)

- ✓Elevate SD to the highest political level in LAS; expand mandate and membership of JCEDAR;
- ✓Establish a mechanism for enhanced coordination between various LAS councils and committees – e.g. establish a SD coordinating committee or working group; CAMRE/JCEDAR to lead on their key sectoral issues.
- ✓Explore options for greater stakeholder involvement – e.g. regional SD advisory committee.
- ✓Update or replace the SDIAR to address key regional priorities and Rio+20 commitments, including the SDGs and green economy; limited set of priorities; clear targets, indicators, responsibilities and funding.
- ✓Explore opportunities for a regional GE roadmap.
- ✓Develop a consistent framework of SD indicators.

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Recommendation for the Arab Region: National level

□ National Institutions for Sustainable Development

- ✓Clear, high-level political commitment to sustainable development and allocating overall responsibility for agenda, setting and monitoring of progress towards sustainable development at the highest possible level within government
- ✓Cross-sectoral coordination of sustainable development strategies or policies as well as vertical integration, i.e. National Council for Sustainable Development or high-level inter-departmental committee for sustainable development

□ National Strategies or Mechanisms for Sustainable Development

- ✓ Adopting a set of national goals and targets for sustainable development and utilizing a consistent set of indicators with a mechanism for monitoring and follow-up at the most senior level of government
- ✓Integrating green economy policies into national strategies
- ✓Effective analysis of policy options, including modeling or cost-benefit analysis, identifying tradeoffs and synergies across the three dimensions of sustainable development using a consultative process to select a small set of priority options for a balanced transition towards sustainable development
- ✓Allocating adequate financial resources and skills to undertake the strategy development process as well as implementation and follow-up, or identifying commitments required from the international community to support implementation
- ✓Applying a participatory approach with adequate stakeholder participation

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THANK YOU

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Webpage of the Arab RIM:
<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=2044E>

