

# **Governance Structures for National Sustainable Development Strategies**

*Study of Good Practice Examples*

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## SUMMARY

This paper studies twenty countries plus the European Union to identify good practice examples of governance structures for national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs) and to study their effectiveness. Six aspects of governance were considered including: the nature of strategy co-ordination; placement of overall responsibility for the NSDS; legislative underpinning; integration with existing planning and budgeting processes; stakeholder involvement; and linkages with local sustainable development (SD) action. Criteria of effectiveness were identified at the outset based on review of an array of existing NSDS guidelines and recent multi-country studies.

Some of the positive trends observed in this study include:

- Of the twenty-one jurisdictions considered in this paper, eighteen were pursuing a NSDS process (titled either as a national SD strategy or an Agenda 21) whereby national-level direction was provided to government departments;
- Almost three-quarters of the jurisdictions studied had a formal advisory or national council for SD to enable vetting of development initiatives from multi-perspectives; and
- Half of the countries studied made recommendations for local level SD related action.

But many challenges remain for the governance aspects studied in this paper. Some of the concerning trends observed include the following:

- Only six of the twenty-one jurisdictions studied place responsibility for the NSDS with the prime minister or president's office;
- Only four countries had a legal mandate for ongoing strategy development and implementation;
- Only one country studied had an NSDS that appeared to be integrated with an existing planning and budgeting process. However, nine other countries had strategy processes with some tangential linkages with existing planning and budgeting processes; and
- Only five of the countries studied attempted to coordinate national level SD action with local SD related efforts.

The NSDS is at a critical juncture in its development. This is because the NSDS in most applications is still not sufficiently linked to existing government planning, reporting and budgeting processes. This is a serious weakness because this type of integration is a good proxy for the overall effectiveness of NSDS governance (see Box 1 below). But with this challenge we see an enormous opportunity emerging. At the same time that governments are advancing the NSDS and its associated governance structures (often championed by environment departments), governments via finance-related departments are also making important and innovative advances in government accountability systems (e.g., annual departmental planning and reporting). For purposes of improved accountability, transparency and efficiency, these innovations from finance-related departments bring aspects of strategic public management to the fore, and in many of the same ways as does the NSDS. This occurs in the form of high-level government goals and targets which are identified and systematically monitored and reported to facilitate continuous improvement and adaptive policymaking. And both of these current efforts – the NSDS and the government accountability system, have a common purpose – that being to navigate real progress toward advances in the quality of life of its citizens.

**Box 1. Integration with existing planning, reporting and budgeting processes – a proxy for overall NSDS effectiveness**

Integration is a good proxy for the overall effectiveness of the NSDS because seamless integration of the sustainability concept with existing planning and budgeting processes would:

- Require that sustainability priorities and objectives be comprehensive in nature and operate in an integrated manner with economic, social and environmental issues (*relevance and comprehensiveness criteria*)
- Inherently involve all departments (*departmental involvement criteria*)
- Place responsibility for progress toward priorities and objectives with the Prime Minister or President's office (or equivalent) and as well would involve the finance departments which coordinate and monitor the expenditures (*placement of responsibility criteria*)
- Embed the sustainability concepts naturally within the legal requirement for departments to prepare plans and report annually on progress (*Legislative embeddedness criteria*)
- Demand formal involvement of multiple stakeholders through the regular process of preparing national budgets (*formal and multi-stakeholder involvement criteria*)
- Provide guidance to other levels of government as national-level expenditures inherently impact local economic, social and environmental conditions (*guidance criteria*)
- Help coordinate action with other levels of government via fiscal responsibility and accountability (*coordination criteria*)

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE NSDS GOVERNANCE

de•vel•op (di•vel'əp) *v.t.* 1. To expand or bring out the potentialities, capabilities, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The Brundtland Commission report *Our Common Future* (WCED 1987) popularized the concept of *sustainable* development within government as a critical and urgent innovation in development thinking. The concept of sustainable development put forth several new and fundamental tenets, including:

- Development that meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Development that takes account of the inherent inter-relationships among our environment, the people living in it, and the economy within which we interact on a daily basis; and
- Development that relies on the multiple perspectives of broad participation to adequately understand the complexity of issues and to garner the support to implement initiatives to advance development.

As has been demonstrated by a growing body of multi-country studies of the NSDS, nations are clearly in a period of experimentation with regard to the preparation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs). Cherp et al. (2004) in developing an assessment methodology for NSDSs, astutely reminds us of two critical points. First is that fifteen years ago Agenda 21, the United Nations call to action for sustainable development (SD) at the national level, *envisaged that the necessary harmonization and extension of existing policies and plans would occur through the adoption of an identifiable strategy for sustainable development* (paragraph 8.7, Agenda 21 – UNCED 1992). Second, and most importantly, the overall objective was not to develop a new strategy document, but “to improve or restructure the decision-making process so that consideration of socio-economic and environmental issues is fully integrated and a broader range of public participation assured (paragraph 8.3, Agenda 21 – UNCED 1992).”

NSDS processes are complex and represent a systematic and complex approach to turning sustainable development from concept into practice. They also require long-term effort, multi-scale and multi-agent action; therefore, they need to be approached as a learning process. The assessment of SD strategies, like this one, play a critical role in that learning process.

This paper was commissioned by the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) to study approximately twenty countries to identify good practice examples of governance structures for the NSDS and to study their effectiveness.

For purposes of this paper we pay particular attention to governance structures related to the following:

- The nature of strategy co-ordination;
- Placement of overall responsibility for the NSDS
- Legislative underpinning;
- Integration with existing planning and budgeting processes;
- Stakeholder involvement; and
- Linkages with local SD action

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<sup>1</sup> Funk and Wagnalls, 1980

While there are undoubtedly many other types of governance structures to consider<sup>2</sup>, the above six elements are common to many recent multi-country studies of NSDSs (e.g., Niestroy 2005; Cherp et al. 2004; Steurer and Martinuzzi 2005; Swanson et al. 2004; Dalal-Clayton and Bass 2002) and to the 2001 OECD-DAC and 2002 UN DESA guidelines for the development and implementation of NSDSs.

Good practice examples NSDS governance structures are identified in this paper on the basis of twenty-one jurisdictions and according to effectiveness criteria specific to each of the five governance elements mentioned above. These criteria are listed in Table 1 below and find their origins in the 2001 OECD-DAC and 2002 UN DESA guidelines. Such criteria are inherently subjective given the broad spectrum of approaches to governance in different countries and due to the dynamic and political nature of public sector governance. Nonetheless, attention to such criteria provides a useful means for self-assessment and continuous improvement in NSDS governance.

Table 1. Governance elements and effectiveness criteria

| <b>Governance Element</b>                                 | <b>Effectiveness Criteria</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Nature of strategy and government co-ordination</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Relevance and comprehensiveness:</i> The more departments and levels of government for which the NSDS is relevant, the better. This implies that the NSDS is comprehensive with respect to economic, social and environmental issues.</li> <li>▪ <i>Department involvement:</i> The more involved individual departments and other levels of government are in the NSDS process, the better.</li> </ul> |
| <b>2. Placement of overall responsibility</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Top-level leadership:</i> The more involved is the Prime Minister or President's office in the NSDS process, the better.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>3. Legislative Underpinning</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Legislative embeddedness:</i> The more embedded the NSDS process is in legislation, the better.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>4. Link to budget processes</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Integration:</i> The greater the integration of the NSDS vision and objectives with the plans and budgets that departments submit to planning and finance departments, the better.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>5. Stakeholder involvement</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Formality:</i> The more formal the requirement for stakeholder involvement in the development and ongoing implementation of the NSDS objectives, the better.</li> <li>▪ <i>Multi-stakeholder:</i> The broader the perspective attained through stakeholder involvement, the better.</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| <b>6. Links to local levels</b>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Guidance:</i> The clearer the recommendation in the NSDS for SD related strategies at the state/provincial and community levels, the better.</li> <li>▪ <i>Sub-national coordination:</i> The more</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                           |

<sup>2</sup> For example, aspects of monitoring, evaluation and improvement in the NSDS are considered in a separate paper being prepared by the OECD.

|  |                                                                                                               |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | coordination between NSDS objectives and the objectives of state/provincial and community levels, the better. |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The countries considered in this paper represent a mix of sixteen OECD countries, four non-OECD countries, and the European Union. Included in the analysis were: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Republic, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. Case study research was carried out for each of these countries using a combination of publicly available documents (i.e., primarily Internet-based) and targeted interviews where possible.

In the context of this paper, the criteria introduced in Table 1 provide the basis for identifying good practice examples from among the countries studied for each of the five governance elements. These good practice examples are featured below in Section 2 while key challenges and opportunities are identified in Section 3.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES FOR THE NSDS

### *Nature of Strategy Co-ordination*

NSDS coordination is an integral part of governance. Coordination has many important characteristics including multi-sectoral, multi-scalar, and multi-stakeholder. For purpose of this paper, we analyse coordination according to two criteria:

- *Relevance and comprehensiveness:* The more departments and levels of government for which the NSDS is relevant, the better. This implies that the NSDS is comprehensive with respect to economic, social and environmental issues.
- *Department involvement:* The more involved individual departments and other levels of government are in the NSDS process, the better.

Based on an analysis of twenty-one jurisdictions, two general typologies of strategy and coordination are observed (Table 2). Of the countries studied, 18 are classified as “top-down” in that they have pursued a national-level strategy for sustainable development under the title of an NSDS or National Agenda 21. Canada was the only country studied using only a departmental SD strategy approach. Mexico is considered in an “other” typology representative of an effort to integrate SD concepts directly into an existing development planning process. One country (South Korea) had an environmentally focused national strategy.

Table 2. Nature of strategy and coordination

| Typology        | Countries                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Top-Down (NSDS) | <i>Featured Good Practice Example:</i> UK, Norway, Switzerland<br><br><i>Others:</i> Ireland, Germany, Belgium, South Africa, Brazil, Philippines, Finland, China, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Portugal, France, Sweden, Italy, EU |

|                                                   |                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bottom-up (Departmental)</b>                   | Canada (departmental SD strategies) <sup>3</sup>                                                                        |
| <b>Other</b> (e.g., SD through existing planning) | <i>Featured as an interesting example to monitor progress of:</i> Mexico ( <i>National Development Plan 2001-2006</i> ) |

Examples of each of these typologies are elaborated on below.

### ***Top-down (NSDS)***

The “top-down” typology reflects those countries which undertake a NSDS or National Agenda 21 type process. Countries in this typology typically have comprehensive strategies and are therefore relevant to all ministries or departments in government, though not necessarily to the same extent. Countries including the UK, France and the Czech Republic are often considered good practice examples from this perspective.

Some countries exhibit more multi-level government strategy coordination than others and this is an important aspect of SD. We feature the UK, Norway and Switzerland as good practice examples, as elaborated below.

**UK.** The UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005) continues to be one of the best good practice examples from a strategy coordination perspective. Not only is it comprehensive, it also involves multiple levels of government in the development of the strategy and therefore speaks to each level.

The strategy includes a comprehensive framework intended to guide policy across the UK government. As well as a nationally articulated strategy, individual departments are asked to develop their own SD strategies within the context of the more far reaching UK SD strategy (UK Secretary of State 2005).

In the process of developing the UK SDS, a Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development was produced in agreement with the Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The framework is intended to ensure a consistent approach to SD across the UK until 2020. It includes the following elements:

- a shared understanding of sustainable development
- a vision and guiding principles
- sustainable development priorities for UK action nationally and internationally, and indicators to monitor the key issues on a UK basis (UK Secretary of State 2005).

A vision and objectives for sustainable development are outlined in the SD strategy in the context of the UK SD Framework and broadly speak to the UK Government and Devolved Administrations. The vision begins with the following goal statement: “The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations (UK Secretary of State 2005).” This will be achieved by addressing economic, social and environmental dimensions. A shared set of principles intended to form the basis for policy in the UK include: living within environmental limits, ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, achieving a sustainable economy, promoting good governance and using sound science responsibly (UK Secretary of State 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Other countries do have departmental strategies as part of the NSDS process, but for Canada departmental strategies are the delivery mechanism – there is no overarching NSDS document.

The SDS also specifies areas of SD that each government department will report on beginning in 2006. The areas were identified by the departments based on respective responsibilities, needs and views. The areas outlined in the SDS range from internal business of departments to policy proposals (Niestroy 2005e). Each department is responsible for reporting on their SD strategy in individual annual reports. A cross-departmental SD program has been put in place to assist departments with reporting on their strategy and challenges departments to improve performance (UK Secretary of State 2005).

The inclusion of department-specific SD strategies in the 2005 UK Strategy is intended to improve integration of SD goals by departments. SD goals were less well integrated in the previous strategy and departments often chose to work with one or two of the most relevant goals without addressing more challenging policy areas. A critical review of the 1999 strategy showed that the SDS mainly influenced the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and had limited influence on policy development in other departments. The 2005 SDS sends a message that SD is not a “narrow specialist issue” (Niestroy 2005e).

**Norway.** Norway’s current ‘National Strategy for Sustainable Development’ was drawn up in 2002 in connection with the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. This was Norway’s first attempt to formulate a coherent, unifying national strategy. As a follow-up of the Strategy, a National Action Plan for SD, or National Agenda 21, was adopted as part of the National Budget 2004 in October 2003 (Norway MOF, 2003), which was presented to the Parliament. Through the action plan, the Norwegian Government wishes to “ensure that sustainable development is given a permanent place on the political agenda (Norway MOF 2003).” It is intended as a means of implementing the national strategy for sustainable development launched in 2002.

The Norwegian NSDS aims to place sectoral policies in a more holistic perspective, and to ensure that all plans and measures contribute to a society of high quality, now and in the future. The overriding objective of the strategy is: “to make development ecologically, economically and socially sustainable. The basis for continued utilization of nature and natural resources must be maintained. Within these constraints we will promote stable, healthy economic development and a society with a high quality of life, and we will play a part in helping the poor people of the world to achieve material welfare and a higher quality of life (Norway MOF, 2003).”

The development of the NSDS was undertaken by the Government based on a wide consultation process with various ministries, the municipalities, social actors, indigenous people and a wide selection of organizations. The Norwegian NSDS also intends to be implemented in cooperation with the business sector, the research community, NGOs and individuals. Cooperation with these actors helps to address all dimensions of SD (Norway MOF, 2003).

The implementation of the NSDS and National Agenda 21 is through the ordinary planning and budget processes. All the sectoral authorities share in the responsibility for sustainable development in their respective spheres of authority, and must incorporate SD into all their plan, programs and activities. The Special Committee, chaired by the Ministry of Finance, will invite relevant stakeholders in both public and private sector to participate in problems and solution oriented *ad hoc* groups around key topic areas. The preparation of municipal and county master plans and local development plans is required to integrate sustainable development (Arto Ruotsalainen 2005).



**Switzerland.** The current Swiss Sustainable Development Strategy was tabled in 2002. The strategy is based on the “provisions of the new Federal Constitution and aims to integrate the principles of sustainable development into as many policy areas as possible (Swiss Federal Council 2002).” The document also articulates the “content and procedural framework for the Federal Council’s sustainable development policy over the coming years.” It contains a total of 22 action programmes in ten fields.

The coordination platform of the Swiss strategy and process is very interesting (Figure 1). The strategy is embedded in the mandate of the Interdepartmental Sustainable Development Committee (ISDC) with the strategy process being managed by the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE). The ARE “fosters systematic collaboration with cantons, towns and cities in the field of sustainable development (in the context of the Forum for Sustainable Development) and promotes the Local Agenda 21 campaign at cantonal, regional and local level (Swiss ARE 2005, 2005b).”

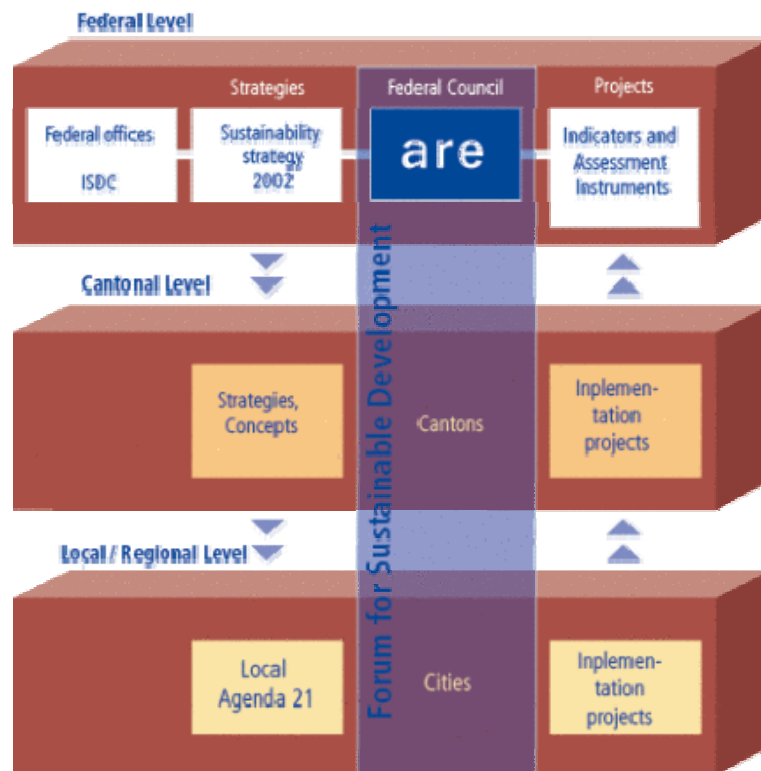


Figure 1. The Swiss coordination platform for sustainable development (Swiss ARE 2005).

**Bottom-Up (Departmental)**

Canada was the only country studied using the distributed departmental approach as the primary means for strategic and coordinated action for sustainable development. Rather than pursue a NSDS or National Agenda 21 process, Canada has since 1995 assigned responsibility for sustainable development to individual government departments and agencies. This responsibility is laid out under the *Auditor General Act*, which requires departments to submit to Parliament individual Sustainable Development Strategies every three years (Stratos 2004). Each strategy has relevance to the respective department, but is not coordinated with the strategies of other

departments, primarily because there has been no overlying national strategy to guide or create impetus for such coordination on economic, social or environmental issues.

The federal government through Environment Canada is currently coordinating the fourth round of departmental sustainable development strategies for 2007-09. The fourth round of strategies will have three new components noteworthy for the nature of strategy and coordination (Wilburn, 2006):

- A set of common federal sustainable development goals;
- Consolidated reporting on federal sustainable development goals and linkages to federal planning and reporting processes; and
- Inclusion of guidance for greening government operations.

The federal government is currently developing a set of six sustainable development goals related to Clean Air, Clean Water, Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Sustainable Development and Use of Natural Resources, Sustainable Communities, and Governance for Sustainable Development. These goals are “intended to compliment work currently underway in departments to develop their departmental strategy and to provide an opportunity to contribute to federal sustainable development goals where they reflect departmental SD strategy priorities (Wilburn, 2006).” Departments are being asked to identify for each federal goal a set of long-term and intermediate-term outcomes, and specific activities directed at these outcomes. Additionally, departments are being asked to develop qualitative or quantitative measures to gauge progress toward outcomes which would be set government-wide or by individual/groups of organizations.

In an effort to better link the existing federal government departmental planning and reporting process with commitments in the SDS, departments are being asked to include SDS commitments in two annual reports. Both reports, the Report on Plans and Priorities and the Departmental Performance Report, are submitted to the Treasury Board Secretariat. By tagging each of the departmental SD related commitments presented in the annual planning and reporting process, the federal government hopes to compile a roll-up report of departmental commitments under each federal sustainable development goal (Wilburn, 2006).

The six federal sustainable development goals are meant to integrate and complement an existing federal initiative, *Greening Government Operations*, for which objectives were set earlier in 2006. An Office of Greening Government Operations (OGGA) was created to facilitate the development of government-wide targets and common performance measures for three priority areas: building energy, vehicle fleets, and green procurement, along with other focus areas including waste management, facilities and land-use management, regulatory compliance, and green stewardship.

Through integration of the goals in the fourth round of departmental SD strategies, the federal government is striving to “identify how departmental activities support broader federal goals and objectives in respect of sustainable development” with the intention “that Canadians will gain a clearer picture of how the federal government works, in an ongoing way, to ensure improvements in our quality of life.” Improved coordination is also intended to strengthen accountability, drive government-wide performance, and focus and stimulate activity in some key areas (Wilburn, 2006).

### ***Other - Pursuing SD through Existing Planning Processes***

As with our 2004 NSSD study (Swanson et al. 2004), Mexico continues to be an interesting example primarily because the country endeavours to integrate SD concepts into an existing development planning process. One of the disadvantages of this approach is that the sustainability concept tends to be less formulated and detailed when integrated into existing planning processes than when a separate NSDS is developed, particularly in the early stages of integration.

Mexico's *National Development Plan 2001-2006* (NDP) is a six-year program established by the Mexican President at the beginning of a presidential term. It is intended to provide systematic and coordinated economic, social, political and cultural development (Stratos 2004, p.4). The three main objectives in the 2001-06 NDP are:

1. Social and Human Development: to improve the well being of the population, develop education, ensure equity, and strengthen human capital and government capacity;
2. Growth with Quality: develop the national economy, increase competitiveness, promote balanced regional development, and create conditions for sustainable development; and
3. Order and Respect: improve co-operation among authorities, make progress towards decentralization, fight corruption, govern with transparency, and guarantee public security and justice (OECD 2003, p. 123 and 126).

This plan is unlike a national sustainable development (SD) strategy in that it is the government's main planning instrument containing its objectives and principles. In this case, SD is just one of its 12 basic principles (Stratos 2004a, p.4). The basis for planning in Mexico is the Law on Planning (DOF, 1983), and the NDP prepared by the federal executive must "pursue the political, social, cultural and economic ends and objectives contained in the Political Constitution", (Palerm 2005, p.126). This particular plan provides both short and long-term visions that "define the major challenges and characteristics Mexico should hold in the forthcoming 25 years" (Stratos 2004a, p.4).

In Mexico, national sectoral programs complementing the *National Development Plan 2001-2006* (NDP) are developed by every Secretariat based on its own long-term (25-year) strategic outlook (Stratos 2004a, p. 4).

### ***Placement of Overall Responsibility***

The placement of overall responsibility and the legislative underpinning are important governance aspects of the NSDS. In this regard, we assess the effectiveness of national efforts toward SD based on the following criteria:

- *Top-level leadership*: The more involved is the Prime Minister or President's office in the NSDS process, the better.

Analysis of twenty-one jurisdictions in this paper revealed two main typologies as summarized in Table 3: top level responsibility, e.g., prime minister's or president's office; and devolved responsibility.

Table 3. Placement of responsibility.

| Typology                                                                                | Countries                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Top-level responsibility</b>                                                         | Norway, Germany, Finland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Portugal                                       |
| <b>Devolved responsibility</b><br>(Planning department or other integrating department) | Mexico, China, Philippines, and Sweden                                                                 |
| <b>Devolved responsibility</b><br>(environment or related department)                   | Switzerland, China, UK, South Korea, Ireland, Belgium, South Africa, Brazil, Italy, Canada, and France |

### *Top-level Responsibility*

Five of the twenty-one jurisdictions exhibited top-level responsibility for the NSDS, including Norway, Germany, Finland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Portugal.

**Norway.** Norway’s placement of responsibility is perhaps the most interesting and potentially the most effective arrangement. Leading the development of the National Action Plan for Sustainable Development, or National Agenda 21, is the Office of the Prime Minister and a special committee chaired by the Ministry of Finance (and consisting of deputy ministers from key ministries). The Ministry of Finance has the dual responsibility of coordinating central government activities and of drawing up a framework for efficient resource use in the country. This combination of responsibility can be very effective as it includes high-level leadership and involves the department with the most cross-cutting function in government (finance) (Norway MOF 2003).

**Czech Republic.** The Czech Republic also has an interesting and effective placement of responsibility including high level leadership and a range of ministries as vice chairs. The Government Council for Sustainable Development (GCSO) is responsible for the NSDS. It is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and has 28 members. Vice-Chairmen of the Council are Ministers from Industry and Trade, Labour and Social Affairs, and Environment. Other members of the council consist of representatives from non-governmental, academic, and social sectors, as well as central and local government authorities (Czech Republic GCSO 2003).

**Portugal.** Portugal is an interesting example of shifting responsibility from an environment department to the Prime Minister’s office. Initially, in 2002, SDS work was led by the Ministry of Environment; lead responsibility was then shifted by the Prime Minister to the PM’s Office at WSSD. The most recent draft SDS proposes to establish a “Strategic Mission Unit” within the PM Office, responsible for coordinating and monitoring implementation through all levels and sectors. This includes coordination of ministries, regional and local authorities, and society at large, and among these various actors.

While the proposed “Strategic Mission Unit” is considered to be desirable, it remains to be seen whether and how this proposal will be taken up. The current one-person unit in the PM Office raises questions as to whether capacity in the unit will be sufficient (Niestroy, 2005c).

**Germany.** In Germany, the Chancellor, or Prime Minister, is responsible for the SDS and for coordinating its process under the “guidance competence” of the Chancellery. The strong role of

the Chancellor is considered to be an important factor for the success of SDS development because it has lessened the conflicts that typically occur between ministries (Niestroy 2005a). Leadership from the Chancellory has also contributed to the progress and visibility of the strategy. At the same time, it is felt that SD could be better integrated into other overarching political programs, such as Agenda 2010 (Niestroy 2005a).

**Finland.** The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Finnish Government's Programme for Sustainable Development. It is chaired by the Prime Minister and vice-chaired by the Minister of the Environment (Finland FNCSD 2005).

**Slovakia.** The overall responsibility for sustainable development issues in the Slovakia rests with the Government Office via the Council of the Government for Sustainable Development. The Council is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and vice-chaired by the environment ministry (Government of Slovakia, 2005).

### ***Devolved Responsibility (Planning and Other Integrating Departments)***

China and the Philippines are examples of countries which have devolved the responsibility of NSDS process to their planning departments. This is an effective placement of responsibility, particularly when there is a good fit with the core mandate of those departments.

**China.** The overall responsibility for the implementation of *China's Agenda 21* rests with a National Leading Group for Promoting Sustainable Development and Administration Centre of China's Agenda 21 (ACCA21). The National Leading Group is chaired by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC, formerly the State Planning Commission), and vice-chaired by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST). It consists of ministerial and vice-ministerial level officials from relevant ministries and an office is located in NDRC, the country's central planning and multi-sectoral agency in the country (ACCA21 1997).

**Philippines.** The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), as the Chair for the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), has the overall responsibility for PA 21 (Tarradell 2004). PCSD was created in 1993 through Executive Order No. 15, "Creating a Philippine Council for Sustainable Development" (1993) to implement sustainable development (SD) initiatives in the country. PCSD's role was further reinforced by Executive Order No. 62 "Strengthening PCSD". Core membership of the PCSD is composed of 3 line agencies namely the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Foreign Affairs, 5 civil society representatives and 1 representative each from business and labour sector. Other government agencies are called upon when warranted by conditions (Triunfante 2006).

**Sweden.** The case of Sweden is particularly interesting, both from the perspective of placement of responsibility and real progress. In 2005 Sweden formed the Ministry of Sustainable Development through a merger of three previously separate departments: Energy, Environment, and Planning and Housing. Not long after this unique and timely merger, Sweden announced, to the envy of many governments around the world, an ambitious target to have an oil-free economy by the year 2020. Considering this effort along with earlier actions such as environmental tax shifting in early the 90s, Sweden has continually demonstrated leadership in key areas of sustainable development. The new ministry has mandate for energy issues, emissions trading, construction and housing, and responsibility for coordinating the Governments work on sustainable development (Sweden MSD 2005)." The Prime Minister has entrusted the Minister

for Sustainable Development with overall responsibility for sustainable development in the Government Offices. But this internalization of sustainability principles goes beyond the new ministry. The 2006 'Budget Statement' from the Ministry of Finance stated that "sustainable development is an overall objective of government policy" (p3) and that the Government "aspires to make the idea of the green welfare state a reality"(p30) (Sweden MOF 2006).

### ***Devolved Responsibility (Environment and Related Departments)***

The majority of countries studied devolved responsibility for the coordination of the NSDS process to the environment ministry. Albeit, the environment ministries concerned have different levels of influence across the countries studied and may deal with more than the environment (UK's Defra is an example of a ministry that has a mandate beyond the narrow interpretation of the environment). This trend is most certainly a legacy of which department championed the concept within government originally. These countries include Switzerland, UK, South Korea, Ireland, Belgium, South Africa, Brazil, Italy, France, Canada and Sweden.

Such devolution of a cross-government strategy to the environment ministry is in most cases not an effective approach for strategic and coordinated action (with perhaps the exception of Sweden as described below). There are signs of strategic change, however, as inter-ministerial bodies being formed to review the NSDS process undertaken by the environment ministries. For example, in Italy the Ministry of the Environment is politically responsible for the NSDS, but an Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning (CIPE) is responsible for monitoring progress (CEC 2004, 50). Consider Belgium and Sweden as examples of this typology.

**Belgium.** Belgium presents an interesting case of devolved placement of responsibility which may prove more effective than placement of responsibility in an environment ministry. The Minister of Sustainable Development is responsible for producing quadrennial Federal Plans for Sustainable Development, as enacted in the Act of 5 May 1997. Operating under the chairmanship of the Minister for Sustainable Development, an Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development (ICSD) consists of representatives from all federal ministries. The ICSD is responsible for implementation of the federal plan as well as the coordination and implementation of SD policies among the federal departments. A critique of the leadership related to the Federal Strategy indicates that while procedurally Belgium scores well, sustainable development has not yet been adopted as a philosophy as reflected in policy and practice. It is not yet a "common denominator" in policies across sectors (FCSD 2006) and continues to lack clear priorities and objectives (UNDSD 2005).

### ***Legislative Underpinning***

We assess the effectiveness of national efforts toward SD in relation to legislative underpinning based on the following criteria:

- *Legislative embeddedness:* The more embedded the NSDS process is in legislation, the better.

As summarized in Table 4, two countries appeared to have a legal basis for the SD strategy process, namely Canada and Switzerland.

While the countries exhibiting top-level placement of responsibility may be considered good practice examples with regard to placement of responsibility, these examples don't always exhibit the same level of effectiveness with regard to legislative underpinning. In Germany, while the NSDS is firmly positioned in the Federal executive, the strategy itself has no formal legal basis (Environmental Policy Research Centre, 2004). In Finland, there is no formal legal basis for the strategy, but the document was adopted as the Council of State Decision-in-Principle on the Promotion of Ecological sustainability in 1998.

Table 4. Legislative underpinning.

| Typology                     | Countries                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Legal Basis for SD</b>    | Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, France                                                                                                                        |
| <b>No Legal Basis for SD</b> | UK, Norway, Ireland, Germany, South Africa, Brazil, Philippines, Finland, China, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Portugal, Sweden, Italy, EU, South Korea, Mexico |

The most formal legislative underpinning for NSDS related processes appear to be in Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, France.. For example, in Canada, while responsibility for coordinating departmental sustainable development strategies rests with the environment ministry, the *Auditor General Act* requires 25 departments to submit to Parliament individual Sustainable Development Strategies every three years (four more departments and agencies prepare such strategies on a voluntary basis). Government departments responsible for specific sectors are responsible for identifying issues of relevance to their mandate, and in developing policies, regulations and other instruments for achieving specific SD objectives.

The Federal Swiss Constitution (1999) enshrines sustainable development as one of the national objectives of which Article 73 “binds organs of state at all levels to “strive to establish a durable equilibrium between nature, and, in particular, its capacity to renew itself, and its use by man (Stratos 2004b, 9).” In addition, the constitution establishes new principles and policies for most of the sectoral policies relevant to sustainable development (Swiss Federal Council 2002; Stratos 2004b).

Even for innovative leaders in NSDS processes like the UK, legislative underpinning is still not strong. The UK's 1999 SDS indicated that all new public bodies were required to include a statutory requirement for sustainable development. The current SDS indicates that the Government will provide further direction in the area of linking of statutory requirements to sustainable development for all or key pre-existing public bodies (UK Secretary of State 2005, p.157). This has potential to be an important move, given a lack of clarity in the past with respect to overall guidance for the SDS. Currently, the Prime Minister's office is not responsible for the overarching policy of the SDS and there is no clear line of authority to trigger departments to develop and stick to targets (Niestroy 2005e).

### ***Integration with the National Planning and Budgeting Process***

A government's planning and budgeting system, typically coordinated by the finance ministry, is part of the central machinery of government. The greater the required linkage between NSDS objectives and the plans and budgets that departments submit to the finance department, the more effective the NSDS will be. In our 2004 study of nineteen countries we concluded this to be one of the four most significant challenges facing the NSDS process (Swanson et al. 2004).

Government spending is a key policy instrument for implementing and influencing sustainable development. In the absence of a formal linkage between SD priorities and the planning and budgeting process, it is hard to see how these priorities can be systematically and effectively addressed. We therefore focus on the extent of integration of the NSDS process with the existing planning and budgeting systems of government as a proxy indicator of commitment to strategic and coordinated action for sustainable development.

We acknowledge that a comprehensive understanding of the linkages of NSDSs with national planning and budgeting processes is difficult to attain through desk studies such as employed for this paper. More extensive personal interviews combined with site visits with innovative countries are necessary to gain a proper understanding of the linkages. It would be particularly interesting if such studies would look into the translation of SD priorities into departmental spending programs. The analysis below presents what we have been able to glean from our study.

Table 5. Integration with national planning and budgeting processes

| Typology                                                                | Countries                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NSDS integrated with the planning and budgeting system</b>           | <i>Beginnings of integration:</i> Norway                                               |
| <b>Some linkage of the NSDS to the planning and/or budgeting system</b> | Finland, Portugal, Philippines, China, France, UK, Sweden, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico |
| <b>Indirect or no linkage to the planning and/or budgeting system</b>   | Ireland, Germany, Belgium, South Africa, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Canada, Switzerland |

### *Integration with the Planning and Budgeting System*

Ideally, integration of the NSDS with the government planning and budgeting system would result in a direct link between expenditure plans and goals and priorities set forth in the SD strategy. The principles of sustainable development would then be addressed—namely that development, supported by the expenditure, would meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs; and trade-offs and synergies among economic, social and environmental impacts (positive and negative) would be understood. In some critical cases this may also involve a strategic sustainability assessment of specific spending programs early in their planning phase.

None of the countries studied in this paper met the integration criteria set above. Norway, however, appears to exhibit the greatest extent of integration of the NSDS with the national planning and budgeting system.

The Norwegian NSDS is closely linked to the national budget budgetary processes in that Parliament adopted the National Action Plan, or National Agenda, as part of the 2004 National Budget. Implementation of the SD strategy therefore happens through regular planning and budget processes of national sectoral authorities. Further, the Ministry of Finance chairs the special committee for the National Agenda 21, effectively ensuring consistency of sustainable development in the country’s economic planning. This also provides financial assurance for the implementation of the NSDS



### ***Some Linkage with the Planning and Budgeting System***

Rather than being a distinct category, this typology reflects a lesser degree of integration with government planning and budgeting systems than the previous typology. The UK, France, Finland and Sweden are at initial stages of developing important elements of integration. Featured below as good practice examples under this typology are the UK, France and Finland.

**UK.** In the UK, Government major spending decisions are made every two years and departmental limits are determined on the basis of business plans. In 2002, through a collaboration between DEFRA (Sustainable Development Unit) and HM Treasury, linkages were made between sustainable development and departmental objectives as a requirement (Steurer and Martinuzzi 2005). Considered to be a positive step towards greening the budget, challenges associated with transparency and monitoring of implementation have also been identified (Niestroy 2005e). For example, while the 2004 Spending Review incorporated SD criteria, there was no indication of how departments were incorporating the criteria into their plans (Niestroy 2005e). The 2005 SDS indicates that further efforts will be made to better integrate sustainable development in the 2006 and future Spending Reviews (UK Secretary of State 2005).

**France.** In France, the NSDS attempts to apply institutional law to the finance laws, which is called: *la loi organique sur les lois de finances* (LOLF), (France MEDDc 2005, p.11). This budgetary reform, envisaged by institutional law, relates to the finance laws of August 2001 and encourages the development of administrative action toward appropriate SD programming. LOLF aims to modernize public administration, and renew the nature and tools of parliamentary control by trusting public administrators with more freedom, and yet with more responsibility (France MEDDc, 2005, p.11).

A primary objective of the LOLF is to ensure that public policies are more transparent and meet performance standards. The framework of the LOLF is made up of programs involving the ecology and sustainable development missions such as:

- A risk prevention and pollution control program;
- A biodiversity program; and,
- A program responsible for the development of environmental politics and sustainable development, (France MEDDd, 2005, p.1),

The bill of finances or, *le projet de loi de finances* (PLF) for 2006 is the first budget prepared according to provisions of institutional law relating to finance laws (France MEDDc, 2005, p.3). The application of these new budgetary rules leads to a radically different presentation of the State budget. Traditional divisions in the budget with sections, chapters and articles are replaced with missions, programs, and actions. Each mission, program and action has measurable indicators associated with it. The new budget was launched on January 1, 2006, (France MEDDc, 2005, p.3).

**Finland.** The Finnish Government Programme for Sustainable Development (FGPSD) states that the national SD strategy will be put into effect by ministries and other units of public administration in their own strategies, action plans and activities. Accordingly, ministries have prepared their own strategies for sustainable development. For example, a strategy for the transport sector is developed for the sector to support the NSDS. It is clearly stated in the FGPSD that the Programme was formulated “on the premise that no separate state appropriations or additional funding will be required from the State Budget for the programme’s implementation” (FGPSD 2005, Part 4, Para 5). Rather, ministries, local authorities and other social administration

organization are to build the goal of sustainable development into all their activities and functioning, and the implementation of the FGPSD is covered by their regular budget.

**Sweden.** In Sweden, the Local Investment Program for sustainable development (budget was €560 Mill) managed by five Ministries responsible for ‘ecological sustainability’ and chaired by the Ministry of the Environment was implemented from 1998 – 2003 (Niestroy 2005d, 255). The 2006 ‘Budget Statement’ from the Ministry of Finance stated that “sustainable development is an overall objective of government policy” (p3) and that the Government “aspires to make the idea of the green welfare state a reality”(p30) (Sweden MOF 2006, 3, 30).

### ***Trends in Integration at Provincial and State Government Levels in North America***

Good practice examples of government accountability systems coordinated by finance departments are also found at provincial and state levels, such as the Oregon State Government in the United States and the Provincial Government of Alberta in Canada as (Box 2 and 3, respectively; described in Barg et al. 2006). In both of these cases a set of overarching goals – three in the case of Oregon and twelve in the case of Alberta, provide strategic guidance to government program expenditures and policymaking. Also in both cases, a set of high-level outcome-based indicators of quality of life, defined by economic, social and environmental wellbeing, are monitored annually. The indicators are a tool for transparency and accountability to the public for government expenditures (90 indicators in six categories in the case of Oregon and 60 in twelve categories in Alberta). In Oregon, an independent, multi-stakeholder Progress Board is responsible for monitoring indicator progress. In both cases government departments must illustrate how their annual business plans relate to the high level, outcome based indicators and report on progress toward time-bound targets for each indicator. These two innovative examples of government accountability systems each are based on at least a fifteen-year history of continuous experimentation and improvement.

#### **Box 2 Results-Oriented Strategic Planning In the State of Oregon, USA**

The state government of Oregon in the United States embarked on a path toward strategic public management around 1989. Their results-oriented strategic planning process has been designed to “measure progress towards Oregon’s strategic vision, Oregon Shines (Oregon Progress Board 2006).” Oregon Shines, originally drafted in 1989, is updated every eight years and encompasses the entire state.

The strategic vision has three goals: (1) quality jobs for all Oregonians; (2) safe, caring and engaged communities, and (3) healthy, sustainable surroundings. A set of indicators called the Oregon Benchmarks were designed to “help to provide the long view perspective in solving economic, social and environmental problems. The Oregon Benchmarks are a set of 90 indicators under seven categories, namely: Economy; Education Report; Civic Engagement; Social Support; Public Safety; Community Development; Environment. They are used for a broad array of policymaking and budget-related activities. Oregon state agencies are now required to link their key performance measures to the Benchmarks (Oregon Progress Board 2006).” Key performance measures are required for state agency plans, with this requirement being introduced in the 2003 budget cycle and improved on in the 2005 cycle.

The Oregon Benchmarks are monitored by the Oregon Progress Board, an independent state planning and oversight agency created by the Legislature in 1989. Its responsibility is to monitoring the state's 20-year strategic vision, Oregon Shines. The Progress Board consists of a 12-member panel which is chaired by the governor of the state. The Progress Board’s official

mission is to make Oregon Shines a reality and make the Benchmarks a useful tool for Oregonians working to improve their communities. This requires that the Board carry out an annual assessment of Oregon's quality of life and help others to align resources and manage performance to make it better. Its 2005 progress report is entitled "Achieving the Oregon Shine's Vision: the 2005 Benchmark Performance Report – Report to the Oregon Legislature and the People of Oregon."

Source: Oregon Progress Board (2006); Barg et al. (2006)

### **Box 2. Goal-based Budgeting in Alberta Provincial Government, Canada**

Alberta was one of the earliest adopters and leaders in government business planning and performance outcome measurement and reporting beginning in roughly 1993 with the introduction of *Measuring Up*, Alberta's performance measurement system to report on high-level government outcome measures of performance. The *Government of Alberta 2004-05 Annual Report* is the eleventh annual performance report that includes both consolidated financial statements and *Measuring Up*, a report to Albertans' required under section 10 of the *Government Accountability Act*. In North America, Alberta was one of the earliest pioneers of government performance measurement along with Oregon, Minnesota, Florida and Texas. Other governments since then, including provincial governments and the Canadian Government, have introduced business planning and performance measurement systems.

The most significant improvement in Alberta's governance and accountability system has been the adoption of goal-based budgeting and the expansion of indicators used to measure progress. For example, the *2004-05 Measuring Up* report is organized according to 12 overarching government goals with 76 performance measures established in the *2004-07 Government of Alberta Business Plan*. Goals 1 through 11 are related to the government's overall programs and services while Goal 12 is focused on government-owned and supported infrastructure (i.e. capital). For each goal total expenses are estimated based on the distribution of expenses from the *2004-05 Consolidated Statement of Operations* report.

For each goal a set of core government measures are aligned. For example, Goal 1 states "Albertans will be healthy" with core measures including: a) life expectancy at birth; b) participation in healthy behaviour; c) self-reported health status; d) overall quality of health care and e) ease of access to physician and hospital services. Furthermore, budgeted expenditures are reported along with actual expenditures (current year and previous year) for each respective goal. For example the budgeted expenditure for Goal 1 (health) was \$8.41 billion in 2004-05 and actual expenditures of \$9.07 billion (compared with \$7.63 billion in 2003-04).

Source: Barg et al. (2006)

## **Stakeholder Involvement**

Stakeholder involvement is a fundamental tenet of sustainable development, and therefore, is an extremely important aspect of NSDS governance. This is not just due to the need to build support for the priorities of the NSDS. Although important, the primary rationale for stakeholder involvement is rooted in complexity. No single group is likely to have sufficient perspective to understand and address complex integrated issues. Multiple perspectives are necessary, and this

requires broad stakeholder involvement. Participation also strengthens the relevance of the strategy and increases its legitimacy.

For effective stakeholder involvement we consider two criteria:

- *Formality*: The more formal the requirement for stakeholder involvement in the development and ongoing implementation of the NSDS objectives, the better.
- *Multi-stakeholder*: The broader the perspective attained through stakeholder involvement, the better.

When the requirement for stakeholder involvement in the development and ongoing implementation of NSDS objectives is formalized, strategy effectiveness increases. This is not to say that *ad hoc* stakeholder involvement processes are not effective, in fact they can reach more people and complement formal involvement. Formal processes however, can ensure that participation is not one-off and NSDS issues that require longer term and repeated engagement with stakeholders are addressed.

Three typologies of stakeholder involvement can be observed from the countries studied. The first type is characterized by a national government council that includes other stakeholders from outside government. The second type is an advisory council made up of stakeholders external to government. The third type is *ad hoc* characterized by consultation processes used during the process of creating strategies and action plans.

Table 6. Stakeholder involvement.

| Typology                                                     | Countries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National government councils with stakeholders</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Finland</i> - Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Czech Republic</i> - Government Council for Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Ireland</i> - National Sustainable Development Partnership</li> <li>▪ <i>Switzerland</i> - Sustainable Development Forum in which governments, cantons and larger towns participate</li> <li>▪ <i>Brazil</i> - Commission for Sustainable Development Policies and of the National Agenda 21</li> <li>▪ <i>South Korea</i> - Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development</li> </ul>                                                                                                              |
| <b>Non-government national stakeholder advisory councils</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>UK</i> - Sustainable Development Commission</li> <li>▪ <i>France</i> - National Council for Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Slovakia</i> - Working Group for Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Belgium</i> - Federal Council for Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Germany</i> - German Council for Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Portugal</i> - Portuguese Council for the Environmental and Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Philippines</i> - Philippine Council for Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ <i>Canada</i> –Round Table for the Environment and Economy</li> <li>▪ <i>South Africa</i> – Round table for the NSDS (2005)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Ad hoc consultations only</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Canada</i> – Required in development of departmental SD strategies</li> <li>▪ <i>Norway</i> - The National Action Plan was circulated for public comment, and comments were received from more than 70 organizations.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Sweden</b> - Stakeholder consultation for policy proposals in standard and academia and stakeholders are usually invited as experts to government / parliament committees (Niestroy 2005d, 262).</li> <li>▪ <b>Mexico</b> - Citizens' consultation sessions held in preparation of components of the national development plan</li> <li>▪ <b>EU</b> – More than 1100 contributions were made during consultations on the review of the SDS from council and parliament, member states, NGOs, citizens and other stakeholders (CEC 2005, 5)</li> <li>▪ <b>Italy</b>- The national environmental strategy for sustainable development was negotiated with relevant stakeholders including ministries, environmental NGOs, trade unions, enterprises and local authorities (CEC 2004, 47).</li> </ul> |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### ***National Government Councils with Stakeholders***

Featured here as good practice examples under this typology are Finland, Czech Republic and Ireland.

**Finland.** The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSO) has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Finnish Government's Programme for Sustainable Development. The Commission consists of 40 members from senior governmental officials and public administrators, to representatives from business, trade unions, science community, local authorities, domestic and international NGOs. Members include ministers of foreign affairs, agriculture and forestry, foreign trade and development, social affairs and health, labour, representatives from the ministries of finance, defence and education, the parliament and local authorities. They also include representatives from various social groups, non-governmental organizations, the media and indigenous people (the Sami). It is chaired by the Prime Minister and vice-chaired by the Minister of the Environment. The Secretariat of FNCSO is seated in the Ministry of Environment.

The FNCSO acts as a forum where different stakeholders present their ideas, goals and programmes, and engage in a broad debate about sustainability. It coordinates the implementation of sustainable development in Finland, provides the guidance to the development of sectoral and local SD strategies, as well as monitors and assesses the implementation of the NSDS in Finland.

In current strategy development process, a Strategy Group composed of 21 members from ministries and stakeholder organizations has been established. The Strategy Group is chaired by the Minister of Finance, and vice-chaired by the Minister of Environment and Minister of Social Affairs and Health. An inter-ministerial secretariat is set up in the Ministry of Environment. The Strategy Group organized various small workshops to discuss specific themes, and broad national consultation is launched via the Internet (FNCSO 2005).

**Czech Republic.** The Czech Republic's Government Council for Sustainable Development (GCSD) is mandated to encourage public discussion related to sustainable development, and to make information readily available for the public. The GCSD is made up of three non-governmental organizations, 15 ministries and agencies, and seven institutions and academic and private sector bodies. The GCSD meets once every three months and meetings are open to permanent collaborators of committees and working groups, experts or guests. External co-operators may be invited to serve on a committee or working group of the Council. Transparency is assured as the GCSD activities, adopted documents, and conclusions are posted on its web site

and made available to the public. In addition to this advisory Council, a Sustainable Development Forum takes place once a year to initiate public discussion and to build awareness of sustainable development among the public (GCSO 2003a, 2003b).

**Ireland.** The primary mechanism for consultation and dialogue on sustainable development in Ireland is the National Sustainable Development Partnership, “Comhar”. Formed in 1999 based on the 1997 SDS recommendation to improve partnership with stakeholders, the Comhar is mandated to advance the national agenda for sustainable development by providing advice and contributing to consensus (Comhar 2004, p.5). Through a series of working groups, agreements are sought on policy decisions regarding programs, policies and policy instruments; reports are commissioned and awareness-raising activities are funded (Steurer & Martinuzzi 2003 p.10)

The Comhar operates in 3 year cycles and consists of 25 members from government, economic sectors, environmental and social NGOs, professionals and academics (Comhar 2005, p.5). The chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Local Government is an “ex-officio” member of Comhar. Due to time limitations when preparing the 2002 update, the Comhar was the only consultation mechanism used for the update (Niestroy 2005b, p.190).

The Ministry of Environment and Local Government is the main Ministry that consults regularly with the Comhar, usually regarding new policy initiatives. Recognized as an experimental body, the Comhar is not yet perceived as having influence – lack of consultation with the Comhar with other Ministries or initiatives has been an important gap, particularly in the development of the National Development Plan (Niestroy 2005b, p.190).

### ***National Stakeholder Advisory Councils***

Featured as good practice examples under this typology are the UK, France and Germany.

**UK.** The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) in the UK was first established in 2000 for the purpose of advising and providing critical feedback on Sustainable Development to the UK government as well as advocating SD across all sectors, and building consensus on actions. The SDC consists of 21 nominated or appointed Commissioners from business, NGOs, local and regional administrations, and academia. The SDC reports to and has close links with the Office of the Prime Minister as well as the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Niestroy 2005e).

There is some criticism that the SDC would have more influence if it were linked to an overarching government body, rather than to Defra (Niestroy 2005e). This thinking appears to be reflected in the 2005 SDS, where consideration is given to the possibility of the SDC as an executive agency under statutory requirements. In the meantime, the role of the SDC is being strengthened by the addition of a director and allocation of additional resources (UK Secretary of State 2005).

*Ad hoc* consultations were also used in preparation of the strategy. Consultation on the 2005 SDS included online discussion, 20 workshops organized by independent sustainable development organisations, nine regional dialogue events in England, and facilitated local community consultations. Written and electronic responses from the public reached 900 (Niestroy 2005e).

**France.** For the purpose of transparency and participation, France included the regional authorities and civil society in the development of the NSDS, (CNDD 2003, p.13). In fact, the attitude was that in order to develop a successful strategy, “mobilisation of all French citizens and

...the participation of all of society's players”, (CNDD 2003, p.13), would be necessary. To this end, the National Council for Sustainable Development which brings together 90 members representing thousands of different groups from regional authorities and civil society, was established on January 14th, 2003, (CNDD 2003, p.13).

In terms of *ad hoc* stakeholder involvement, all ministries have been asked to identify, organise and prioritise lines of action, and in doing so, have been encouraged to use open dialogue and to work together with all stakeholders in civil society, (CNDD 2003, p.133).

**Germany.** The main body for encouraging stakeholder involvement is the German Council for Sustainable Development. Established in April 2001 by the Chancellory, the council consists of 17 members of the public and is responsible contributing to the implementation of the SDS, designation of specific areas of action and projects and raising public awareness of sustainability.

Public consultation on SDS progress reports appears to be increasing through online mechanism, such as the website “dialogue for sustainability” established in 2004. Notwithstanding, there is still a sense that the National Sustainability Strategy continues to reach experts, but has not yet engaged a broader public (Germany RNE 2005, p.31). This has been attributed to an overall low interest by the public in politics during the past decade and a half, and also because of the relatively low budget of the German Council for Sustainable Development (Niestroy 2005a, p.147).

In addition to engaging in critical dialogue with the Federal Government and civil society, it also takes part in a network of European environment and sustainability councils which reviews the European SDS. The Council also initiated a federal campaign “Citizens initiate Sustainability” (BIN) which promotes projects at local and regional levels (Germany RNE 2006, p.1).

## ***Links to Local Level SD Governance Mechanisms***

To be considered strategic and effective, national action toward sustainable development must catalyze new action and leverage the self-organizing potential at the sub-national and local levels. Promoting sustainable development effectively when central, state or provincial and municipal governments may all be pursuing different agendas is inherently complex, but critically necessary.

The effectiveness of NSDS governance in relation to linking with local level SD action can be assessed based on the following criteria:

- *Guidance:* The clearer the recommendation in the NSDS for SD related strategies at the state/provincial and community levels, the better; and
- *Coordination:* The more coordination between NSDS objectives and the objectives of state/provincial and community levels, the better.

The analysis presented here is from the perspective of effective governance of the NSDS. A country with an active local SD process that was catalyzed at a sub-national level is not necessarily a reflection of an effective NSDS – it is a reflection of an engaged local citizenry. What we are trying to capture is how the NSDS provides impetus for strategic SD action at the local level and how coordinated it is with the local level – receiving and incorporating messages on priority issues from the ground up, and sending messages of priority issues at the national level to the ground for implementation.

We group countries into three broad categories based on varying degrees of guidance and coordination. The first category and the one we consider most effective from an NSDS assessment perspective includes NSDSs that recommend local SD related strategic action and attempt to coordinate with it. This type of coordination has potential for increased effectiveness as local and national programs can work together and exploit comparative strengths to achieve shared objectives. The second category includes countries that recommend local SD action, but do not necessarily coordinate this local action. The third category is a listing of countries for which SD action at the local level is occurring, but the NSDS does not stress the need or importance of such action. Again it is important to note that this typology is not an assessment of the effectiveness of the local action itself, but rather it is a reflection on the degree of importance awarded to it by the NSDS.

Table 7. Linkages with local SD action.

| Typology                                                                       | Countries                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NSDS recommends local SD action and coordinates with it</b>                 | Switzerland, Ireland, France, Czech Republic, South Korea |
| <b>NSDS recommends local SD action</b>                                         | Sweden, Finland, UK, Italy, Philippines, China            |
| <b>Local SD action, but NSDS does not stress the importance of such action</b> | Germany, Slovakia, Portugal                               |

***NSDS Recommends Local SD Action and Has Described Mechanisms to Coordinate with It***

Switzerland, Ireland, France, Czech Republic and South Korea appear to be countries that recommend local SD action, along with implementation mechanisms to coordinate the action. These countries are featured here as good practice examples.

**Switzerland.** The Federal Office for Spatial Development fosters systematic collaboration with cantons, towns and cities in the field of sustainable development (in the context of the Forum for Sustainable Development) and promotes the Local Agenda 21 campaign at cantonal, regional and local level (Swiss ARE 2005 and 2005b).

Quality criteria for a sustainable development process were developed by a working group from the Sustainable Development Forum for cantons and towns and are meant as a “reference framework for public authority actors at the cantonal level.

**Ireland.** The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government is centrally responsible for Ireland’s 29 County Councils and 5 city councils (Ireland DOEI, 2002). The main sphere of influence for local authorities is in the adoption of local development plans. The 1997 SDS included elements of local planning, and three years later, legislation was introduced to include “proper planning and sustainable development” in addition to Strategic Environmental Assessment for all plans at county, regional and local levels. Later, the National Spatial Strategy was developed, though linkages to the SDS appear to be weak (Niestroy 2005b).

There are some linkages between Local Agenda 21 and the SDS. The 1997 SDS requested that local authorities complete a LA 21 for their areas by 1998. Resources for local communities were



provided by an Environmental Partnership Fund, to enable “a wide range of on-the-ground projects to be undertaken by local authorities and NGOs in partnership at local level, with or without a LA 21 approach” (Ireland DOEI 1997, p.57). Some delays in formal adoption of Local Agenda 21 have been attributed to local government reform (Ireland DOEI 1997, p.57). The 2002 update includes promotion of Local Agenda 21 through County and City Board Development processes (Ireland DOEI 2002).

**France.** France’s Ministry for Ecology and Sustainable Development encourages Agenda 21 implementation focusing on integrating SD into local policy and in 2004, 119 Local Agenda 21 plans were registered in France (Gomez 2005, p. 16). The plans have three levels: Departmental (involving the department’s townships); Inter-communal (an agreement between two or more townships); and, Local (involving particular local interests) (Gomez, 2005, p.16). In support of these Agendas, the Ministry for Ecology and Sustainable Development periodically organizes “seminars of reflection”, inviting 155 local communities constituting the “National Agenda 21 Network” (France MEDD 2004, p.3). The seminars provide an occasion for sharing knowledge on SD.

**Norway.** At sub-national level, more than 60% of the municipalities have already signed the Fredrikstad Declaration, a Norwegian tool for promoting democracy and sustainable development. After the adoption of the NSDS, county and municipal authorities continued to adopt the methods of Local Agenda 21, or the Fredrikstad Declaration. The preparation of municipal and county master plans and local development plans is required to integrate sustainable development (Arto Ruotsalainen 2005).

**Czech Republic.** The Working Group for Local Agenda 21 in the Czech Republic under the Government Council for Sustainable Development aims to disseminate lessons learned in the implementation of local Agenda 21 in municipalities, micro-regions and regions. The intent is to ensure that Local Agenda 21 becomes a customary instrument of public administration, contributing to the principles which lead to sustainable development.

Furthermore, the strategy recognizes that in the field of regional development, it is necessary to work towards eliminating economic disparities through creating conditions which provide support for the co-operation of regions and the implementation of local Agenda 21. This is measured by a set of indicators, one of them being, the percentage of local authorities that have implemented Agenda 21 (Czech Republic GCSD 2003).

**South Korea.** Local Agenda 21 is widespread in Korea as it is being planned or implemented in 90% of Local Administration Districts (222 out of 248). Local Agenda 21 has been instrumental facilitating a shift towards bottom-up approaches to local level decision making in Korea, particularly as local associations and NGOs were also on the rise since the early 1990s. The Korean Council for Local Agenda 21, a voluntary national network, was formed by the central government and the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development (PCSD) to assist with local capacity building for LA 21 implementation (KCLA21 2006).

The Council has had some direct involvement in sustainable development planning including conducting research on plans for the PCSD and organization of the Local Council for Sustainable Development. Progress towards incorporation of sustainable development policies at the local level is limited however, and has been attributed to a lack of active participation on the part of administrative bodies. A related factor is that LA 21 projects often are on-off projects that may prevent long term comprehensive understanding of sustainable development among local officials (Republic of Korea MOE 2003).

### ***NSDS Recommends Local SD Action***

Among those countries recommending local action in the NSDS, but not necessarily coordinating with this action include Sweden, Finland, UK, Italy, Philippines and China. The cases of Sweden, Finland and the UK are discussed below in detail.

**Sweden.** In Sweden, after Rio (1992), municipalities were encouraged to start Local Agenda 21 processes, which were supported by government grants and in 1995 the National Committee for Agenda 21 was established for monitoring the process (Niestroy 2005d, 261). Around 70% of the municipalities have LA 21 processes and roughly half have developed their own SD / local action plan (Niestroy 2005d, 261). “So far no mutual adaptation of the national SDS and the Local Agenda 21 activities has taken place,” though there are some new initiatives to strengthen these links: in 2004 the Government SDS asked all local authorities to develop their own SDS by 2005; and the Ministry of Regional Affairs will present the revised NSDS at its annual conference on SDS (Niestroy 2005d, 261).

**Finland.** In Finland the FGPSD encourages local authorities, private sector and many social actors to follow the lines of action described in the Programme. Many local authorities had their own local Agenda 21s before the national SD strategy was formulated. Up to 2005, around 80 per cent of Finnish municipalities have started LA 21 processes (Niestroy 2005).

**UK.** In the UK one of the key messages of the 2004 NSDS consultation was a need for Government to “reenergize community action to achieve a step change in the delivery of sustainable development” (Niestroy 2005d). This may particularly be the case as the once abundant Local Agenda 21 initiatives no longer have the momentum they once did. A new program included in the 2005 SDS, “Community Action 2020 – Together We Can” appears to respond to the need for greater community action. The program is being developed through the Central Local Partnership, a collaborative effort between the Local Government Association, the Improvement and Development Agency, the Audit Commission and other stakeholders.

## **3. OBSERVATIONS ON GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR SD GOVERNANCE**

This review of good practice examples of governance related to NSDSs reveals some innovations in virtually all of the countries studied. Some of the positive trends observed include:

- Of the twenty-one jurisdictions considered in this paper, eighteen were pursuing a NSDS process (titled either as a national SD strategy or an Agenda 21) whereby national-level direction was provided to government departments;
- Almost three-quarters of the jurisdictions studied had a formal advisory or national council for SD to enable vetting of development initiatives from multi-perspectives; and
- Half of the countries studied made recommendations for local level SD related action.

Some of the most interesting good practice examples revealed in the analysis are summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Featured good practice examples.

| <b>Governance Structure</b>                                | <b>Country</b>                            | <b>Good Practice Examples</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategy Coordination                                      | UK<br>Norway                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UK Sustainable Development Strategy 2005; UK Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development; Community Action 2020</li> <li>▪ National Strategy for Sustainable Development; National Action Plan for SD; Fredrikstad Declaration</li> </ul>                                                                                          |
| Placement of Responsibility                                | Germany<br>Norway<br>Sweden               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guidance competence of the Chancellor</li> <li>▪ Office of Prime Minister and special committee chaired by Ministry of Finance</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Sustainable Development (merger of Energy, Environment, and Planning and Housing departments)</li> </ul>                                                                         |
| Legislative underpinning                                   | Canada<br>Switzerland                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Auditor Generals Act requiring departmental strategies every three years</li> <li>▪ The Federal Swiss Constitution (1999)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Integration with Existing Planning and Budgeting Processes | Norway                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Action Plan adopted as part of the National Budget 2004. This mandates the implementation of the SD strategy through the regular planning and budget processes of national sectoral authorities.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   |
| Stakeholder Involvement                                    | France<br>UK<br>Finland<br>Czech Republic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Council for Sustainable Development (90 members)</li> <li>▪ Sustainable Development Commission (links to regions)</li> <li>▪ Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development</li> <li>▪ Government Council for Sustainable Development</li> </ul>                                                                      |
| Links to Local SD Governance Mechanisms                    | Switzerland<br>France                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quality criteria developed for “public authority actors at the cantonal, regional and municipal levels who are embarking on a new sustainable development process or who wish to improve an existing process (Swiss ARE 2006).”</li> <li>▪ 119 Local Agenda 21s. Three levels of plans (township, between townships, local)</li> </ul> |

But many challenges remain for the governance aspects studied in this paper. Some of the trends of concern observed in the analysis include the following:

- Only six of the twenty-one jurisdictions studied place responsibility for the NSDS with the prime minister or president’s office;
- Only four countries had a legal mandate for ongoing strategy development and implementation;
- Only one country studied had an NSDS that appeared to be integrated with an existing planning and budgeting process. However, nine other countries had strategy processes with some tangential linkages with existing planning and budgeting processes; and
- Only five of the countries studied attempted to coordinate national level SD action with local SD related efforts.

These challenges are serious and are reason to reflect further on the advantages and disadvantages of the various typologies observed for each aspect of governance considered in this paper.

## ***Nature of Strategy Coordination***

The typologies observed included “top-down” (an NSDS or Agenda 21 processes), bottom-up (departmental SD strategies - Canada), and other (e.g., some integration of SD concepts into existing development planning processes – e.g., Mexico). The advantage of the top-down typology is that the strategy produced is typically more comprehensive in its coverage of economic, social and environmental issues and is relevant to more government departments. Bottom-up (departmental) SD strategies may be comprehensive in coverage of specific sectoral issues compared to a top-down strategy, but given that they are departmental strategies, they are not typically integrated with the strategies of other departments.

The “other” category is a more complex typology. Mexico’s efforts to integrate SD concepts into existing development planning processes is certainly a potentially effective approach, but suffers from the trade-off that the SD concepts introduced are diluted relative to a focused NSDS process. We return to this discussion in the next section which highlights what we see as the key challenge and opportunity related to the NSDS.

## ***Placement of Responsibility and Legal Basis***

The typologies considered for this governance aspect included top-level responsibility, devolved responsibility among planning departments and among environment departments, and legal or no legal mandate for the NSDS. It is certainly difficult to argue the importance of top-level leadership by the prime minister or president’s office and even finance departments. Devolving responsibility of such a cross-cutting government function to a single department such as an environment department is not an effective governance structure. Devolving responsibility to a single department can, however, be effective if the department has some inherent cross-cutting function (e.g., a finance department and its mandate for fiscal responsibility and public accountability such as in Norway; a department of sustainable development that is a merger of several key departments such as in Sweden). Responsibility should not be confused here with involvement, which is necessary for all departments across government for an effective NSDS process. But responsibility must be focused somewhere, and to be most effective this should be with an office or department with a cross-cutting function that has legitimacy across government.

Legal embeddedness for a process of strategic and coordinated action is fundamental. But evidence from studying twenty-one jurisdictions would indicate that sustainable development is still not a priority that demands longevity and certainty of process.

## ***Stakeholder Involvement***

The typologies observed for this governance aspect included national government councils with stakeholder involvement, national stakeholder advisory councils and ad hoc stakeholder participation processes. A truly insightful discussion on this aspect requires a study in and of itself. Suffice it to say here that all three typologies have their place in the NSDS. National government councils have the advantage of ensuring more relevance for the council given its close ties to government decision makers, but it typically does not allow for a sufficient number of stakeholders to provide the level of multiple perspectives which complex issues demand.

The stakeholder council suffers from the opposite dilemma in that it typically has broad stakeholder representation, but lacking the influence and direct connection with key government decision makers. But clearly, an independent stakeholder body is critical to the NSDS because it represents ownership of progress toward improvements in economic, social and environmental wellbeing for which all levels of government, businesses and citizens all influence and share responsibility for progress.

The answer just might be that both are required for something as comprehensive as priorities for a development that is sustainable represents.

## ***Links to Local Level SD Governance Mechanisms***

The typologies observed for this aspect of NSDS governance included: recommendation for and coordination with local SD action; recommendation for local SD action; and local SD action not necessarily influenced by NSDS. These typologies represent degrees of effectiveness rather than different types of coordination. Coordination with local SD action is the most effective because it is understood that local SD action is important, as is the two-way feedback involved in coordinating the action. Because all development is essentially local, feedback from local to national levels is fundamental. At the same time, cumulative impacts from unsustainable development may not be detectable at one local point, resulting in a need for feedback from national to local levels as well.

## ***Integration of NSDS and Existing Planning and Budgeting Processes***

The typologies observed for this aspect of governance are similar to the local governance aspect in that they represent varying degrees of integration of the NSDS with existing planning and budgeting processes. The first typology represents full integration of the NSDS with existing planning and budgeting processes. We featured Norway as exhibiting initial progress toward such integration. The advantages of full integration are numerous and typify effective strategic and coordinated action for sustainable development.

We pay particular attention here to the challenge of integrating the NSDS with existing national planning and budgeting processes for two primary reasons. First, the effectiveness of integration is in many ways a proxy for the effectiveness criteria relevant to other aspects of governance considered in this paper. Second, although such integration has been a serious challenge to date, a tremendous opportunity is emerging given a recent surge of innovation in government accountability systems and frameworks. We elaborate on these two reasons below.

Integration with existing national planning and budgeting systems is a good proxy for the overall effectiveness of the NSDS because seamless integration of the sustainability concept with existing planning and budgeting processes would:

- Require that sustainability priorities and objectives be comprehensive in nature, and operate in an integrated manner with economic, social and environmental issues and relevant for all departments (*relevance and comprehensiveness criteria*)
- Inherently involve all departments (*departmental involvement criteria*)
- Place responsibility for progress toward priorities and objectives with the Prime Minister or President's office (or equivalent) and as well would involve the finance departments which coordinate and monitor the expenditures (*placement of responsibility criteria*)

- Embed sustainability concepts naturally within legal requirement for departments to prepare plans and report annually on progress (*Legislative embeddedness criteria*)
- Demand formal involvement of multiple stakeholders through the regular process of preparing national budgets (*formal and multi-stakeholder involvement criteria*)
- Provide guidance to other levels of government as national-level expenditures inherently impact local economic, social and environmental conditions (*guidance criteria*)
- Help coordinate action with other levels of government via fiscal responsibility and accountability (*coordination criteria*)

From this perspective addressing the challenge of integration of NSDS and existing planning and budgeting processes is a critical leverage point for navigating sustainable development. A second reason to pay particular attention to this challenge is because of the enormous opportunity that is beginning to present itself through recent innovations in government accountability systems. These innovations appear to be occurring more in sub-national levels of government and we base this on observations at the provincial and state government levels in Canada (see Box 2 describing goal-based budgeting in the Alberta Provincial Government) and the United States (see Box 3 on results-oriented strategic planning in the state of Oregon). We make the assumption that similar advances in government accountability systems have and are also occurring in other countries.

As previously noted, Cherp et al. (2004) reminds us of two critical points. First, Agenda 21, the United Nations call to action for sustainable development (SD) at the national level, *envisaged that the necessary harmonization and extension of existing policies and plans would occur through the adoption of an identifiable strategy for sustainable development* (paragraph 8.7). Second, and most importantly, the overall objective was not to develop a new strategy document, but “to improve or restructure the decision-making process so that consideration of socio-economic and environmental issues is fully integrated and a broader range of public participation assured (paragraph 8.3, Agenda 21).”

The concept of sustainable development was indeed an innovation in development thinking. But the concept needs to be incorporated into existing government decision making machinery to have impact. In an ideal situation, i.e., where a government accountability system such as presented in Boxes 2 and 3 already exists, the concept of sustainable development can be integrated with the existing government machinery at the appropriate places. For example, with an overall vision and goals of future development in place, the tenets of inter-generational consideration and integration of economic, social and environmental systems could help improve an existing vision and its underlying outcome-based objectives. And with an outcome-based monitoring and evaluation system to provide navigational aids to departments in place, progress toward societal outcomes in the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development could be tracked and necessary adaptations made to existing policies and programs. Additionally, the sustainability tenet of multi-stakeholder participation in creating the vision and the underlying priorities could also help improve the existing machinery.

But the fact is that these high-level government accountability and strategic public management components have not yet been formally created in many governments. Coupled with the fact that the concept of sustainable development resonated first with environment departments, this has led to the creation of NSDS documents, processes and related indicators that are not integrated with the existing planning and budgeting machinery of government. Champions in environment departments put forth strategic documents relevant to the entire development picture, but they lack the legitimacy in most cases with the planning and finance departments, and the rest of

government, to introduce a public administrative component that is relevant to government as a whole.

So fifteen years after Agenda 21 put forth the notion of NSDSs, we typically still have sustainable development strategy documents and processes that are not connected with government planning and budgeting, and we still have development indicators for which government departments do not typically have to refer to in a regular cycle of continuous learning, improvement and adaptation.

But improvements in the integration of the NSDS in existing government planning and budgeting processes are occurring as exemplified by countries such as Norway and the involvement of the Finance department in the NSDS and the UK through the spending review process. Countries like Mexico, which are attempting to introduce the sustainability concept directly into their existing development planning processes, are interesting cases to keep abreast of as such cases will highlight the tradeoffs between a more elaborate understanding of sustainable development via the NSDS and a higher degree of integration with existing processes.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS - THE CHALLENGE AND THE OPPORTUNITY OF INTEGRATION**

The NSDS is at a critical juncture in its development. In most applications, the NSDS is still not sufficiently linked to existing government planning, reporting and budgeting systems. This is a serious weakness because this type of integration can be a good proxy for the overall effectiveness of NSDS governance. But with this challenge we see an enormous opportunity emerging. At the same time that governments are developing the NSDS and its associated governance structures (often championed by environment departments), governments via finance departments and treasury board secretariats are also making important advances in government accountability (e.g., annual departmental planning and reporting processes). And both of these efforts – the NSDS and government accountability systems, have a common purpose – that being to navigate real progress toward advances in the quality of life of its citizens.

For government accountability systems to become more strategic and outcome-oriented, a viable and sophisticated concept of future national development is required. The concept of sustainable development can help meet this need through its inter-generational consideration, integrated thinking (integrated economic, social and environmental perspectives) and its multi-stakeholder principles. For the NSDS to become more strategic and outcome-oriented, strategies must be integrated into the existing machinery of governmental planning, reporting and budgeting. The NSDS and current efforts toward government accountability would appear to be a perfect match – with the potential to advance a form of national development that is sustainable.

Synergy between these two governance components (e.g., Figure 2) is urgently needed if we are to achieve real and timely progress toward effective strategic and coordinated action for sustainable development. While creating this synergy is largely a function of leadership, it is also a function of understanding of the extent of improvements that are being made on both sides of the equation – an awareness of and embrace of innovations in government accountability systems by those championing the concept of SD, and similarly, of innovations in the NSDS by those championing government accountability and whole-of-government planning and reporting systems.

From the perspective of those championing the NSDS, this synergy could be facilitated by focusing more effort on analysing the components of good practice examples in government accountability and whole-of-government planning and reporting systems being pursued by finance departments in national level governments. Even more importantly, effort should be put toward studying state/provincial and city level governments where much of the innovation in this regard appears to be occurring.

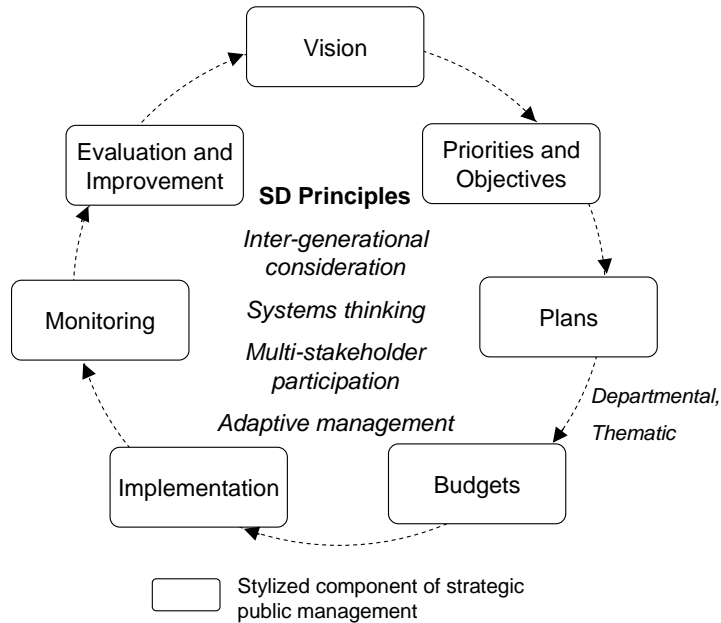


Figure 2. Effective governance - Synergy between government accountability/ whole-of-government planning and reporting systems and the NSDS.



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