Report of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development at its fourteenth meeting

International Atomic Energy Agency headquarters, Vienna, 9 and 10 September 1999

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I. Introduction

1. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) held its fourteenth meeting at the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna, on 9 and 10 September 1999. The agenda for the meeting, as adopted by the Committee, is contained in annex I, the list of participants in annex II, the list of documents in annex III and the provisional agenda for the fifteenth meeting in annex IV.

2. In opening the meeting, the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, expressed appreciation to IAEA for hosting the meeting.

II. Matters for consideration by the Administrative Committee on Coordination

A. Follow-up to the outcome of meetings of ACC

3. The Committee considered the conclusions of the first regular session of 1999 of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) (ACC/1999/4).

Environmental management group

4. The Committee was briefed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the latest developments related to the proposed environmental management group, in particular the outcomes of the consideration by the General Assembly of the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements (A/53/463), as spelled out in Assembly resolution 53/242.

5. Members of the Committee expressed their strong interest in working together with UNEP in designing specific modalities for the environmental management group. In this context, the Committee underscored the necessity of the United Nations system’s agreeing on a common view with respect to the mandate, terms of reference and criteria for membership as well as working methods of the environmental management group.

6. In order to expedite inter-agency consultations aimed at arriving at such a common view, it was agreed that UNEP would circulate, as soon as possible, a draft containing suggestions on the issues referred to above. These suggestions would draw from IACSD’s earlier considerations stipulated in the report of its thirteenth session (ACC/1999/1, para. 12-14) which were subsequently endorsed by ACC.

7. It was further agreed that once the results of inter-agency consultations on the environmental management group were approved by ACC, information on the mandate, terms of reference and criteria for membership as well as working methods would be included in the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the General Assembly. In the meanwhile, the Assembly will be briefed on the consultative process launched in the United Nations system with respect to the establishment of the environmental management group.

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

8. The Committee welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63 of 30 July 1999 on successor arrangements to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction including the proposed new institutional arrangements. It expressed its willingness to contribute to the implementation of that resolution. Recognizing the significance of the links between disaster prevention and sustainable development, the Committee stressed the need for a functional relationship with IACSD. In this vein, the Committee invited the Decade secretariat to consult in good time with concerned agencies in particular as regards the establishment of the institutional arrangements called for in Council resolution 1999/63.

9. The Committee agreed on the importance of raising the effectiveness of collecting, analysing and disseminating relevant information, and in promoting the focus on scientific and technical aspects related to disaster preparedness and mitigation, and in ensuring an effective link with operational work in the field. In this context, the Committee also reconfirmed the importance of ensuring links between the secretariat arrangements to follow-up of the Decade and the resident coordinator system.

B. Dates, venue and provisional agenda for the fifteenth meeting of IACSD

10. The Committee will hold its next meeting at United Nations Headquarters, New York, during the last week of January 2000. The provisional agenda for the meeting is contained in annex IV to the present report.
III. Work of IACSD

A. Follow-up to the outcome of meetings of ACC

11. The Committee considered the working report prepared by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries of the United Nations Secretariat on the priority issues of sustainable development in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318). The Committee reiterated the importance given to the issues of sustainable development in Africa by most programmes and organizations of the United Nations system. The Committee invited the task managers to continue giving particular attention to matters related to the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s in their work, including in the preparation of reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Committee also felt that the Office of the Special Coordinator, in carrying out its coordination functions, should identify specific issues and tasks that required action on the part of IACSD and bring them to the attention of the Committee as appropriate. The Committee also invited Special Initiative participants to refer to IACSD for its consideration any specific policy-related issues on sustainable development.

ACC statement on the impact of climate change and depletion of renewable resources affecting small island developing States

12. The Committee invited the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat to explore the most effective ways of bringing to the attention of the General Assembly at its twenty-second special session the ACC statement on the impact of climate change and depletion of renewable resources affecting small island developing States. This might be done through highlighting the significance of this document in the introductory statement of the Secretary-General. The Committee also underscored the importance of finalizing joint contributions of the United Nations system to major United Nations meetings and conferences in time so that they could be made available to the preparatory meetings. This would maximize the impact of such contributions to the intergovernmental process. The Committee agreed that this issue should be brought to the attention of the Organizational Committee (OC) of ACC.

B. Matters related to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly

14. It was felt that arrangements agreed upon at the thirteenth session of IACSD for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/131-E/1999/75) to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the measures taken in the United Nations system to accelerate progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 had proved to be effective. The document provides additional information to Member States on various inter-agency processes and planned activities in the area of sustainable development. The Committee agreed to consider the arrangements for preparing similar reports for future use at its next session by which time the General Assembly would have provided its view on the usefulness of such a report.
C. Follow-up to the substantive session of 1999 of the Economic and Social Council

16. The Committee considered Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/55 of 30 July 1999 on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. It was agreed that the thematic approach recently advanced by the Council supported the work of the task managers at the inter-agency level.

17. The Committee noted the emphasis given by the Economic and Social Council to matters relating to information and indicators. An important area of collaboration is improving the effectiveness of existing systems for the collection and aggregation of data and information, thereby facilitating the measurement of progress towards achieving the goals and objectives set by Governments and intergovernmental bodies at the conferences. This includes work on elaboration and application of relevant indicators. The main challenge is to ensure a better link between statistical and policy development work, at both the inter-secretariat and national levels. It was noted that the work under way in the United Nations system on the development of indicators of sustainable development supports this goal. The Committee welcomed the close collaboration in this area between the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Statistics Division and welcomed the proposed joint briefing on the latest developments and work under way in this area during the next meeting of IACSD. This would facilitate the Committee’s consideration of modalities for strengthening its collaboration with the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.

D. Follow-up to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Oceans and seas

18. Items 3 (a) and 6 were discussed together, with item 3 (a) on follow-up to decision 7/14 on oceans and seas, adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session, introduced by a representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and item 6 on the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas introduced by its Chairman, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). The Subcommittee agreed at its recent informal meeting (London, 16-18 August 1999) to recommend a number of proposals to IACSD that could improve its transparency, effectiveness and responsiveness to member States, as called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development, and could also move forward the process of inter-agency coordination on oceans issues.

19. After a discussion on the importance of the oceans debate for many United Nations organizations, and of the possible implications of the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development that the General Assembly establish an open-ended informal consultative process on oceans, IACSD endorsed the following suggestions made by the Subcommittee:

(a) Subcommittee members would provide regular annual briefings to delegations and interested observers during every session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (not just when oceans were discussed, as had been past practice), subject to the financial and time constraints on travel to United Nations Headquarters;

(b) Each member would explore the feasibility of conducting briefings on the work of the Subcommittee to Governments, agency representatives and non-governmental organizations during regular sessions of each respective governing body;

(c) The Subcommittee would develop its own Web site linked to that of ACC and relevant organizations, as well as to the United Nations Atlas of the Oceans Web page;

(d) A Subcommittee brochure would also be produced and made available at the briefings described in (a) and (b) above.

20. Finally, to help it carry out its various and expanding functions, IACSD agreed to the request made by the Subcommittee to hold two regular sessions per annum as the need might arise, since the current practice of one formal and one informal session restricted the Subcommittee’s decision-making actions to only once a year.

21. IACSD also endorsed the Subcommittee’s proposal to hold its eighth formal session during the third week of January 2000 at the UNEP/Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) Office in The Hague, Netherlands.

22. A discussion also took place on some of the practical problems that had been encountered by agencies and organizations, working individually or through the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas or the ACC...
Subcommittee on Water Resources, in implementing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (A/51/116, annex II). In accordance with UNEP Governing Council decision 19/14 A, these two bodies have been mandated to jointly collaborate in performing the functions of an inter-agency steering committee on technical cooperation and assistance for the Global Programme of Action, with UNEP serving as Global Programme Action secretariat. The IACSD Chairman reminded members of the serious concern of member Governments of the Commission on Sustainable Development over the slow progress in implementing the Global Programme of Action, and urged stepped-up efforts to avoid further criticism at the eighth session of the Commission. He suggested that UNEP prepare some concrete guidelines for the two Subcommittees, which could take account of the recommendations made by the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas to define its functions as a coordinating body for inter-agency cooperation on the Global Programme of Action. IACSD agreed to the Chairman’s proposal to take stock of the status of implementation of the Global Programme of Action at its next session, and to add an item dealing with this to its agenda.

Sustainable tourism

23. The Committee was briefed by the World Tourism Organization on its ongoing and planned activities, including those undertaken jointly with UNEP and other organizations, aimed at the implementation of decisions adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session, preparing for the International Year of Ecotourism (2002) and contributing to the forthcoming twenty-second special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

24. The Committee welcomed the work by the World Tourism Organization carried out in consultations with organizations of the United Nations system and major groups to prepare for the first meeting of the ad hoc informal open-ended working group on tourism envisaged in Commission on Sustainable Development decision 7/3 on tourism and sustainable development. The Committee invited the working group, in carrying out its tasks as assigned by the Commission, to make specific recommendations regarding possible tasks that might need to be undertaken by organizations of the United Nations system and submit them to IACSD for consideration.

25. The Committee agreed that, in order to minimize the financial implications for one single organization of convening this informal working group, consideration would be given to the possibility of the hosting of future meetings of the group by various United Nations organizations whose mandates were closely related to the issue of tourism (UNEP, UNESCO, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Trade Organization and so forth).

E. Preparations for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

26. The Committee was briefed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the state of preparations for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, including ongoing collaboration with the task managers on the reports of the Secretary-General and other documentation to be submitted for the consideration of the session and its preparatory meetings.

27. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) representative briefed the Committee on the status of preparations for the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. FAO’s contribution will include reports on the land- and agriculture-related chapters of Agenda 21, in particular chapters 10 and 14. Information will also be provided on the FAO/Netherlands Conference on the Multifunctional Character of Agriculture and Land (Maastricht, 12-17 September 1999). The Committee noted FAO’s ongoing consultations with other United Nations organizations and stressed the need to ensure coherence in the reporting of land-related issues, since several organizations were expected to prepare addenda to the Secretary-General’s report on integrated land management. Members of the Committee reiterated the commitment of their organizations to supporting FAO in its work.

F. Follow-up to matters relating to the expansion of the task managers system

28. Mr. G. Glaser of UNESCO, who had chaired the joint IACSD/Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ)/Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) working meeting on the task managers approach (Geneva, 13 and 14 July 1999), briefed the Committee on the results of the meeting.
29. The Committee agreed with the conclusion of the joint meeting that it would be more appropriate to speak about the expansion of the task managers “approach” rather than the expansion of the task managers “system”.

30. The Committee reiterated that the task managers approach had worked well in the thematic areas of Agenda 21 and had effectively supported IACSD over the last several years. The Committee also reiterated its view that the task managers approach might be effectively used for the benefit of other standing committees of ACC besides IACSD. Therefore, the Committee supported the general thrust of recommendations of the joint IACSD/CCPOQ/IACWGE meeting. In particular, the Committee agreed that the main objectives of the expansion of the task managers approach were:

(a) To avoid multiple inter-agency mechanisms at the global level for policy coordination in any given thematic area;

(b) To facilitate coordinated implementation of the outcomes of major world conferences and summits and their respective periodic reviews, taking into account the evolving political context;

(c) To promote better coordination and complementarity between policy development and normative functions of the United Nations system at the global level with activities of United Nations organizations carried out individually and/or jointly at the regional and national levels;

(d) To promote coherence and harmonize approaches and policy guidance on specific issues both at the global and at the country level.

31. IACSD also supported conclusions of the joint meeting with regard to the role and functions of the task managers. More specifically, it was reaffirmed that the task managers’ main role was to promote and facilitate better coordination, policy coherence and complementarity of action, to identify possibilities for joint initiatives, and to serve as the focal point for information and networking in respective thematic areas. The task managers could thus serve IACSD, CCPOQ, IACWGE and other inter-agency bodies, as required, in carrying out the following specific functions:

(a) To assist, in collaboration with other relevant organizations, the standing committees of ACC in ensuring coordinated contributions of the United Nations system for the implementation of global intergovernmental mandates and programmes of action in designated thematic areas;

(b) To act as a system-wide focal point for information in these thematic areas through strengthening and, when necessary, establishing a network of collaboration among the relevant organizations and developing a regular flow of information on ongoing and future activities among them, including through Web sites and other electronic means (in those areas where the role of the task manager was carried out by an inter-agency body, this function could be carried out by the secretariat of that body);

(c) To facilitate consultation and mutual interaction among organizations and agencies that had activities in those thematic areas;

(d) To initiate and catalyse joint activities and programmes relating to those thematic areas;

(e) To facilitate, when required, elaboration within respective thematic areas of common strategies and approaches within the United Nations system, which might include elaboration of new or updating/streamlining of existing guidelines aimed at facilitating action at all levels to implement global commitments and programmes of action;

(f) To prepare, in consultation with concerned organizations, draft reports or inputs thereto on relevant policy issues that might need to be submitted for consideration by relevant inter-agency or intergovernmental bodies and processes with a view to promoting consistency of actions and decisions taken by such bodies;

(g) To take a proactive approach in informing relevant standing committees of ACC, and through them relevant intergovernmental bodies, of key policy, operational and/or emerging issues within their areas of competence with a particular emphasis on pursuing anticipatory and preventive approaches.

32. Members of IACSD agreed on the need for a high degree of flexibility in applying the task managers approach. In many of the sectoral thematic areas of Agenda 21, some of which had been also addressed in the outcomes of world conferences and summits that followed the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the existing IACSD task managers could effectively support the work of CCPOQ, IACWGE and other inter-agency bodies. Furthermore, as recommended by the joint meeting, it might be useful to recognize that there were already organizations or entities that acted as de facto task managers in such areas as food security, energy, sustainable tourism, drug control and human
immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). However, in some other thematic areas, particularly those that were cross-sectoral in nature (such as poverty, capacity-building, governance, transfer of technology, gender, and so forth), IACSD responsibility covered a relatively smaller part of the relevant activity in the United Nations system. The Committee felt that, since a large part of work in these areas fell within the terms of reference of CCPOQ and IACWGE, it would be important to know the views of those Committees in order to proceed further.

33. The Committee stressed the fact that the expansion of the task managers approach should not be interpreted as adding additional lines of reporting by organizations acting as task managers to all three standing committees of ACC. The intention is to avoid situations where different organizations are given the lead to coordinate work in similar thematic areas. Furthermore, the expansion of the task managers approach should be demand-driven and the task managers would undertake to fulfil the respective requirements of the three standing committees when called upon.

34. The Committee further underscored the fact that the expansion approach should not weaken or replace the system of task managers established by IACSD. It was also stressed that the arrangement whereby representatives in IACSD were usually drawn from the technical/substantive units of the organizations involved had proved effective and should remain unchanged.

35. The Committee also underscored the fact that the task manager’s responsibilities were assigned to an “institution” and different individuals and/or structural units may undertake specific tasks emanating from different standing committees of ACC. It was agreed that it would be up to the organizations themselves to design the most effective means of internal coordination and consultation.

36. The Committee invited CCPOQ and IACWGE to take into account the views outlined above during their consideration of the report of the joint IACSD/CCPOQ/IACWGE working meeting. It was agreed that once CCPOQ and IACWGE addressed this issue at their forthcoming sessions, a decision could be taken on how to proceed further.

G. Cooperation in the energy area: preparations for energy discussion in 2001

37. The Committee was briefed on the outcomes of the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy (Vienna, 8 September 1999) and received the preliminary text of its report. Members of the Committee underscored the importance of active inter-agency collaboration in this field and expressed their support for the work of the Task Force. The Committee also underscored the need for active involvement of the United Nations system with regard to the proposed global energy forum.

H. Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD

Report of the informal meeting of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, London, 16-18 August 1999

38. Please refer to paragraphs 18-22 above.

I. Other matters

1. Follow-up to other items dealt with at the thirteenth meeting of IACSD

(a) Common core data sets

39. The Committee was informed that, owing to resource constraints, it had not been possible for UNEP to establish the working group on common core data sets as agreed at the twelfth meeting of IACSD. The Committee noted that this was an important issue in the context of EarthWatch which should be reverted to at its next meeting.

(b) Waste management

40. The Committee reiterated the importance of this issue and the fact that it was an area of significant potential for collaborative work within the United Nations system. It recalled the useful preliminary work undertaken by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in this regard, particularly the initial survey and inventory of the status of United Nations work in this area. It expressed its hope that the Centre would continue, and further expand, its work in this field as discussed at the thirteenth meeting of IACSD.
2. Briefing by FAO on preparations for the International Year of Mountains

41. The representative of FAO briefed the Committee on preparations under way for the International Year of Mountains in 2002 as proclaimed by the General Assembly, for which FAO had been designated lead agency. A concept paper had been prepared and extrabudgetary resources were being solicited to initiate various activities at national and regional levels as well as to support coordination work at FAO. He further noted that a number of meetings had taken place with stakeholders and that a decision had been taken to make the year a decentralized event rather than a major conference. A programme of work for the Year involving all relevant stakeholders was in the process of elaboration.

42. Members of the Committee, in particular UNEP, UNESCO and UNDP as well as the World Tourism Organization, expressed their willingness to support the preparatory process for the Year. It was noted that it would be useful to establish appropriate arrangements for the United Nations contribution to the Year.

3. Briefing by UNESCO on the World Conference on Science

43. UNESCO briefed the Committee on the results of the World Conference on Science (held in Budapest, 26 June-1 July 1999) which it had organized with the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). The Committee welcomed the participatory nature of the Conference which had brought together representatives of Governments, research institutions and academia, international organizations and major groups, and its positive outcome. UNESCO expressed its gratitude to United Nations organizations that had contributed to the Conference. The Committee noted that sustainable development was an important area of focus during the meeting. The outcomes of the Conference — Declaration and Framework for Action — will be circulated to all United Nations organizations with a view to bringing those outcomes to the attention of the relevant governing bodies. UNESCO will also circulate suggestions regarding possible inter-agency collaboration in follow-up to the Conference which, in the view of UNESCO, should take place within existing inter-agency bodies, particularly IACSD.

Notes

3 General Assembly resolution S-19/2, annex.
Annex I

**Agenda**

1. Adoption of the agenda and timetable.
2. Follow-up to the outcome of meetings of:
   (a) Administrative Committee on Coordination;
   (b) Intergovernmental bodies:
       (i) General Assembly;
       (ii) Economic and Social Council.
3. Matters related to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.
4. Follow-up to matters relating to the expansion of the task managers system.
6. Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD:
7. Other matters:
   (a) Follow-up to other items dealt with at the thirteenth meeting of IACSD:
       (i) Common core data sets;
       (ii) Waste management;
   (b) Briefing by FAO on preparations for the International Year of Mountains;
   (c) Dates, venue and provisional agenda for the fifteenth session of IACSD.
8. Adoption of the report.
Annex II

List of participants

Chairman: N. Desai (United Nations)
Secretary: K. Gerlach (United Nations)

United Nations, its entities and programmes

United Nations
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
J. DiSano
K. N. Mak
A. Rogers
A. Vasilyev

Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
W. Wagner

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
M. F. Coviello

United Nations Development Programme
K. Jorgensen

United Nations Environment Programme
A. Amin
I. Schusdziarra
M. Jansen

United Nations International Drug Control Programme
S. Noyan
S. Mlango

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
J. Eigen

Specialized agencies and related organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
A. Dejene

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
G. Glaser

World Health Organization
P. K. Singh
Y. E. R. Von Schirnding

World Meteorological Organization
S. Chacowry

United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Z. Csizer
C. Gurkok
I. diPietro

* * *

International Atomic Energy Agency
M. Opelz
N. Halde
C. Yvetot

* * *

World Tourism Organization
E. Yunis

* * *
ACC Sub委员会 on Oceans and Coastal Areas  P. Bernal

* * *

United Nations University  J. Smith

* * *

Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  J. Pasztor

* * *

Observer

Global Environment Facility  S. Li
Annex III

List of documents

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<td>Follow-up to the matters relating to the expansion of the task managers system: report of the joint IACSD/CCPOQ/IACWGE working meeting on the task managers approach, Geneva, 13 and 14 July 1999</td>
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<td>ACC/IACSD/XIV/1999/CRP.5</td>
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Annex IV

Provisional agenda for the fifteenth meeting of IACSD

1. Adoption of the agenda and timetable.
2. Follow-up to the outcome of meetings of:
   (a) Administrative Committee on Coordination;
   (b) Intergovernmental bodies:
       (i) General Assembly: (a) follow-up to the special session for the review
           and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the
           sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and (b) report
           on measures taken in the United Nations system to accelerate the
           implementation of Agenda 21;
       (ii) Matters relating to the environmental management group.
3. Matters related to the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development
   and preparations for the ninth session of the Commission.
4. Status of implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of
   the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.
5. Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD:
   (a) Freshwater;
   (b) Oceans and coastal areas.
6. Other matters:
   (a) Follow-up to issues dealt with at its previous IACSD meetings:
       (i) Expansion of the task managers approach;
       (ii) Briefing by the United Nations Environment Programme on common
            core data sets;
   (b) Briefings on:
       (i) Vulnerability index (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the
           United Nations Secretariat);
       (ii) Indicators for sustainable development (Department of Economic and
            Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat);
       (iii) National sustainable development strategies (United Nations
            Development Programme).
7. Adoption of the report.