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Issue: Addressing New and Emerging Challenges

**The EU * and its Member States Common Responses to Questionnaire C of UNDESA
as Contribution to UNCSD2012**

C.1 What five new and emerging challenges are likely to affect most significantly your country's prospects for sustainable development in the coming decade? Please rank in order of importance.

None of the challenges mentioned in the chapeau of the questionnaire C can be considered new or emerging. What might be considered as new/emerging challenges are the more often happening concurrence or coincidence of several crises in different sectors/areas, which are moreover multiplied by increasing global interdependence.

The European Union is not in favor of the dilution of the main themes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). The Conference should focus on the two central themes - the institutional framework for sustainable development and green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Rather than identifying five new and emerging issues, there is a need to focus on the integration of the "emerging issues" in "the Green Economy in the context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication".

The sustainable development related challenges we need to face today can hardly be characterised as new, but rather as ones that require stronger political attention and action today even more than ever. Measures to tackle the present crisis must be compatible with long-term sustainability goals¹. A number of unsustainable trends require urgent action:

- The financial and economic crisis affects especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Unemployment is increasing, especially among young people. According to the FAO, more than one billion people, the highest figure for the last 40 years, suffer from hunger and malnutrition.
- Significant additional efforts are also needed to curb and adapt to climate change, to decrease high energy consumption in the transport sector and to reverse the current loss of biodiversity and natural resources in the current scenario of increasing water scarcity and desertification. The shift to a safe and sustainable low-carbon and low-input economy will require a stronger focus in the future. Priority actions should be

* References to the EU should be understood as referring to the EU and its 27 Member States

¹ 2009 Review of EU SDS Strategy

more clearly specified in future reviews. Governance, including implementation, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms should be reinforced.²

C.4 What new and emerging challenges should be acted upon at UNCSD?

Success Factors

The UNCSD should address the new degree of challenges by focussing its attention and delivering concrete results in the two main topic areas, Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication and Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development. In particular potential solutions to the challenges highlighted in the chapeau to the Part C of the Questionnaire can be found only by discussing and identifying a new economic paradigm and through the support of a strengthened and renewed institutional framework for SD.

C.7 How can the link between science, education, and policy be strengthened to address the new and emerging challenges, especially those identified above?

Addressing the complex global interrelated challenges as those highlighted in this section calls for an integrated approach to policy making. A stronger connection is required between the generators of evidence (i.e. scientists) and the academic community and policy / decision makers. To this extent a strengthened science policy interface building upon the experiences carried out within MEAs could represent an added value to be upgraded and applied, where appropriate, in other areas. National and regional experiences in this direction provide a valuable input (e.g. NSDC, EEA SOER 2010 consultation process, UNEP GEO, and others) to be considered.

In order to be able to better address SD challenges, it is important that research in these areas is prioritized at international as well as at national level and that sufficient resources are allocated to the three main areas of education, research and innovation³. There should be strong communication among research and education bodies (esp. universities) and praxis. Education, in the broader definition of formal non formal and informal learning processes, represents a key tool to promote and support sustainable development global objectives. In this sense, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) can be included into curricula and cross-curricular approaches, developed and implemented at all levels of education. Teachers, Trainers and School Staff should be provided with the knowledge and competences required to promote and include the principles underlying ESD, promoting a “whole school approach” To this extent, the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) provides the global scheme of implementation aimed at integrating sustainable development into learning processes at all levels. The UNESCO implementation scheme represents a tool for countries and regions to strengthen, through the adoption of national and regional action plans (e.g. UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development) the links between science, education and policy making.

The alignment of research on sustainability goals is a crucial and irreversible thrust, ensuring that research bears fruits for the European society. One of the key objectives of the EU Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development for the period

² Dec 2009 European Council Conclusions, see:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/111877.pdf

³ The European Commission launched a structured dialogue with Member States on how the whole of European research can be harnessed to sustainability goals. "RD4SD exercise"

http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/index_en.cfm?pg=rd4sd

of 2007-2013 (FP7) is to contribute to sustainable development. In the current framework for EU-funded cooperative research, it is more than 69% of the allocated EC funding over the first three years of implementation that is expected to have a positive impact on at least one of the seven key challenges of the EU SDS. In terms of budget, this leads so far to an amount of €5.9 billion⁴. Two of the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI) established under FP7, "Clean Sky" and the "Hydrogen and Fuel Cells", are also linked to sustainability. The total EU contribution amounts to €1.3 billion.

Moreover, in the European economic recovery plan, the Commission proposed three major public-private partnerships (PPPs) around three key issues for sustainability: "green cars", "energy-efficient buildings", and "factories of the future".⁵

As an example of sustainability goals recently set by the EU, the 2009 Directive on renewable energy⁶ sets ambitious targets for all Member States, such that the EU will reach a 20% share of energy from renewable sources by 2020 and a 10% share of renewable energy specifically in the transport sector. It also improves the legal framework for promoting renewable electricity, requires national action plans that establish pathways for the development of renewable energy sources including bioenergy, creates cooperation mechanisms to help achieve the targets cost effectively and establishes the sustainability criteria for biofuels. This Directive should be implemented by all EU Member States by December 2010.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)⁷ has been recently set up to be a key driver of sustainable European growth and competitiveness through the stimulation of world-leading innovations with a positive impact on economy and society. The mission of the EIT is to grow and capitalise on the innovation capacity and capability of actors from higher education, research, business and entrepreneurship from the EU and beyond through the creation of highly integrated Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

It is also important to mention the IU Partnerships created under the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative in October 2010.

C.8 How can international support be harnessed effectively to address these challenges?

In order to address the interlinked challenges of emerging global problems described above such as poverty eradication, lack of resources, pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change, we will need to address the roots of the problem. We will need to "do more with less", embed the life-cycle thinking in the current economic model, enforce the already existing Rio principles (such as the "polluter pays" and the "precautionary principle") across borders and make full use of available technologies to build partnerships between regions and nations.

The EU values UNCS2012 as an opportunity to make further international progress on policies that foster sustainable development, including poverty eradication. It should contribute to and complement already ongoing processes in the field of sustainable development. A good example of this would be the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

⁴Monitoring system on research for sustainable development www.fp7-4-sd.eu

⁵ source: 2009 Review of SDS Strategy, p.12)

⁶ Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC (OJEU L 140, 5.6.2009, p.16)

⁷ <http://eit.europa.eu/about-eit/at-a-glance/eit-mission.html>

The EU, as the world's largest trading partner, the biggest donor of development assistance and the leader in the efforts on climate change is aiming to show leadership also in areas such as food and water security, health and education.⁸

International support should also be used for strengthening the capacity of countries to address emerging challenges, through exchange of knowledge and best practices, pilot projects, joint research activities, exchange of researchers and teachers, through the platforms of international and NGO umbrella organizations.

International support should focus on prevention of problems, not only on addressing of impacts. It should multiply effects and integrate solutions.

C.9 Do the new and emerging challenges pose a fundamental risk to the prospects of economic growth and development of your country?

The consequences of challenges such as climate change, economic and financial crisis, inefficient and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, energy and food crisis have adverse impacts on each society. Solutions to address these challenges require additional capacities, investments and expenditure, as well as a more coherent approach and stronger co-ordination between different sectors. These challenges are tightly interlinked with one another and their potential solutions ought to be searched through the use of a sound integrated approach to policy making in each and every area or sector of intervention.

Poorer and most vulnerable societies will be those affected first and greatest, and therefore efforts should be focused in particular on these countries.

C.10 How can the risks to the poor and other vulnerable populations be addressed?

The development strategies which will have to be elaborated have to address not only potential risks and challenges in general but must specifically include an assessment, including from a gender perspective to what extent the poor or vulnerable populations are likely to be affected.

They have to include targeted measures to improve their situation and the level of full, productive and "decent" employment at global, regional, national, sectoral and local levels, which means a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men, including the need to close the gender gap in green economy.

Definitions on what constitutes a green job are still evolving, but it is a fact that women have very limited representation in occupations that predominate in the green jobs sector, as most jobs tends to concentrate in non-traditional professions. Thus, it is necessary to prioritize programs that both train women for these positions and help them make the challenging transition into male-dominated occupations; as well as promoting balanced participation of women and men in family and working life. Participation is key in order to meet the concrete needs.

⁸ 2009 Review of SDS Strategy