



Strategies for Sustainable Development

*Statement by the DAC High Level Meeting upon endorsement of the
“Strategies for Sustainable Development: Practical Guidance for Development Co-operation”*

Strategies for sustainable development: practical guidance for development co-operation

The Rio Summit established sustainable development as the guiding vision for the development efforts of all countries. At Rio, and in later commitments, all governments undertook to establish and implement national sustainable development strategies. The strategies for sustainable development called for at Rio are foreseen as highly participatory instruments intended “to ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations”. The Rio Agenda 21 was reaffirmed most recently in the Millennium Summit Declaration. The International Development Goals call specifically for the “establishment of sustainable development strategies by 2005”. In the run up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), in Johannesburg in 2002, it is appropriate that we review progress towards achieving this commitment and to agree how the international community can best assist developing countries in meeting this goal. Thus, it is particularly timely that the High Level Meeting of the DAC on 25-26 April 2001 endorses the DAC Guidelines: “*Strategies for Sustainable Development: Practical Guidance for Development Co-operation*”.

We are committed to provide support for sound nationally-owned sustainable development strategies where conditions for effective partnership are in place. In simple terms, sustainable development means integrating the economic, social and environmental objectives of society, in order to maximise human well-being in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This requires seeking mutually supportive approaches whenever possible, and making trade-offs where necessary. For developing countries, and for development co-operation, reducing poverty and meeting the International Development Goals are imperatives — within the broad context of sustainable development — for this generation.

The challenges ahead

Since Rio, there has been progress in developing countries in some key areas, including reducing levels of absolute poverty and increasing attention to environmental issues. In other areas there has been significant deterioration, including water, soil, and bio-diversity. Extreme poverty still ravages the lives of a quarter of the population in developing countries. Such levels of poverty and inequality raise serious issues of sustainability — of peace and security, of equity and solidarity, and of the environment — at the national, regional and global levels.

The sustainable development challenge remains urgent and acute. For each country, the challenge, and the strategy that it chooses to follow in response, will be different. All, however, will require deep structural changes, relating to economy, society and politics.

Guiding principles for sustainable development strategies

In preparing this guidance, we have worked intensively with a number of developing countries who have been actively formulating national sustainable development strategies. Their input has been essential. Our

consultations and wider international experience have led to a consensus on the following principles for effective sustainable development strategies.

Strategy formulation

- Country ownership and participation, leadership and initiative in developing their strategies.
- Broad consultation, including particularly with the poor and with civil society, to open up debate on new ideas and information, expose issues to be addressed, and build consensus and political support on action.
- Ensuring sustained beneficial impacts on disadvantaged and marginalised groups and on future generations.
- Building on existing strategies and processes, rather than adding additional ones, to enable convergence and coherence.
- A solid analytical basis, taking account also of relevant regional issues, including a comprehensive review of the present situation and forecasts of trends and risks.
- Integration of economic, social and environmental objectives through mutually supportive policies and practices and the management of tradeoffs.
- Realistic targets with clear budgetary priorities.

Capacity development

- Strengthening and building on existing country capacity — public, civil society, and private — as part of the strategy process.
- Linking national and local levels, including supporting devolution, in all stages of strategy development and implementation.
- Establishing continuous monitoring and evaluation systems based on clear indicators to track and steer progress.

We endorse these principles and commit ourselves to putting them into practice with developing country partners in our support for sustainable development strategies. We believe that any nationally-owned strategy which applies these principles, and which puts in place a co-ordinated set of mechanisms and processes that ensure their implementation, is a sustainable development strategy and will have a good chance of success. We stress that the label on the strategy does not matter. Existing strategic planning processes are good starting points. Nationally-owned poverty reduction strategies offer a major new opportunity.

Fostering convergence in national development strategies and policy making

The environment is a key determinant of growth and of poverty reduction. Environmental issues, including longer-term and global perspectives, need to be integrated into mainstream planning processes affecting these and other development objectives.

We welcome the international discussions on the synergies between, and potential for convergence in the underlying principles of country-level planning frameworks – such as the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs); the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF); the National Visions and the National Action Plans. There is a particular opportunity to promote the better integration of environmental and other issues of sustainability into poverty reduction strategies, and we endorse the move to develop these as long-term sustainable poverty reduction strategies. More broadly, convergence is necessary to avoid duplication, confusion and straining developing country capacity and resources. We endorse the emerging consensus on convergence and we recognise that putting this consensus into practice effectively is a learning process.

The challenges for development co-operation agencies

Implementation and adherence to the principles pose challenges for development co-operation agencies. Ensuring genuine country ownership requires development agencies to adapt their assistance programmes to the country's strategic planning frameworks. We will strengthen our co-ordination and harmonise our interventions, which will also help promote country leadership.

Cross-cutting these challenges is the need for agencies to help strengthen the capacity of partner countries to put in place the mechanisms and processes for sustainable development. We agree to provide support for them, recognising that they are multi-year endeavours. We will also examine and implement changes within our own organisations that will improve our capacity to provide effective support to country-led strategic planning for sustainable development.

We recognise that the world is closely interlinked and that a wide range of policies of our countries, in such areas as trade and energy, have a major impact on environmental and other aspects of sustainable development. This applies to impacts both on developing countries and globally. We will deepen our attention to the coherence of our policies affecting development, in the context of a broader OECD effort in this area.