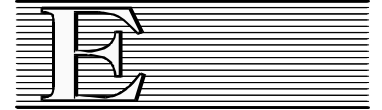




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**MANAGING LAND-BASED RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT: HIGHLIGHTS ON THE STATUS OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

INTRODUCTION

1. Africa is one of the most endowed continents in terms of natural resources. Yet four out of 10 Africans live on less than US\$ 1.00 per day, making it the poorest continent on earth. Africa includes 25 of the world's 30 poorest countries. The number of Africans currently living below the poverty line (over 180 million) is expected to rise to 300 million by 2020. These are people without adequate access to food, housing, education and health care. In more specific terms, Africa faces many daunting challenges, including the following:

Lack of food security

2. Africa cannot feed itself and relies on 3.23 million tonnes of food aid annually. It imports 25% of its food grain requirements; and a large section of the continent (Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)), is the only major world sub-region where per capita food grain output has declined over the last 4 decades.

Low productivity in agriculture

3. Agriculture which is the cornerstone of the livelihood of about 70% of Africa's poor is beset with several problems including low productivity. Despite the fact that there are ample water resources available for development in Africa, less than four percent of Africa's renewable water resources are withdrawn for agriculture, domestic supply and sanitation and industry, and less than 6% of Africa's arable and permanent cropland is irrigated, compared to an average of 33% for Asia.

Disease burden

4. Africa is plagued with serious health problems. Malaria kills two million people and reduces the gross domestic product of SSA by 1% every year. There is a re-emergence of tuberculosis, diarrhoea, pneumonia, whooping cough, polio, measles, river blindness and sleeping sickness. To compound the situation, from the 1980s, HIV/AIDS added to the disease burden of the continent, and it is currently ravaging some parts of the continent in such way that gains in life expectancy observed over four decades have been wiped out. Of the 36 million people infected worldwide with HIV/AIDS, more than 72% are in Africa. The disease is estimated to reduce the continent's GDP growth by an annual average of between 0.5% to 2.6%.

5. These health challenges increase disability and death and compound the poverty and food security situation. For example, infant mortality in Africa stands at 103 per 1,000 compared to 8 per 1,000 in the developed regions (that is almost 13 times the risk of death in infancy in the developed world).

Dependency on natural resources

6. Africa's development strategy of depending mainly upon the exploitation of her natural resources has led to several environmental problems including air and water pollution, as well as land degradation (especially deforestation, soil deterioration and desertification). With fast population change, illiteracy and limited access to education, dependency on natural resources perpetuates a vicious circle of poverty, land degradation and low agricultural productivity, resulting in chronic and increasing food insecurity.

Poverty and the vulnerable segments of population

7. In an environment of lack of basic requirements for sustenance, it is the vulnerable groups in the population who suffer the dire consequences. These groups include children, women and the elderly. In the case of women, in particular, there are at least 50 per cent of the entire population (especially in the working ages) with limited access to resources (such as land and credit), decision-making institutions and roles, and effective family management. Yet it is women who devote a large proportion of their time to household activities (activities that contribute substantially to the welfare of the family).¹

8. Women are the main food producers and take care of such important household provisions such as fuel wood and water. All this is carried out in addition to their important roles of child bearing and child caring. Indeed, the workload on women is much higher than that of men in spite of their restricted access to resources. Overall, lack of equity, equality and empowerment for women, leads to environmental destruction (especially land degradation) because a large segment of users of natural resources are not effectively empowered to take care of the same resources².

9. These challenges put Africa at the crossroads as nations search for policy mixes, programmes and strategies, as well as appropriate institutional mechanisms, to meet targets and goals set in the international frameworks such as the MDGs, JPOI, ICPD-PoA and NEPAD; and, ultimately, to improve the quality of life of their people. Implicitly, aiming at achieving the goals and related targets of one framework contributes to achieving related goals and targets of other frameworks.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

10. Evidence available in the forthcoming Sustainable Development Report on Africa (SDRA) to be published by the Sustainable Development Division (SDD) shows that Africa has not made progress on the basis of indicators analyzed in the report. This is true for all the pillars of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental), including the streamlined area of institutions.

11. Right from the outset, the SDRA will touch on the issues of data availability, suitability and utilization. It will discuss indicators for measuring the progress of countries towards sustainable development. The preliminary findings suggest that although the situation is improving, there is still a general lack of reliable, up-to-date data in many African countries. Also, the Report proposes formulation of frameworks for identification and assessment of the relevant indicators, and the integration of the principles and dimensions of sustainable development. These call for capacity building efforts in the region to collect and utilize reliable and up-to-date information for informed planning and policy-making. Consequently, the highlights presented here were produced under constraints of limited data.

¹ For more on this subject, see Isabelle Droy and Jean-Zue Dubois, "Gender inequality in rural Madagascar: A constraint to the development of women's capabilities (2002); "The Geography of Gender Inequality" in Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the MDGs (IDRC Books Online, www.idrc.ca).

² Population Environment and Agriculture Linkage and Sustainable Development (ECA 2001,) pp 18-19

Social

12. The findings so far made in this thematic area reflect an undesirable situation of mostly stagnant and sometimes declining levels of the human quality of life and the social environment. Very few countries show positive signs of progress in the status of indicators; and this signals that there is a need for concerted effort to effectively implement policies, programmes, strategies and related instruments that have already been adopted to facilitate sustainable development or, where these do not exist, there is a need for their formulation, adoption and aggressive implementation. This is an imperative if African countries have to achieve the targets set in the MDGs and related international and regional frameworks.

13. For example, available information on under-five mortality, buttresses the findings made on infant mortality. In 1995-99, countries with under-five mortality rates of 200 per 1000 or more included: Chad (Central Africa); the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Burundi (East Africa); Angola, Malawi and Mozambique (Southern Africa); and Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone (West Africa). This state of affairs had changed marginally for the better in 2000-04 with Burundi, Malawi, Mozambique and Burkina Faso indicating under-five mortality rates below 200 per 1000. The countries with very high infant mortality are included in this group. But nine additional countries joined the group, suggesting that both infant and under-five mortality are high in the region and the pace of change is too low or non-existent to support the achievement of reducing the level of child mortality by two-thirds by 2015.

14. In the case of life expectancy, in a more sub-regional aggregate form, in 1990-94, 71% of the countries with information in North Africa, 36% in Southern Africa, 14% in Central Africa and 7% in West Africa had life expectancy values of 60 years or more. By 2000-04, however, the perspective had dramatically worsened for the Southern Africa sub-region where only nine per cent of countries reported life expectancy of 60 years or more. In East Africa, where all countries recorded a life expectancy below 60 years in 1990-94, there was a remarkable turn-around in 2000-04 when eight per cent of the countries reported life expectancy of 60 years or more largely due to efforts made to reverse the impact of HIV/AIDS in the sub-region. On the other hand, the dramatic decline in life expectancy in southern Africa was due to the increase in its prevalence in Southern Africa.

15. Overall, the evidence shows that Africa is hardly making progress towards achieving the internationally agreed targets for moving towards sustained quality of life, and, hence, sustainable development. It is encouraging, however, that in all situations, regardless of the level of survival, females enjoyed higher life expectancy than males.

16. In the case of poverty, available data shows marginal or no improvement at all. This is supported by trends in the percentage of countries with a human poverty index of 40 per cent and over which confirm that Africa has stagnated or experienced a very marginal reduction in poverty. While North Africa experienced substantial reductions in poverty, the reductions were marginal in East Africa and West Africa, the situation changed for the worse in Central and Southern Africa, especially in the latter sub-region.

17. According to SDD (2005), many poverty reduction initiatives have been undertaken by African countries with support from development partners and civil society. About 31 countries are involved in the PRSP process (26 of them, with completed PRSP documents, and four with Interim

PRSPs (IPRSPs). The PRSP process has, however, been beset with lack of adequate participation of stakeholders, neglecting the mainstreaming of key sectors and issues such as environment, women and children. In addition, the partnership arrangements for financing the process are conservative and unfriendly to the situation of developing countries. All these are components of some of the important issues that should be tackled to achieve sustainable development in Africa.

18. An example from Kenya (Box 1) confirms that special and urgent strategies are needed to deal with the scourge of poverty and related hunger. Collaborating information from ECA's analysis of progress and challenges in Africa in pursuit of the MDGs extends the situation in Kenya to a wide range of countries in the region. The ECA (2005) concludes that with regard to the achievement of the MDGs within Africa, it is only the North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia), and eight countries in SSA (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritius, South Africa and Uganda) that are likely to meet the poverty reduction target.

Box 1: Poverty and sustainable development in Kenya

Kenya's poverty incidence has risen from 52% in 1982 to an estimated 56% in 2004. During the same period, rural absolute poverty had increased from about 48% to about 60% with urban informal settlements and rural areas being more adversely affected. More seriously, the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing with poverty levels standing at approximately 56% of the population by 2003, up from 52% in 1994. The interaction of the poor and the environment has resulted in undesirable consequences which contribute to the worsening poverty situation in the Kenya. As a result of poverty, the poor engage in activities such as poor farming practices, overgrazing, burning of trees to make charcoal and poor waste disposal to mention but a few.

The Gini coefficient increased from 0.40 in 1982 to 0.49 in 1992. The Gini Coefficient for 1992 for urban areas was about 0.45. The distribution of income has continued to worsen. For instance, in 1982 in the rural areas, the bottom 20% of the population received 4.9 % of the income while the top 20 % received 56.9%. By 1992 the distribution was 3.5% and 60.2 % respectively. The poorest 20 % were even worse off in the urban areas in 1992, where the lowest 20 % received 2.9 % and top 20 % received 58.8 %.

Source: A Report on the Status of Sustainable Development in Kenya by BCIN, (2005)

19. In the case of education, there was a slight deterioration in the net primary enrolment ratios and stagnation in the secondary school enrolment ratios from 1998/99 to 2002/03, making it doubtful that Africa will achieve the MDG on universal primary education and parity in secondary enrolments by 2015. Box 2 pertains to the state of education in Nigeria.

Box 2. Concern about education in Nigeria

The educational sector is on the concurrent list of the three tiers of governance in the country. There is less emphasis on vocational education and currently the aggregate enrolment in 2003 shows that 76.9% are in primary school, 19.8% in secondary schools while 3.3% are in tertiary institutions. Available data showed that school enrolment has not shown significant increase in recent times. On the other hand, the quality of education at all levels has continued to deteriorate while the physical infrastructure and teaching facilities in the universities are in their poorest shape in recent times

Source: A Report on the Status of Sustainable Development in Nigeria by Adeniyi Osuntokun, (2005)

20. Generally, the gender gap in primary education remained at the same level (7 per cent for Africa as a whole), and changes in secondary school enrolments were marginal for some countries with reversals for others. Over the period 1990-2002, Africa registered an increase in the gender gap from 4 per cent to 6 per cent. In addition, indicators on access to improved sanitation and safe water, as well as the disease burden exerted by HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB reflected similar, largely stagnant or worsening conditions. All this puts in question Africa's ability to make progress towards sustainable development.

Economic

21. Findings from the SDRA reveal that although some selected countries have experienced notable economic growth rates, the situation for Africa as a whole is still poor. According to the African Development Report of 2004, many African countries have faced difficulties in sustaining high growth rates, resulting in great variability in economic growth rates from year to year. ECA's 2005 Survey of Economic and Social Conditions notes that investment in Africa is generally low, barely exceeding 20 percent of GDP during 2000-2002. The low level of investment in Africa is partly due to the low savings rate in the region. On average, Africa had a savings rate of 21.1 percent of GDP during 2000-2002. The low level of domestic savings deepens dependence on external aid and renders African countries vulnerable to the volatilities of FDI and ODA flows.

22. Aid to Africa increased from just under US\$ 1 billion in 1960 to US\$ 32 billion in 1991. But by the end of the 1990s, aid had fallen to almost half the 1991 level (ECA, 2002). After declining through most of the 1990s, net ODA to Africa has begun to recover, rising from a total US\$ 15.7 billion in 2001 to US\$ 21.2 billion in 2002 (ADB, 2004) and US\$26.3 in 2003 (ECA, 2005^a). But this is still a far cry from the \$32 billion recorded in 1960.

23. Africa's share of FDI dropped from 25 percent in the early 1970s to just five percent in 2000. Generally, FDI is concentrated on the richer countries of the continent; thus, further marginalizing the great majority of the poorest countries in the region.

24. In terms of debt, many countries in Africa remain severely indebted. As a percentage of GDP, Africa's external debt is higher than any other developing region of the world. A substantial proportion of Africa's export earnings has been used for debt repayment, and this imposes a huge debt burden on the continent, perpetuating poverty and contributing to environmental degradation as well as the inability of African countries to implement sustainable development agreements.

25. It is hoped that the recent debt forgiveness by the G-8 to 14 African countries will pave the way for the debt of the rest of Africa to be forgiven. It is also hoped that undue conditionalities will not be placed in the way of the debt forgiveness.

Environmental

26. Although Africa contributes very little to the Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, the region is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change because of its dependency on agriculture and limited financial resources for development of mitigation strategies (SDD, 2005). Air pollution problems are more and more noticeable in many major cities of Africa due to the rapid urbanization and rapid increase in the number of motor vehicles. Indoor air pollution which arises from the use of biomass fuels, coal and paraffin in open fires or poorly functioning stoves puts the health of many people, especially women and young children, at risk on a daily basis.

27. Africa's forests are under threat across the entire continent. Only a small proportion of the total forest area is legally protected (in reality this category of forest is unprotected). Moreover, Africa has the fastest rate of deforestation anywhere in the world. Forest loss between 1990 and 2000 was more than 50 million hectares, representing an average deforestation rate of nearly 0.8 percent per year over this period. (UNEP, 2002).

28. The distribution of water resources in different regions of the continent is highly variable in time and space (SDD, 2005). The spatial distribution of rainfall is also varied. The variable and uneven distribution of water resources in Africa combined with the region's rapidly growing population, current state and pace of development and urbanization, taken together, pose significant challenges to meeting water needs. The region withdraws only 3.8 percent of its internal renewable water resources for agriculture, industrial and human consumption. It is estimated that by 2025, 25 African countries will be subjected to water scarcity or water stress. Water bodies are being depleted due to poor waste management, agricultural and industrial discharges and over-extraction. Industrial and agricultural pollution release chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers into water bodies, compromising their quality.

29. It is estimated that over 40% of Africa's population derives its livelihood from coastal and marine ecosystems and resources – a percentage that will continue to increase with current migration and overall population change. But due to over-fishing by foreign fleets and destructive harvesting methods such as dynamite fishing (still practiced in the coastal zone of Eastern Africa), the region is experiencing a decline in its fish stock. This loss, combined with population growth, implies a negative impact on the levels of per capita fish consumption in sub-Saharan Africa; and, hence, the augmentation of food insecurity.

30. Land degradation and desertification are on the increase and compounded by poverty and population pressure. The expansion of agriculture into marginal areas, particularly semi-arid areas, and clearance of natural habitats such as forests and wetlands have been a major driving force; leading to an estimated 500 million ha of land degradation since around 1950, including 65% of the region's agricultural land. Ethiopia provides a grim example on natural resources (Box 3).

Box 3. Reflection on natural resources in Ethiopia

Renewable natural resources, namely, land, water, forests and trees as well as other forms of biodiversity, providing basic needs in food, clothing and shelter, spiraled down to low levels of productivity, rendering, inter alia, the country a prominent recipient of food aid for the last three decades at a stretch. In many areas of highland Ethiopia, for instance, the present consumption of wood is in excess of unaided natural sustainable production. Estimates of deforestation, attributed mainly to expansion of rain fed agriculture, vary from 80,000 to 200,000 hectares per annum.

Source: A Report on the Status of Sustainable Development in Ethiopia Emmanuel Malifu (2005)

All these factors provide an alley of formidable challenges that Africa needs to overcome and move towards sustainable development.

Institutional and strategic framework for sustainable development

31. In the context of the mandate given to it, and in conformity with its status as the overall UN regional arm in Africa, ECA has played, and continues to play, an important role in the region in the implementation of the international frameworks aimed at sustainable development. In 1997, the Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning in Africa established the Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD), now referred to as the Africa-CSD. Since then, a number of institutional strengthening measures have been taken at the ministerial and committee levels as well as at the level of the Commission to enable it to respond adequately to this mandate and, implicitly, the mandates from other international frameworks.

32. The Commission recently completed a study on National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs) in member States (SDD, 2005). The study concluded that African countries, to varying degrees, have made progress in establishing institutions and putting in place the necessary instruments and other relevant processes to facilitate the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. However, these institutions do not adequately fulfill the role of NCSDs and a lot remains to be done to strengthen them.

33. The NCSD study also revealed that African countries have adopted different combinations of policies, strategies and plans, to address sustainable development issues. The variation in combinations is an indication of the different perceptions that countries have of sustainable development. Policies, strategies and plans listed by the survey countries include those addressing national and rural development (Vision 2020s; National and Rural Development Plans); poverty (including PRSPs); environment; natural resources; agriculture; social issues; economic development; and sustainable development in the broad sense. Almost 75 per cent of countries which responded to ECA survey recognize PRSPs as sustainable development strategies. The study also revealed that sustainable development principles and concerns are being integrated into the national development plans of these countries. In addition, many countries have incorporated or were in the process of incorporating global agreements including the MDGs, ICPD-PoA goals and targets and the JPOI, in their various national development plans and/or sectoral strategies.

34. In the case of governance, more countries are increasing space for popular participation in electoral processes; giving more rights to minority and marginalized groups (e.g. women, children, disabled and elderly); making governance institutions more inclusive along ethnic, religious, racial and gender lines; promoting commitment towards macro-economic stability, accountability, resource mobilization, reform of financial and monetary institutions, and trade liberalization; adopting reforms that facilitate private sector development such as macro-economic stability and transparency, political stability, and peace and security; and embracing conflict resolution mechanisms. All these are institutional developments which, if strengthened, will create beneficial linkages to policies, programmes and strategies focused at the achievement of sustainable development.

35. But most of these institutional and strategic developments happened just recently or are just happening, and fall outside the period covered by the indicators used for analysis in the SDRA. It is therefore expected that these developments will set the platform for Africa's future concerted effort for progress towards sustainable development. But the lessons learned from country experiences indicate that there is a need for effective institutional empowerment and capacity building and provision of resources (Box 4 on Zambia). As long as institutions exist only in name

without being operationalized, Africa's progress towards sustainable development will remain doubtful.

Box 4. Zambia : Institutional challenges

During the years of central planning up to early 1990, there existed a planning commission in the name of National Commission for Development Planning (NCDP)..... NCDP was abolished in 1994 and with it went all the capacity and experiences in planning amassed over three decades. In its place there has been a promulgation of institutions including the Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (PAC) at Cabinet Office and development coordinating committees at national (NDCC), provincial (PDCC) and district (DDCC). These were established to improve coordination of development activities as well as provide for an establishment framework to manage and report on development programmes from national down to district level. DDCCs and PDCCs have been relatively well established in the country with the support of donors. However, it is the NDCC that has not been functional, therefore, defeating the whole idea of building linkages from national to district level. In addition the capacity of districts is constrained by lack of resources and qualified human resources in addition to not having the legal mandate for district strategic planning.

Source: A Report on the Status of Sustainable Development in Zambia by L Aongola (2005)

Land-based resources: Linkages

36. The analysis in the selected sectors on land-based resources illustrates the need for careful consideration of the need for policy mixes and multi-sectoral programming in meeting any development challenge. For any given sector, many sectors which should work together are identified. For example, in the case of mining, synergy is recommended among the following: mining, industry, education, health, culture, finance, economic development and planning (including statistics), public administration (governance), local government, trade, labour, immigration, housing, transport and communication, energy, water, lands and surveys and justice. Related actors (partners and participants) include the national organs, the international community, the non-government organizations (NGOs), as well as the public and private sectors. In taking action, linkages and inter-linkages in policies, programmes, strategies and institutional mechanisms would yield optimal results in support of sustainable development.

37. In a general sense, managing land resources requires stakeholder participation; well debated political decisions; appropriate legal, administrative and institutional mechanisms; transparent lands and survey services; enforcement of decisions made; solving of land tenure issues; settling of water rights; issuing of concessions for plant and animal extraction (timber, fuel wood, charcoal and peat, non-wood products, hunting); and promotion of the role of women and other disadvantaged groups in agriculture and rural development among other things. This again points to the importance of linkages in policymaking, planning, and implementation of development programmes. Settling of water rights would take care of the multiple requirements for safe water and sanitation; agriculture (especially for food security); industry; urban development; hydropower generation; inland fisheries; transportation; recreation; and low and flat lands management.

38. Some of the challenges in harnessing energy resources for sustainable development include lack of adequate policy and institutional framework; poor performance and lack of creditworthiness of power utilities; inadequate approach to addressing the problems of rural energy supplies,

including the problem of incentives and credit facilities linked to rural electrification programmes; imbalance in the geographical distribution of energy resources; inadequate energy infrastructure, such as gas pipelines and power transmission lines; small size of the continent energy markets; lack of integrated energy infrastructure; and difficulties with financing energy projects.

39. These challenges demonstrate the need for linkages within the energy sector; and between the energy sector and other sectors such as justice (for legal and regulatory frameworks); finance and planning (for planning, credit access, and promotion of private sector and NGO partnerships); national and local government (for equitable distribution of energy); and regional integration and trade (for consolidating markets, optimizing regional comparative advantages, and promoting international partnerships).

Conclusion

40. The SDRA presents indicators that show that the journey towards sustainable development is largely beset with stagnant or worsening status indicators over the observation period. Therefore, there is a need for concerted effort in all countries to aggressively implement or adopt and implement policies, programmes and strategies that are aimed at achieving the international goals and targets in the medium-term, and sustainable development in the long-term.

41. The work presented in the SDRA has also emphasized the need for serious inter-linked analysis of the 4 pillars of sustainable development. It is argued that because policies are taken sectorally without any attempt to harmonize them, they tend to be contradictory and inconsistent leading to under-achievement of objectives. This suggests the need for harmonized development policies, programmes and strategies; and it is expected that the NCSDs that are in place in countries will seriously take on the coordination role to facilitate this process.

ROLE OF ECA AND WAY FORWARD

42. The ECA assists Africa in the implementation of the outcomes of the WSSD and related regional and international frameworks by providing greater coherence and better coordination at country, sub-regional and regional levels. Furthermore, through its analytical and advocacy work, ECA has produced several reports focused at monitoring and evaluating different areas of sustainable development in a number of areas, including social-economic issues; environmental factors; governance; gender equity, equality and empowerment; trade and regional integration, as well as HIV/AIDS and related diseases such as malaria and TB. Through SDD, the Commission produces reports on population and sustainable development; environmental impact assessment and institutions; agriculture and food security; science and technology; as well as natural resources. These reports contain lessons learned, constraints and recommendations on the way forward to assist member States to strengthen mechanisms for achieving sustainable development.

43. The current draft of the SDRA is aimed at building upon the first ECA Report on “Harnessing Technologies for Sustainable Development” by assessing the status of sustainable development in the continent. The SDRA inaugural issue gives special reference to land-based resources: land policy and resources; management of water resources for food security; managing energy resources for harnessing land-based resources; and managing mineral resources. Recommendations from this report will add to a pool of resources member States can use in adopting and implementing policies, programmes and strategies for sustainable development.

44. In dealing with the environmental, social and economic dimensions for sustainable development, a number of issues should be dealt with, including the following useful pointers to the way forward:

- Treatment of all the three pillars of sustainable development as equally important;
- Taking an inter-sectoral approach in dealing with identified challenges;
- Identifying all interested stakeholders and involving them in the planning, policy-making, programming and implementation processes;
- Adopting policies, programmes, strategies and related instruments with a focus to achieving sustainable development;
- Making concerted effort to implement policies, programmes, strategies and related instruments after they are adopted;
- Establishing and building capacity of institutions for implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Building databases for monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment;
- Setting up coordination mechanisms to reduce duplication of effort and create beneficial linkages;
- Promoting political will and commitment, including the ingredients of good governance; and
- Promoting useful national, regional and international partnerships.

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