

## **NOTES**

### **UN ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

#### **PANEL DISCUSSION**

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**New York, 02 July 2014**

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: FROM SILOS TO INTEGRATED POLICY-MAKING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 1 This presentation covers general observations on SA's experience in terms of breaking down silos and introducing integrated planning and implementation as the default mode in the operations of government across the various spheres. This is not to suggest that the problem of fiefdoms has been resolved in SA; but mainly to identify intentions and both positive and negative experiences.
- 2 The starting point is that improving the human condition requires integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. However, the first and fifth generations of human rights are as critical; and these encompass the political and informational dimensions of a polity. Quite often, good intentions on the three dimensions have floundered on the rocks of poor leadership and lack of accountability.
- 3 Needless to say, underpinning integrated planning and implementation should be a strategic plan that integrates all the dimensions of human development. It is in this context that SA has developed a National Development Plan which, instructively, enjoys the support of the majority of parties in the national parliament (which parties garnered the support of about 93% of the electorate during the May 2014 elections).

### **CRITICAL PRINCIPLES IN PLANNING SYSTEMS**

- 4 What are some of the critical principles that should be kept in mind in integrating systems and institutions of planning and implementation?
  - 4.1 Firstly, the processes of strategic planning should bring together all critical governmental role-players within a sphere and across the spheres to ensure their contribution and, ultimately, ownership of the strategic plans (refer for e.g. SA's bi-annual strategic retreats with politicians and senior bureaucrats from national, provincial and local government spheres). A critical element of this is that the cycles of planning should be aligned across these agencies.

- 4.2. Secondly, the tendency among different spheres or agencies is to claim original powers, autonomy and so on depending on the constitutional system; and so it becomes necessary to ensure clarity on subsidiarity – whatever the constitutional system. Further, flexibility can be facilitated through asymmetric allocation of responsibilities among spheres of government, based on the capacity extant in each implementing agency.
- 4.3. Thirdly, it should be appreciated that, whilst planning and policy-making can take place at national and provincial level, there is a geographic or sectoral space where these plans find practical expression – where everything converges – and in the SAn situation the district/metro is meant to be the basic spatial unit of planning & implementation. Integrated project teams that encompass all the dimensions of sustainability should operate from this level upwards.

## **HIERARCHY AND DISCIPLINE**

- 5 The issue of hierarchy in an integrated planning and implementation system is fundamental. For a start, this implies decisive leadership and a single-minded focus at the highest level. This should be buttressed by what theoreticians of ‘developmentalism’ refer to as a Pilot Agency at the centre, which should have both the authority and the leverage to ensure that all agencies follow the agreed plans and programmes. Indeed, large bodies such as governments are polymorphous and have centrifugal tendencies. A Pilot Agency ensures discipline across the board.
- 6 Leadership at the centre should include technical infrastructure to ensure that submissions to decision-making bodies follow standard templates that incorporate substantive references to the impact of each proposal on, and its implications for, the other dimensions of sustainable development. This requires firm gate-keeping such that, if a submission does not cover these issues, it is simply sent back to the originators.
- 7 Where government departments or agencies are clustered, the top-most leadership should ensure that it allocates a cluster leader among the peers – not just for chairing purposes, but with authority.
- 8 Clustering should also inform systems and institutions of accountability. For instance, Key Performance Agreements should expressly incorporate integrated functions; legislative bodies should also cluster their work; and public communication should be conducted in a clustered way.
- 9 Processes of identifying choices and trade-offs should include appropriate sequencing of implementation steps. For instance, a sustainable environmental programme should include: an emissions inventory and projections, abatement opportunities, policy instruments to be used, and how the cost/savings of an action relates to the sum of potential reductions in greenhouse emissions.

## ILLUSTRATION: TWO CASE STUDIES

- 10 South Africa, perhaps more than most countries, is struggling to reduce not only the carbon intensity of its growth and development trajectory, but also its energy intensity. Historically, the colonial economy was too energy-dependent and it was constructed around the mineral-energy complex. Extracting the country from this path dependency is proving quite a daunting task. But doing it in a manner that takes into account the three dimensions, as well as the other generations of human rights, is even more difficult.

### Case study 1: bidding in the green energy portfolio

- 11 Recently, the country completed three bid windows for renewables with about US\$4-billion of projects confirmed. While the environmental benefits of the green energy portfolio are obvious, the following should be underlined:
- 11.1. At the social level, the bidding route itself ensured that, by the third window, prices had come down markedly, ensuring better affordability. Further, in some of the projects, allocations of between 2.5% and 40% for local community shareholding have been made.
- 11.2. At the economic level, the trade and industry department had incorporated the green portfolio into its industrial policy action plans. Thus it helped ensure that importation and assembly in the early stages will, in the medium-term, be replaced by manufacturing of most components. The fact that the roll-out of the bidding process took into account the self-interest of the business community, including financial institutions, resulted in a huge over-subscription by the third bid window.

### Case study 2: PGM and the hydrogen economy

- 12 South Africa possesses about 80% of the world's reserves of platinum group metals (PGM). Beyond their current use in catalytic convertors, these minerals are important for new green technologies, particularly the nascent hydrogen economy and fuel cell technology. In terms of integrating the various dimensions of sustainable development, the following in current experience can be highlighted:
- 12.1. The economic dimension includes partnership with the private sector and the scientific community to research especially stationary application of fuel cell technology in providing electricity (as distinct from mobile applications in fuel cell vehicles). Some of the mining companies have elected to take part in the whole value chain in part to create demand for their mineral products; and joint public-private initiatives also involving universities and research entities are being undertaken.
- 12.2. The social dimension is reflected in the fact that such electricity-generation will be most viable in remote villages where it would be too expensive to take the electricity grid. Research work is being conducted to ensure continuous generation through

appropriate stacking of the fuel cells, unlike with other renewables with intermittent generation.

- 12.3. The recent strikes in SA's platinum mines raise a critical element of the social and economic dimension: about issues to do with the income gap and social inequality, social services for mining communities and the very fundamental question of employee share-ownership schemes. In other words, the sustainable development paradigm cannot ignore the issue of economic inclusivity.

#### **IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION**

- 13 The systems, processes and structures of integration for sustainable development should take into account not only the economic, social and environmental dimensions; but also the political and informational – encompassing visionary and effective leadership as well as public accountability.
- 14 Co-operation and compacting should be pursued not only within state agencies; but also among all the economic role-players as well as the scientific and intellectual community – along with appropriate fora of consultation and joint planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- 15 The problem of a silo mentality within states and among multilateral agencies also speaks to the character of education and research in the modern world. The trend in the past century has been towards hyper-specialisation – within the natural and social sciences. Quite clearly, in order to break down silos requires that multilateral bodies such as UNESCO and individual governments interrogate afresh the culture and content of teaching, learning and research on a global scale.
- 16 What is required is not just co-ordination but integration; not just 'multidisciplinarity' but 'transdisciplinarity' – in theory and praxis.

**END**