

**Commission on Sustainable Development, 12<sup>th</sup> Session**  
**Overall Review of Implementation**  
**23 April 2004**

**Statement by Ms. Thorhild Widvey, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway**

Mr. Chairman,

In the overview document for this session of the CSD, the Secretary General reports that progress towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals on sustainable development has primarily been made in terms of process. As regards real, measurable outcomes, the results have been - at best - very mixed. We share the impatience with the slow pace of progress expressed by the Chair, the European Union, the Group of 77 and other speakers in this debate.

This review session of the CSD gives us an opportunity to take stock of the achievements, to identify obstacles and bottlenecks, and to mobilise political commitment to better integrating the main themes of this session - water, sanitation and settlements - into the overall effort to combat poverty through sustainable development.

The Norwegian Government supports the four important preconditions for progress that have been highlighted in the discussions so far during this session.

Firstly, that our approaches need to be comprehensive and include all relevant sectors of government.

Secondly, that our efforts should be integrated into national budgetary and parliamentary processes.

Thirdly, that there should be a clear commitment to promoting co-ordination and coherence in the way nations and international organisations address these challenges.

Fourthly, that there should be timetables and provisions for monitoring progress.

The Norwegian delegation will, in other interventions during this meeting of the CSD, address how we are dealing with the development part of these conditions. Today, let me start by giving you an overview of efforts being made in Norway to live up to the commitments made in Rio and Johannesburg.

Norway started work on integrating environment issues into national policy over 30 years ago. The present government put forward its national strategy for sustainable development in 2002, in time for the Johannesburg summit. It concluded that the value of human knowledge and skills far exceeds all other forms of capital. By harnessing these assets, we would be able to manage the changes ahead. To follow up, a process was set in motion which led to the adoption of a national plan of action - a National Agenda 21- in October 2003.

The Norwegian National Agenda 21 takes as its point of departure that efforts to promote sustainable development must have a *global perspective* and be based on the premise that

world poverty and the state of the world's environment are the most important challenges confronting us.

In order to make the document a concrete plan of action, it was decided to focus on the following policy areas, which are essential for making development sustainable.

1. International co-operation to promote sustainable development and combat poverty.  
*The Government will play an active part in strengthening international cooperation to achieve international environment and development goals. The Government will pursue a poverty-oriented development policy. Environmental issues will also be an important element of development cooperation, based on the strategic focus in developing countries' own action plans and on their priorities.*
2. Climate change, the ozone layer and long-range air pollution.  
*The Government will take responsibility at both national and international level for efforts to counteract global climate change. To prevent depletion of the ozone layer, the Government will phase out all use of ozone-depleting substances. To limit long-range air pollution, the Government's main objective is to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and ammonia to levels where environmental damage and injury to health are avoided.*
3. Biological diversity and the cultural heritage.  
*The environment shall be managed in a way that maintains the diversity of habitats and landscape types and ensures that there are viable populations of naturally-occurring species. Archaeological and architectural monuments and sites and cultural environments are to be managed in such a way that annual losses, which at present are about one per cent of the total, are reduced, and so that we make use of the opportunities they offer.*
4. Natural resources.  
*The Government's energy policy is intended to promote wealth creation, and is based on the objective of sustainable development. An active policy is needed that limits energy use more than would be the case if developments were allowed to continue unchecked, for example through measures to ensure greater energy efficiency. The extraction of petroleum resources is a very important sector of the Norwegian economy and is to be managed in a way that takes account of its effect on the national wealth and is environmentally sound. Norwegian fisheries management is to ensure sustainable harvesting based on the best possible scientific advice. The Government's agricultural, forestry and reindeer husbandry policy is intended to promote long-term resource management that will maintain settlement patterns, wealth creation and employment and contribute to the production of environmental goods (for example maintenance of the cultural landscape, the cultural heritage and biological diversity).*
5. Hazardous substances.  
*Emissions and use of hazardous substances must not cause injury to health or damage the productivity of the natural environment and its capacity for self-*

*renewal. Concentrations of the most hazardous substances in the environment shall be reduced towards background values for naturally occurring substances and close to zero concentrations for man-made substances.*

6. Sustainable economic development.

*The objective of Norway's economic policy is to promote the efficient use of the country's overall resources within a sustainable framework. The Government will promote sustainable production and consumption patterns through international cooperation and through the use of economic and other types of instruments. Non-renewable resources are to be managed in a way that takes account of impacts on the national wealth. Human resources are our most important asset, and one of the Government's objectives is to encourage knowledge development and high labour market participation.*

7. Sami perspectives on environmental and natural resource management.

*The Government's objective is to ensure that Sami interests and concerns are integrated into its sustainable development policy, and to develop constructive forms of cooperation between the Sámediggi, the central environmental authorities, regional authorities and other actors in environmental efforts. The Government also wishes to ensure that developments in Norway are in accordance with the country's commitments under international law to protect the material basis for Sami culture, for example through UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and ILO Convention No. 169.*

Mr. Chairman,

In accordance with the recommendations from the UN summits in Rio and Johannesburg, the Government included *civil society* in its work on the National Agenda 21. We have held frequent consultations with stakeholders such as private sector, trade unions, NGOs and local government. Conferences on the main issues related to sustainable development have been held. Stakeholders have been invited to provide input to the draft plan. The final draft of the plan was subject to a public hearing process, which led to inputs from a broad range of Norwegian stakeholders. One of the main objectives was to encourage public involvement and raise awareness of the need for sustainable development. We also challenged the various participants to clarify and strengthen their roles in efforts to achieve sustainable development.

The work on the National Agenda 21 in Norway was led by a committee of deputy ministers from key ministries and the prime minister's office, and chaired by the Ministry of Finance to ensure consistency in economic planning. The Agenda was put forward as a part of the National Budget for 2004, and was subsequently discussed and approved by parliament in this context. All relevant ministries now have a obligation to follow up the commitments set out in the National Agenda 21 within their respective spheres of responsibility. The action plan strongly emphasises the importance of promoting a cohesive effort and establishing mechanisms to ensure closer co-ordination of our efforts.

An important aim of the action plan is to improve the general level of knowledge in Norway about global and national development trends that have a bearing on sustainable development. Here, the educational system has an important role to play. An information strategy is included in the action plan, linking it to follow-up actions rather than to general information campaigns. Many NGOs showed great interest in taking part in the information activities.

The committee has now been made permanent. The responsibility for monitoring follow-up processes is placed at a ministerial level, under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance. Perhaps most important of all, a preliminary set of indicators for sustainable development was presented in the National Agenda 21. A committee of experts, aided by an advisory body of stakeholders, will suggest a final set of indicators by the end of 2004. The purpose of this work is to create a framework and method for monitoring progress towards sustainable development and thereby focus the government's attention towards those areas that demand stronger attention and action.

Another key follow-up action is to invite relevant stakeholders in both public and private sector to participate in problems and solution oriented ad hoc groups around key topic areas. This is in order to advance our joint and separate abilities to address the sustainability challenge, for instance in sectors such as energy and fisheries.

The follow-up will be reported in future national budgets and we aim at evaluating and revising the whole of the National Agenda 21 every four years.

Thank you.