

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As expressed by the 1987 Brundtland report «our common future», Sustainable Development is defined as a development that «meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs» and improve the livelihood of human communities within the limits of ecosystems capacity. Through this definition, the international community considers the impact of human activities, both in time and space. It provides development approaches with global and inter-generational solidarities.

Sustainable development has three principal components: Economic, Social and environmental:

- Economic, with growth objectives and economic efficiency;
- Social, with equity and social cohesion objectives, including questions related to health, consumption, education, labour, culture and housing;
- Environmental, in order to improve the management and preserve within the long term the environment

«Sustainable development is generally considered as a theoretical concept. It must now be included in the day-to-day life of every French». In order to answer to this President requirement, the government adopted several measures within the last two years, during three main phases:

- The 28th of November 2002, first inter-ministerial meeting focused on sustainable development: 64 short-term measures are adopted regarding economic activities, regions, prevention and police, public information and education, toward an exemplary state process and international actions. The meeting builds the framework of the National Sustainable Development Strategy, along with a governance mechanism based on an Inter-ministerial Committee for Sustainable Development, chaired by the prime minister and a National Council for Sustainable Development, bringing together local authorities, companies and civil society.
- The 3rd of June 2003, the first inter-ministerial committee for Sustainable Development adopts the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (see <http://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/sndd-2.pdf>), resulting from consultations between the government and civil society. The strategy extends, within a detailed action plan, the short-term measures adopted during the 2002 governmental meeting. It establishes an intervention framework to take into account long term and global effects resulting from economic development and individual behaviour. It directs the governmental action for the next five years and fixes objectives to every minister.
- During the spring session, the parliament adopted the Environmental Charter. This constitutional modification must be now ratified. When it will be done, the Charter will add, according to the wish of the President, the respect of the environment to the fundamental principles of the Republic, stated both in the 1789 human right declaration for civic and political right and the 1946 constitution for economic and social rights.

The Charter principles will stand out through the next laws. At an international level, the Charter expresses the willingness of the French authorities to become an exemplary State in the domain of environment and sustainable development.

The present report points out the implementation of the NSDS. The deep changes involved by a shift of the development approach require the participation of every stakeholders, whether the State or the citizens. The NSDS objectives put forward a range of sectorial tools.

The evaluation and evolution of the strategy is also part of the exercise. This executive summary presents the main conclusions drawn by the permanent senior officials committee for sustainable development.

1. FACILITATING THE PARTICIPATION

With the NSDS, the government promotes the participation of every stakeholder: State, local authorities, companies, NGOs and citizens.

The State: includes institutional measures: the Minister in charge of Sustainable Development, Inter-ministerial Committee for Sustainable Development, National Council for Sustainable Development and Network of senior officials dedicated to sustainable development.

Along with those measures, an inter-ministerial representative for sustainable development is nominated (order n°2004-601, 24 June 2004), in order to:

- Prepare, follow-up and implement Inter-ministerial Committee for Sustainable Development consultations.
- Implement evaluation, training and communication actions and take part in the definition of research programmes on sustainable development
- Coordinate actions of senior officials in charge of sustainable development (article 5 of the order from 21-02-03)
- Take part in the definition of the National Council for Sustainable Development work programmes
- Present his works to the Prime Minister and the Minister in charge of Sustainable development

Local authorities: Several local authorities have started since 1997, projects regarding sustainable development and were mobilised for the Johannesburg Summit. The number of Environmental Charters and «local Agenda 21» increase and are more closely followed by elected representatives at a municipal and inter-communal level. Departments and regions are on the way. This is due to incentives developed by the government and public administrations. Some actions related to sustainable development appear also in the State-region contracts. At this stage, many local actors want the government to establish a shared vision between public administrations on a sustainable development territorial project. This expectation is expressed within the NSDS objectives to reach 500 «local Agenda 21» projects.

Economic stakeholders: are with consumers the main actors of the economic sphere. Their number is increasing. They tend to promote consultations between actors and display coherent strategies with a long-term development. They start to combine their economic interests with a positive image of their actions through sustainable development related messages toward the general public.

This is mainly the case of firms listed in the CAC 40. An effort must be done to help small businesses to take into account, sector by sector, sustainable development objectives. For that purposes, it is important to work with local chambers and professional organisations, especially for vocational and continuing training.

The consumer mobilisation is also very important. To that extend, It is worth to note the initiative « www.consodurable.fr », supported by the Minister in charge of consumption and the Minister in charge of Sustainable Development.

Non governmental organisations: many NGOs have been concerned by environment related issues for a long time. They face now a double problem of reorientation and balanced budget. Some NGOs have started, for example, a global reflection on territories or transport management. They would need some support concerning the implementation of sustainable development engineering.

Citizens: with the media, they are generally more concerned with environmental questions and participate more spontaneously in public debates. The Minister in charge of SD notices this evolution of perceptions and behaviours. If we notice a better understanding of terms including sustainable development (fight against poverty, climate change, inequality), this new acculturation needs to be strengthened. Therefore it is essential to pursue the NSDS approach: explain the concept, available information, trainings, participation of citizens to public debates.

The sustainable development week: was the second edition (16 to 27 June 2004). This year, it combined national and regional actions. The multiplications of manifestations and presentations in different place show the success of this edition. The speeches of several Ministers during the week, along with their attention to actions led by their administration regarding sustainable development, ensure its recognition. The sustainable development week must become the key meeting of putting forward initiatives.

Reliable and available information: to the public is an objective of the national strategy. After its adoption, the present report along with the one regarding the state of sustainable development will be available on Internet. Those documents will enhance the approach credibility with the general public and the European and foreign observers.

Education and training: are essential in the NSDS. Sustainable development is a long-term approach involving a complete change of behaviours. It will be possible if people are aware that an alternative way of development exists. Because, if our current way of development has allowed an unprecedented growth, this path is not sustainable.

To this extend, giving courses at school to young people, can and must play an essential role. In 2003-04, such initiatives have been implemented by the Minister in charge of Education.

This approach must be wider than teaching environment protection practices. The challenge is to raise the awareness that solutions lie in new development strategies, completely different with the one we know now.

This approach must also target adults. It is therefore important to include it in vocational trainings. It must also target elected representatives, at the European, national and local level.

The participation of citizens to public debates: is an objective stated at Rio. Two leverages appear as essential to achieve it:

- An available information to citizens as stated in the Aarhus convention and the directive «plan-programme»
- Public debates that prepares national, regional or local decision-making.

An experience developed throughout debates on water and energy has allowed improvements in public debates methods and a better participation of citizens. However, it is worth to note that practices of public debates come from governance methods from North countries where consensus is part of the political culture. Therefore its adaptation to France,

a country with a different political tradition, needs to take precautions in order to avoid both to give an excessive place to lobby and to question the role of elected representatives which constitutes the pillar of our democratic institutions.

2. ACTIONS MEANS

Sustainable development involves almost every public policy. Some have a predominant role.

THE RESEARCH

Research, focused on global or local stakes, must deepen knowledge related to complex systems, particularly human and environmental interactions.

A study undertaken by the Ministry in charge of Research, evaluates, a 2002 budget involving sustainable development approach, at around 1611 millions euros, nearly 18% of the global research budget.

Research on sustainable development, adopted by the Ministry in charge of Research, is based on a global vision, sectorial strategies and concrete actions. It involves the central administration and research organisations. An Inter-directional committee, inside the administration, led by a senior official in charge of Sustainable development, contributes to propose actions. He is supported by research organisation representatives in charge of sustainable development.

The workshop report «Research regarding sustainable development», led by the Professor Guesnerie and decided by the Minister in charge of Research and the Secretary of State in charge of sustainable development, proposed an approach that can be included in the strategy evolution of the whole scientific community:

- Every scientific discipline and fundamental research are concerned with sustainable development
- Sustainable development and research needs a long term approach
- The Society asks for knowledge, technologies, appraisal, decision support and communication
- Sustainable development needs inter-disciplinary and transversal approach and tools allowing integration between research fields, particularly the contribution of human and social sciences

It is essential to move economic knowledge, which has a strategic mission of coordination and integration, toward inter-disciplinary approach to build interface and resolve problems. Those inter-disciplinary conditions must be deepened to combine this objective with the different disciplines objectives.

Those institutional articulations must also involve coordination with both international research and technologic and scientific prospecting.

In addition, cooperation between research, civil society, businesses and administration must also be improved. Development and improvement of scientific communication, but also the adaptation of higher education to sustainable development questions, can contribute to a better account of world stakes. The circulation of researchers within institutions and organisations must also be facilitated.

ENHANCING INCENTIVES TOWARDS ECONOMIC ACTORS

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is a voluntary approach, relates to principles and programmes that companies adopts to answer, beyond the compliance with the law, to demands coming from investors, consumers, employees and the public.

In France, the most committed companies are part of associations that work on those questions. It is worth to note: ORSE (Observatory on corporate responsibility), AERES (Business Association for the reduction of greenhouse effect gas), EPE (companies for the environment), and OREE (Companies and local authorities partnership for the environment).

Regarding CSR, some French companies produce and publish environmental reports or include social data to their annual report in order to respond to an increasing need of information. Thus, social reporting comes from a private initiative and CSR gives a large voluntary initiative framework to businesses.

With this evolution, the truthfulness of speeches and reports are therefore a crucial question. The State controls some sectors with its technical services in charge of environmental police. But generally, corporate social and environmental responsibility is not monitored.

In order to promote this approach, the French administration has given a legal framework to CSR related information provided by companies to their shareholders. According to the article 116 of the law on new economic regulations, companies, quoted on the stock exchange, must provide in their annual reports information on the way they take into account social and environmental impacts related to their activity. The law states social and environmental criteria that require information and widen the obligation to inform both to every stakeholder (NGO, trade unions, consumers...) and to new fields (social, territory, environment). Those innovations don't involve new social or environmental rules but impose on companies to inform about those questions. A report from the Minister in charge of labour and social cohesion and one from ORSE-OREE-EPE highlight the application of the new economic regulations law.

Labels and norms: Nowadays several tools exist to help businesses to adopt sustainable approaches such as French and European norms, auto-evaluation tools, rating agency....

The NSDS advocates that the State encourages companies or local authorities to be certified ISO 14000 or to follow the EMAS regulation. A guide on SD21000 recommendations, realised by AFNOR and its partners, help businesses to implement sustainable development strategies. This guide is undertaken by AFNOR as part of the ISO work.

«Sustainable or green» fiscal measures, along with direct incentives to businesses and consumers, must also be developed in order to become an effective sustainable development leverage. The environmental Charter should facilitate this evolution because it puts forward green fiscal measures in comparison with redistributive or financing fiscal measures.

TOOLS AND ORGANISATION TOWARD AN EXEMPLARY STATE

The public procurements policy has a strong impact on economic activities. It concerns public administrations as a whole, from local to national, public companies and companies in charge of public services.

The new procurement contract code (10/01/2004) introduces the possibility of taking environmental criteria into account when preparing contracts. A permanent group of market study has been set up for that purpose. For the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005, it is developing guides and recommendations integrating sustainable

development, towards public procurement departments. It anticipates the coming evolutions of the procurement contract code which has to include European directives. It will give an increasing weight to sustainable development related criteria.

The LOLF «loi organique sur les lois de finance» (organic law on budget law) will deeply modified the financial year, both for administrations and for parliament in which power is strongly reinforced. The state budget will move from a culture of means to a culture of results. It will give more flexibility to the budget execution with a higher credits fungibility.

The public policies coherence, the effectiveness of sustainable development orientations and information to the parliament require a «transversal policy document with regards to sustainable development». The Ministry in charge of sustainable development has asked the production of this document.

The State reform implies many projects:

Following the nomination of their senior officials in charge of sustainable development, several Ministries have set up co-ordination committees to conduct the implementation of sustainable development approach within sectorial policies. But, despite the call of the minister in charge of public services, there is no consideration regarding sustainable development within ministerial strategies of reform (SRM).

The on-going year has allowed to increase trainings of civil servants regarding sustainable development.

At decentralised levels, the new strategic actions plans of the State within regions (PASER) and departments (PASED) refer to inter-ministerial policies. Some refer to sustainable development and to the NSDS.

However, we observe that administrations need more experience in the field of sustainable development. They haven't used yet tools being already tested. The senior officials in charge of sustainable development, helped by some experts, analyse the first experiences, make them sharing and draw recommendations.

3. EVALUATION-EVOLUTION

As stated in the introduction of the NSDS, «the concerted elaboration of the national strategy is a strong advantage to the implementation success. However difficulties are still numerous. A continuous monitoring process will be put in place with the senior officials committee and the national council for sustainable development. Highlighting differences with objectives will imply correction measures: increasing public awareness, best practices diffusion and if necessary review objectives and measures.» the present report reinforces this diagnosis.

IMPLEMENTING FIRST

The national sustainable development strategy covers a very wide field: almost every public policies. Its aim is to change policies in the sense of sustainable development. Some decisions taken during the year have already modified some objectives or actions contained in the NSDS: conciliations, a clarification of objectives, etc. The national strategy is evolutionary and the evaluation process must take that into account.

The 64 measures taken during the 2002 inter-ministerial meeting are presented within this report, and a chapter emphasises the state of realisation.

It is proposed that:

- When their contents adopted, the sectorial strategies must be included within the national strategy

- Propositions and recommendations formulated by the National Council for Sustainable Development involve modifications
- Encountered difficulties lead to modifications
- Results and lessons lead to adjustments

WITH REFERENCE POINTS TO KEEP THE COURSE

The pragmatism within the formulation must not hide operational objectives stated in the NSDS and recommended by the international community. They are related to anticipations and preventions of short and long term risks. Their stakes are global and essential.

Therefore, indicators on «the state of sustainable development» is an essential measuring tool of the sustainable development approach. They highlight the multi-facetted reality:

- Long term growth factors and heritage to the next generation
- Performance of the production and consumption sustainability
- Social cohesion
- Long term risk management

«The state of sustainable development» allows European and international comparisons. It points out time based evolutions and evaluates policy effectiveness within a long term approach. It gives diversified data for citizen information and public awareness. It supports decision-making process of stakeholders.

Indicators will be regularly updated by a group of expert (Ministries, civil society...), coordinated by the “commissariat general au plan” (Commission for the National Plan). The next versions of the report will reinforce the international dimension in order to appreciate the evolutions of the French development related support and the responses to international co-operation stakes in favour of sustainable development.

The territorial dimension in favour of sustainable development will be also strengthened. It is now presented through regional unemployment rates and tourist pressure. It will be observed through the evolution of regional disparities and territorial cohesion.

In addition, it will be important to account for governance. Indicators will have to translate the evolution of the collective co-ordination, particularly the participative democracy, regarding sustainable development.

ESTIMATING THE POSITION OF STAKEHOLDERS FOR IMPROVEMENT

A hundred of objectives and several hundred of actions are stated in the NSDS. They are included in as many sectorial policies and relate to short and long term issues. Thus, other indicators are necessary to estimate their implementation. Some indicators are acknowledged. Others need to be identified.

In the same time, others procedures need the same kind of indicators in order to monitor and estimate public actions effectiveness: the LOLF law, European programme, etc. The inter-ministerial representative in charge of sustainable development, with the help of the senior officials committee in charge of sustainable development will propose measures:

- Indicators adapted to every sectorial policy, to every administration or to every administrative territory (region, department)
- A monitoring process for indicators at each level

Local stakeholders are directly concerned by those indicators. But the evaluation of implemented actions and related difficulties concern the inspection department. It must, therefore, be involved in the elaboration of monitoring indicators.

EVALUATING THE PROCESS TO ENSURE IMPROVEMENT

The NSDS evaluation requires also the evaluation of related sectorial policies and strategies. It is a technical exercise involving experience and sufficient means. The "Commissariat General au Plan" has this experience.

Evaluating the NSDS, at a global level, is an exercise, which hasn't been undertaken yet with such approach. The evolution of the NSDS will give a first interesting observation and it is important to keep the initial text with objectives and actions as a comparison. Successive improvements listed above, will give an essential historical approach to the global evaluation.

However, the best way to improve the NSDS lies in the comparison with others countries. It is the reason why United Nation set up the Sustainable Development Commission. For the same purpose, the President proposed, at the Johannesburg summit, a peer revue of the French NSDS. This exercise will be undertaken before the spring 2005 and will benefit from the experience of Belgian, British, Ghanaian and Mauritian colleagues. The DG environment of the European Commission will also be part of the exercise.

SHARING A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CULTURE

Those levels of evaluation and those methods contribute to the shift toward sustainable development. But tools are not the essential: an active participation of every stakeholder as stated in the Rio summit.

How can we translate this objective in our country? What kind of acculturation? This is the major stake. The future jurisprudence of the Constitutional Council based on the Environmental Charter will give the fundamental evaluation and boost.

This is the commitment of the President to see Culture as the engine of sustainable development, not as a fourth pillar but as an active principle.