Sustainable Development, Peace and Confidence-building[1]

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1. Introduction

This brief paper highlights the intrinsically re-enforcing mechanisms of sustainable development, peace and confidence-building. To this aim, it first describes the global political framework of sustainable development, including regional preparatory processes. Second, it lays out how the management of sustainable development processes are linked to peace and security, including highlighting regional and transboundary environmental cooperation towards sustainable development and peace. Third, it focuses on the OSCE, giving examples on how the OSCE's Economic and Environmental Activities contribute to global sustainable development and giving recommendations to this aim.

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2. Global political framework on sustainable development and the road to Rio+20

The progress toward the establishment of a global political framework on sustainable development has been characterised by various phases (Quental et. al. 2011). The Brundtland report from 1983 „Our Common Future" was an important milestone, offering the very basic and most accepted definition of the principle of sustainable development (cf. Box 1)

Box 1: **Sustainable development** is based on the principle of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Conceptually, sustainable development can be broken down in three core dimensions:

- Economy: Economic sustainability means maximising society's well-being, economic equity, and eradicating poverty through the creation of wealth and livelihoods, equal access to resources, and the optimal and efficient use of natural resources.

- Society: Socio-political sustainability means promoting social equity and uplifting the welfare and quality of life by improving access to basic health and education services, fulfilling minimum standards of security and respect for human rights, including the development of diversity, pluralism, and grassroots participation.

- Environment: Environmental sustainability means the enhancement and conservation of the environment and natural resources for present and future generations.

For confidence and peacebuilding, the key is to balance these three dimensions. For sustainable development to support peacebuilding, negative impacts and risks arising from trade-offs among the dimensions must be minimised and the positive potentials or synergies among the different dimensions maximised.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which took place in Rio in 1992, can be characterised as another milestone which has been followed by series of fundamental political achievements, e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). Regarding sustainable development, the Rio Conference brought about some crucial agreements: the Rio Declaration or Agenda 21, which amongst others resulted in the creation of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) to follow up UNCED. Since 1996, international efforts rarely led to such fundamental agreements, institutional arrangements or financial mechanisms. However, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 in Johannesburg can be seen as a starting point for the development of a model for International Sustainable Development Governance - a process that has not yet come to an end. In chapter 10 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, basic principles of an Institutional Frameworks for Sustainable Development have been defined (Strandenaes 2011: 6):

- Institutional strengthening and capacity building
- Integrated management and ecosystem approach
- Legal and regulatory frameworks
- Partnerships
- Coordination and cooperation
- Good Governance.

Conferences after WSSD failed to establish a concrete governance framework, which is still fragmented (UNEP, CSD, etc.). As a result, the (re)development of an institutional and global political framework for sustainable development is one of the core objectives of the Rio+20 conference in 2012, though there is no consensus on the different models to date.

More progress has been made on the other major Rio+20 theme 'a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication'. For a start, the initial hesitation or resistance from some developing countries - who wanted the developing world to deliver on Rio outcomes on sustainable development (e.g. NSDS) rather than introducing a new concept that might hold trade barriers and green protectionism - has largely been overcome. Meanwhile there is a large consensus that 'green economy' offers sustainable development solutions for all countries (ENB 2011). Indeed, countries benefiting from green growth are not only in the Northern and Western hemisphere, but also include China, Uganda and Rwanda. The latest report by a panel of experts on the theme places the concept in a larger context, summarising that "the green economy has gained currency to a large extent because it provides a response to the multiple crises that the world has been facing in recent years – the climate, food and economic crises" (Ocampo 2011: 2).

While there is no universal definition of 'green economy' the UNEP's (2011) Green Economy Report is a widely-recognised reference document. It includes core principles and concepts of a green economy, relating to a more sustainable use of natural, human and economic capital, focusing on 7 sectors (agriculture, buildings, cities, fisheries, forests, industry, renewable energy, tourism, transport, waste management, water). All definitions have in common the conception of a low-carbon, resource and energy efficient as well as socially equitable economy. For the private sector the 'triple bottom' line concept equally aims at achieving value in social and environmental besides economic terms.

The regional preparatory process for Rio+20 (UNECE and Astana)

The Rio+20 Summit has a formal preparatory process outlined in resolution 64/236 of the UN General Assembly. Relevant stakeholders, such as UN organisations and bodies, Major Groups[2] and international financial institutions are invited to actively participate in the preparatory process. Five regional groups ensure that regional voices are heard: The Latin America and Caribbean Region; the Asia Pacific Region; the Arab Region; the Africa Region and the ECE Region.[3] The ECE preparatory meeting is scheduled for 11 December 2011. Some of the topics mentioned for the meeting under the green economy theme are (Hlaváček 2011):

- the need for modified indicators beyond GDP,

- the RCM Thematic Working Group on Climate Change's action plan on climate change mitigation and adaptation in the ECE region,

- a review of how transport contributes to sustainable development in the UNECE countries.

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[2] "Major Groups" are the themes that allow citizens to participate in the UN activities to achieve sustainable development: Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples, Local Authorities, Non-Governmental Organizations, Scientific and Technological Community, Women, Workers and Trade Unions (cf. http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=54).
[3] These regional groups also presented candidates for a ten-member Bureau of the Preparatory Committee (Prep Com). Three Prep Coms are held, the final and only outstanding one on 28 - 30. May 2012.

The conference will be the culmination of the ongoing ECE Rio+20 process. The regional commissions all appointed Rio+20 focal points who share information with the UNCSD secretariat concerning the ongoing activities on a monthly basis. They also conduct special studies and organise intersessional regional meetings. Additionally, "sub-regional inter-agency collaborations" have been launched. Some of these intersessional meetings are, for instance, regional Science and Technology Workshops.[4] These workshops aim at fostering the multi-stakeholder policy-science dialogue in order to identify region-specific needs, requirements and options for successfully contributing to the preparation of the Rio+20 summit.

Among many noteworthy events, the 6th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (MCED6) holds particular relevance, where the Astana "Green Bridge" Initiative and the Regional Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific 2011-2015 have been signed (September/October 2010). The Initiative aims to stimulate trans-regional cooperation, especially in the area of green economy, ensuring access to green technologies and developing framework mechanisms to stimulate their implementation. The key areas of the Initiative include, among others, eco-efficient use of natural resources, investment in ecosystem services and promotion of green business and technology. A wide range of approaches are proposed to achieve the main goals of the Initiative, including policy dialogues, capacity-building for policymakers and developing and strengthening mechanisms for technology transfer across the European, Asian and Pacific region to preserve ecosystems and attract green investments. The Initiative will also be presented at the "Environment for Europe" (EfE) Ministerial Conference in Astana (see below). Another important milestone on the road to Rio+20 was the meeting of Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions (January 2011), which was attended amongst other by Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, and included preparations for the Rio+20 Summit as well as highlighting the rising importance of regions in global governance for development (UNECE 2011).

Additionally, 'greening the economy' is one of the two main conference themes for the 7th "Environment for Europe" (EfE) Ministerial Conference on 21. – 23. September in Astana, Kazakhstan. Environment ministers and other high-level participants from the ECE region will, inter alia, explicitly address the question how the "Environment for Europe" process can contribute to outcomes on green economy in the context of UNCSD 2012 (Rio+20), besides the 'Green Bridge Initiative' (see above).[5] The discussion will focus on a green, inclusive, and competitive economy, including resource efficiency, innovation and green investments as well as policies in sectors, such as transport, housing, energy, agriculture and education. The agenda will target the potential contributions and links of the "Environment for Europe" process and Rio+20 in the area of green economy. While to formally integrate the EfE outcomes into the Rio+20 process, Member States would need to raise them individually or

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[4] Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the African Region will hold Science and Technology Workshops in the following months. The Asia Pacific Regional Science and Technology Workshop already took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 16 Apr 2011 - 18 Apr 2011. Besides government representatives, several natural scientists, social scientists, engineers and representatives of Major Groups were invited. See also See http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=26

[5] Another important topic of the EfE conference is the 'Assessment of Assessments' (AoA) report. Its objective is to provide a critical review and analysis of existing national and international environmental assessments that are of relevance to the region and the two topics of the Astana Conference.

channel them into the UN ECE process, [6] already the commitment of the EfE to the theme of 'greening the economy' clearly promotes the global green economy agenda and give impulses for concrete action in the region.

3. <u>Management of sustainable development processes and their links to peace and security</u>

Security and peace are not on the Rio+20 agenda, though there are strong links between the management of sustainable development, including green economy considerations, and peace at global, regional and national level.

Concerning regional cooperation, there has been much research and ample evidence how environmental and economic cooperation support confidence building, crisis management and peacebuilding (Conca et al. 2005), while also showing that such outcomes are not automatic but rather dependent on a variety of factors, including symmetry among participants in regard to power relations, benefits, communication and information (Feil et al. 2009, Wittich and Maas 2009).

At national level, the tri-partite approach of sustainable development also offers evident links to confidence and peace. (National) sustainable development strategies, a major outcome of the original Earth Summit in Rio 1992, have become a widely recognised and effective instrument working towards both sustainable development and peace. Yet there is no single approach or formula for achieving sustainable development. Balancing the different dimensions and negotiating trade-offs among them is highly context-specific, every country has to determine for itself what approach is best. Yet the key management principles that are decisive for sustainable development processes are not only common to all National Sustainability Action Plans but also principles that support peace: participation, long-term thinking, iteration and improvement.

- First and foremost, sustainable development processes are based on **participation** and inclusion, which in turn can support peacebuilding by (re)building the social contract between a divided citizenry and its government. While at a global level, the CSD process is "still recognised as the most interactive and inclusive processes within the UN system, allowing for active civil society engagement" (Strandenaes 2011: 9f; UN General Assembly 2010: 24)[7], national sustainable development strategy process have the same ambition. This participation can help increase the effectiveness of sustainable development strategies through decentralised planning and management, and by capitalising on traditional knowledge and institutions. Participation is a vehicle to foster confidence building, though it also holds the risk exacerbating tensions and divisions, if it is not moderated properly or raises expectations by stakeholders that are not met. Thus, the process has to be based on a thorough understanding of the different stakeholders and their expectations and it has to be designed in a way that minimises these risks.

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[6] At the time of writing it was still unclear how most other stakeholders than Member States could contribute to the Rio+20 agenda and outcomes. One approach suggested enabling comprehensive participation between the final Prep (end of May) and the Rio+20 Summit (beginning of June), which however would only allow few days.
[7] Cited from § 70, Chapter V of the Secretary General's Report on the upcoming UNCSD conference 'Building a multi-stakeholder movement towards Earth Summit 2012- Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development'.

- The second management principle is to include more **long-term thinking** into planning processes for mid-term goals and short-term actions. This is especially challenging in situations of instability and change, which are marked by uncertainty, humanitarian crisis, and the need to produce quick peace dividends. However, it is innate to structural planning and confidence building processes. It also helps to avoid unintended future impacts or laying certain negative developmental paths, which are hard to change. Besides avoiding these negative consequences, long-term goals and visions also provide a useful frame of reference for policy making. A long-term development vision can help ensure policy coherence and unify different actors to strive for a common goal.

- The third principle is **iteration and improvement**. Ideally, every sustainable development process is an iterative and cyclical process. The emphasis is on managing progress toward sustainability goals rather than producing a fixed 'plan'. This means that sustainable development processes encompass analysis, formulation of policies and action plans, implementation, and regular review--in other words, they include feedback loops. This not only allows for adaptation to in case of instability, but also affords the opportunity to learn from the past and build confidence.

While the themes and objectives of Rio+20 agenda may not state security concerns explicitly, the processes of sustainable development and the focus on a green economy rely on the same mechanisms as the approach of building confidence and peace through environment and economy.

4. OSCE's Economic and Environmental Activities and sustainable development

OSCE participating States have expressed their commitments to sustainable development against the background of the broader aspirations embodied by the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 (1992) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation (2002), some of which were made tangible by being formulated in clear-cut and measurable Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Similarly, in the activities of its Second Dimension (Economic and Environmental Activities, EEA) and in cooperation with its partners of the ENVSEC Initiative, the OSCE implements a variety of activities that connect to both the green economy and linkages of sustainable development and peace. The following presents only few select examples, full information is available from the OSCE.

One central example are the Aarhus Centres, which promote and support the implementation of the core principles of the UNECE Aarhus Convention – the right to information, the right to participate and the right to access to justice – in environmental matters. They offer environmental information and contribute to establishing and strengthening participation of civil societies in the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), Eastern Europe (Belarus), South Eastern Europe (Albania, and Aarhus Convention-related activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia). The Aarhus Centres are instrumental in providing a forum for dialogue and cooperation on reduction of environment and security risks. In the South Caucasus, where 17 centres are active (Armenia (14), Azerbaijan (3), and Georgia (1),) Aarhus Centres focus on boosting public participation in environmental decision-making and environmental access to justice. In Armenia, in particular, they also support NGO-led environment and security projects under the CASE Initiative (see below). In South Eastern Europe, an Aarhus Centre network is emerging with Centres active in Albania and Serbia and opening in Montenegro,

The Aarhus Centre project for this region focuses on activities to strengthen regional, national and local capacities for participatory and informed planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes in the countries of South-Eastern Europe. Central Asian Aarhus Centre activities are being further intensified by organizing targeted trainings and other capacity building activities for stakeholders on priority environmental and security issues and facilitating active involvement and participation of Aarhus Centres and their constituencies in local and national environmental projects and programmes, particularly those under the ENVSEC Initiative. Notable in the sustainable development context among these activities are participatory environmental monitoring efforts and support for the participatory local environmental action plans.

Another initiative addressing sustainable development and peacebuilding is the Civic Action for Security and Environment (CASE) Programme, aimed at strengthening pivotal technical and administrative capacities of civil society organizations through supporting civil society projects with small grants. From January 2010, civil society projects are being supported in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. These include public awareness raising projects on the linkages between environment and security, capacity building and demonstration projects for environmental cooperation as a means for conflict prevention.,. For each country, a National Screening Board has been created in order to guarantee transparency and accountability.

An example combining environmental knowledge development and the promotion of a green economy by educating the next generation is offered by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek (CiB). According to its 2009/2010 report, CiB continued to work in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and State Agency on Environment protection and Forestry, which are government bodies responsible for promoting education for sustainable development (ESD) in Kyrgyzstan. CiB is working to support the younger generation to learn more about sustainable nature resource management, how to achieve a "green" life-cycle economy, and how to improve environmental safety and sustainability.

The OSCE's 'Regional Cities: Environmental Assessment and Capacity Building in Tbilisi, Georgia' project is connected to the green economy topic of sustainable urban planning. It is being carried out by OSCE in cooperation with UNEP under ENVSEC and focuses on improving environmental decision-making and promoting Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA) as a key instrument for informed decision making on municipal level. The project activities include capacity development workshops, preparation of IEA guidelines for urban areas, assessment of the state of environment in Tbilisi and fostering a multi-stakeholder forum.

Recommendations

These example are only highlights from a broad portfolio of the OSCE's Second Dimension activities aiming to foster region-wide improvement on environment and security, which at the same time target the substance of larger international policy frameworks, in particular the green economy theme of the Astana Environment for Europe and the Rio+20 conferences. As the OSCE (2003) Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension states in section 2.3., the "OSCE is committed to the achievement of sustainable development" and promotes "co-ordinated approaches to institutional frameworks for sustainable development". Against this background and the discussion under section 2 and 3 above, the following recommendations are made:

Promote the OSCE Second Dimension's activities, experiences and impacts at the regional preparatory process of Rio+20

The OSCE has a variety of relevant experiences from its activities, particularly those carried out in cooperation with the ENVSEC Initiative, which are of particular relevance to the sustainable development agenda. For example, the Aarhus Centres provide excellent opportunities to offer participation in sustainable development and environmental decision making, important aspects for promoting a green economy and peace. Both the December 2011 UNECE preparatory meeting and the Astana Environment for Europe Conference provide unique opportunities to integrate these OSCE experiences in current global environmental policy frameworks. They are also platforms for OSCE participating States to present their own sustainable development mandates and action plans as a regional and OSCE contribution to global sustainable development. Therefore, participating States should focus on the added value that the OSCE can offer in contributing to sustainable development in its specific region, bringing to bear the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, and avoiding duplications of existing efforts.

Develop explicit green economy objectives for OSCE's Second Dimension work

The OSCE's array of environmental activities in the Second Dimension, also in collaboration with ENVSEC, address many topics central to the green economy, including climate change, urban planning, sustainable resource management, and public participation in environmental governance. However, the green economy value of these contributions currently largely remains implicit. By more clearly highlighting how OSCE contributes to the green economy and national as well as regional sustainable development, its Second Dimension will be more clearly associated to current global policy debates on sustainable development and green growth. The framing of the OSCE's activities in this area offers the additional benefit of pointing to synergies between the environmental and economic spheres of the Second Dimension, recognised by the green economy concept.

Further develop approaches to sustainable development management and confidence building

Section 3 above highlighted clear communalities of sustainable development management and confidence building. OSCE and the ENVSEC Initiative have recognised these links and are capitalising on these synergies through targeted activities. In areas where environment and security links are being addressed, a more comprehensive sustainable development approach, including social and economic considerations besides environmental ones, may be feasible. For example, the Aarhus Centres could include special information services on sustainable development, in particular the Rio+20 agenda and national approaches to the green economy. To this aim, OSCE and ENVSEC could mobilise civil society organizations and build their capacities through workshop and knowledge platforms.

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