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Background Paper to Report 4: Institutions for Sustainable Development: Developing an optimal framework for New Zealand

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Prepared by The Sustainable Future Institute, as part of *Project 2058*

Authors Hayley Vujcich and Wendy McGuinness

The research team Nick Preval and Willow Henderson

External reviewers Dr Barbara Nicholas and Dr Morgan Williams

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For further information
The Sustainable Future Institute
Phone (04) 499 8888
Level 2, 5 Cable Street
PO Box 24222
Wellington 6142
New Zealand
www.sustainablefuture.info

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Preface

> Bernard of Chartres used to say that we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size. (John of Salisbury, 1159)

The concept of 'standing on the shoulders of giants' best reflects the purpose of this background paper. Designing an institutional framework for New Zealand without learning from other governments would be false economy.

This background paper recognises the efforts and expertise of countries that are leaders in the field of sustainable development, and describes the functions of their institutions for sustainable development. The focus is on learning about their government structures, rather than assessing the outcomes of their efforts. This is in part due to the lack of reported information measuring the progress that has resulted from implementing these structures. Despite this lack, we consider a review of how countries have responded to the issue of sustainable development is useful in developing such structures for young countries such as New Zealand.

This research feeds directly into Report 4, *Institutions for Sustainable Development: Developing an optimal framework for New Zealand*, which aims to design an optimal framework to progress sustainable development in New Zealand, and in particular a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS).

Reports 4 and 4a will be complemented by Report 5, *The Common Elements of a National Sustainable Development Strategy: Learning from international experience.* It reviews three 'best practice' NSDSs to develop clarity over what an NSDS looks like, which in turn will inform the optimal institutional structure to develop an NSDS for New Zealand. Whereas Reports 4 and 4a explore ways in which the New Zealand government could pursue an NSDS for New Zealand, Report 5 sheds light on the shape, breadth and depth of the final report of *Project 2058*, an NSDS for New Zealand, which is due to be published by Sustainable Future in mid-2009.

Our special thanks go to staff at the United Nations, in particular the team at the Office in Charge of the National Information, Monitoring and Outreach Branch of the Division for Sustainable Development for the Department for Economic and Social Affairs, and the Librarian at the Economic and Social Affairs Branch, who met with me on 6 August 2008 and provided useful insights which have in turn been integrated into Reports 4 and 4a.

In addition, the authors would like to thank the external reviewers, who provided robust and challenging feedback: Dr Barbara Nicholas and Dr Morgan Williams. Errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

Lastly, my thanks go to Hayley Vujcich, Nick Preval and Willow Henderson for their patience and perseverance.

Wendy McGuinness
Chief Executive

Executive Summary

This paper provides an assessment of the institutional framework for sustainable development of nine countries — Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Sweden, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.[1] In order to add rigour and clarity to our process, we identified five elements to act as a lens with which to frame the analysis. These elements — administration and implementation, integration, participation, monitoring and independent review — are described in detail at the end of Section 2. These elements were established following reviews of international practice and are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Five Elements Used for Analysing the Nine Countries

Five Elements	Sub-elements
(i) Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?
(ii) Integration	Horizontal
	Vertical
(iii) Participation	Stakeholder involvement
	Public participation/ownership
(iv) Monitoring	Indicator development/monitoring
(v) Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases

A review of each country is undertaken in Section 3. The individual countries are discussed in terms of their progress towards a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS), and any institutions of note. A table at the end of each subsection provides a summary of how each country's institutional framework has incorporated these five elements.

This background paper concludes that although there appears to be no optimal institutional framework that can be applied to all countries, the five elements above, when developed in light of the unique characteristics and resources within each country, have generally resulted in the publication of a definitive NSDS. The implication for New Zealand is that it is now timely for this country to learn by example and work urgently towards meeting its international commitments by establishing its own institutional framework and publishing its own unique NSDS. To this end, Report 4 builds on this paper's findings and explores how best to design an optimal institutional framework for New Zealand.

1 For a full list of NSDSs by country, see Sustainable Future, 2007b: Appendix 8.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

> describe international experience with institutional frameworks for sustainable development.

Progression towards sustainable development would clearly benefit from being undertaken within an effective, proven framework. Ascertaining areas of both strength and weakness within international institutional frameworks will be one step in the process of identifying an optimal framework for New Zealand. This research therefore provides a background for Report 4, *Institutions for Sustainable Development: Developing an optimal framework for New Zealand*, which systematically analyses the findings of this paper then compares the models produced with previous research by Sustainable Future.[2]

In order to achieve this purpose, we have identified five elements to act as a lens with which to frame the analysis. These elements — administration and implementation, integration, participation, monitoring, and independent review — are described in detail in Section 2, which discusses our methodology. A review of each country is undertaken in Section 3.

1.1 Sustainable Future

Sustainable Future is a non-partisan not-for-profit research organisation based in Wellington, New Zealand. The strategic aim of *Project 2058*[3] is to:

> promote integrated long-term thinking, leadership and capacity-building so that New Zealand can effectively explore and manage risks and opportunities over the next fifty years. (Sustainable Future, 2007b: 5)

The current research fits within the overall purpose of the two-year *Project 2058.* In order to reach our objective, we have broken *Project 2058* into three parts; this is Report 4a of Part 1. For an explanation of the *Project 2058* methodology and to monitor our progress, please refer to our website.

[2] See http://www.sustainablefuture.info

[3] See http://www.sustainablefuture.info

This paper and Report 4 are part of our response to the findings of an earlier paper in the series, Report 1, *A National Sustainable Development Strategy: How New Zealand measures up against international commitments* (Sustainable Future, 2007a). Report 1 concluded that New Zealand is not currently meeting its international commitments as it has failed to produce and implement a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS).[4] Sustainable Future believes that this is a missed opportunity to prove our integrity, with regard to both our international agreements and our clean, green image. In addition, we believe that developing an NSDS will bring about the alignment of local and central government strategies and make New Zealand a more effective country in the future.

[4] For a detailed explanation of what an NSDS entails, see Sustainable Future, 2007a: Appendix 2.

2. Methodology

In order to meet its purpose, this paper reports on how the nine countries have designed their institutional framework to progress sustainable development, and in particular to prepare a National Sustainable Development Strategy.

2.1 Terminology

Throughout this paper we use the term '*framework*' to refer to the 'structure and functions of institutions working towards sustainable development', and the term '*institutions of note*' to refer to the 'relevant institutions in each country'. Readers who wish to gain a better understanding of terms such as '*institution*', '*sustainable development'* and '*NSDS*' are referred to Appendix 1 of Report 4.

2.2 Information Collection

Our review is limited to nine countries, and dependent on the quality of publicly available information sourced via the internet (see Section 2.3.2). Each of the institutions discussed had the opportunity to provide feedback on their specific country,[5] but no responses were received.

In order to complete this review, information was primarily gained through internet-based research. Information was sourced from government websites, though this was sometimes difficult when the official language(s) was not English. A small literature review of academic and government publications was also undertaken. This paper benefited significantly from previous independent reviews of institutional frameworks, in particular the work of Niestroy (2005), Swanson and Pintér (2006),[6] Volkery et al. (2006)[7] and Steurer and Martinuzzi (2005).[8]

[5] An email was sent to each 'institution of note' at the address on their website in June 2008.

[6] Swanson and Pintér (2006: 2) consider six aspects of governance: nature of NSDS coordination; placement of overall responsibility for the NSDS; legislative underpinning; integration with budgeting and reporting processes; stakeholder involvement, and linkages with local-level sustainable development action.

[7] Volkery et al. (2006: 2049) develop a simple model that takes into account leadership, planning, implementation, monitoring, coordination and participation.

[8] Steurer and Martinuzzi (2005: 460-9) use five elements to review NSDSs: horizontal mechanisms; vertical mechanisms; implementation mechanisms and processes; participation mechanisms, processes and organisations, and monitoring and reviewing processes.

These papers also benefited from a meeting with staff at the United Nations on 6 August 2008, including the team at the Office in Charge of the National Information, Monitoring and Outreach Branch of the Division for Sustainable Development for the Department for Economic and Social Affairs, and the Librarian of the Economic and Social Affairs Branch.[9]

In addition, groups such as the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) and the Network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) have proved useful as sources of up-to-date information on sustainable development governance efforts. Other sources of information that have been widely used include the United Nations Department of Environmental and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Division of Sustainability reporting website (though not always up-to-date) and the International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD).

2.3 Limitations and Boundaries

Importantly, this paper does not discuss or assess:

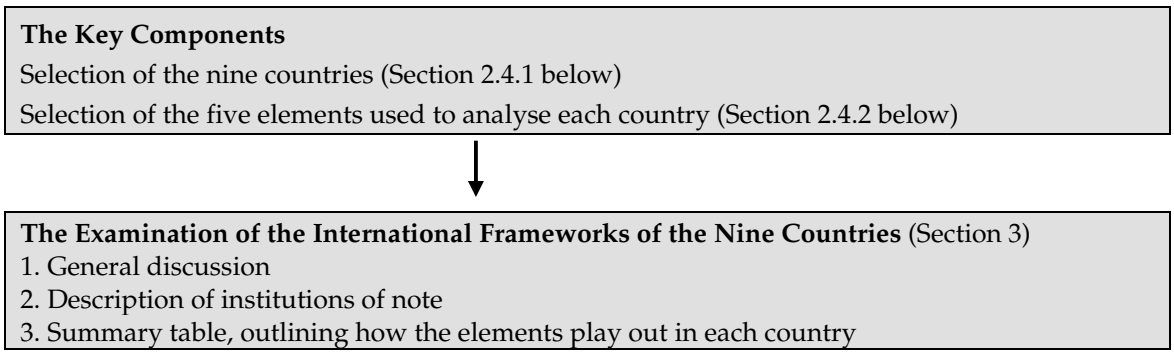
1. The actual costs and benefits of each of the nine institutional frameworks. To do so would require a great deal more information than we were able to collect. The paper simply reports on the structure and functions of the institutions and develops an understanding of how they work.
2. The extent to which each 'institution of note' meets its purpose. Such a task is beyond the scope of this paper.
3. The quality of the resulting NSDS (in terms of the development process or the quality of implementation) of each country. Although this paper does not focus on the NSDS, Sustainable Future's Report 5 does review three 'best practice' NSDSs and identifies and discusses common elements with a view to providing an insight into what a New Zealand NSDS should contain.
4. The degree to which civil society (e.g. non-government organisations) is satisfied with the framework that currently exists within each country. Given the importance of both coordination and participation noted by Volkery et al. (2006: 2050), we would have valued an insight into how civil society rated the effectiveness of each of the frameworks in progressing sustainable development; however, this data was not readily available.

[9] A staff member read drafts of Reports 4 and 4a prior to the meeting and advised that based on his knowledge there were no obvious technical errors, nor was he aware of any significant gaps in the secondary research. Importantly, he was not 'verifying the content', but was using his knowledge of the international landscape to highlight any glaring errors or omissions.

2.4 Method of Analysis — International Frameworks

The process adopted is outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 International Frameworks



2.4.1 The nine countries

The countries reviewed in this paper were chosen to include both similarities to New Zealand (all were developed countries) and differences (with respect to size of economy, size of population, styles of governance and advances in sustainable development governance). Some countries that were initially chosen proved difficult to research and were subsequently dropped. The nine countries reviewed in this paper are:

1. Australia
2. Canada
3. Finland
4. Germany
5. Ireland
6. Republic of Korea (South Korea)
7. Sweden
8. The Netherlands
9. United Kingdom.

2.4.2 Selection of the five elements used to analyse each country

In order to select the elements for this study, we reviewed comparative international studies and considered the findings in terms of the New Zealand landscape. The selected elements represent the result of combining the respective governance and strategy elements used by Swanson and Pintér (2006),[10] Volkery et al. (2006)[11] and Steurer and Martinuzzi (2005).[12] For the purpose of this paper we call these criteria 'elements', and the final five elements we use to analyse each country are described in Table 2 below.[13]

Table 2 Five Elements Used for Analysing the Nine Countries

Five Elements	Sub-elements
(i) Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?
(ii) Integration	Horizontal
	Vertical
(iii) Participation	Stakeholder involvement
	Public participation/ownership
(iv) Monitoring	Indicator development/monitoring
(v) Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases

[10] Swanson and Pintér (2006: 2) consider six aspects of governance: nature of NSDS coordination; placement of overall responsibility for the NSDS; legislative underpinning; integration with budgeting and reporting processes; stakeholder involvement, and linkages with local-level sustainable development action.

[11] Volkery et al. (2006: 2049) develop a simple model that takes into account leadership, planning, implementation, monitoring, coordination and participation.

[12] Steurer and Martinuzzi (2005: 460-9) use five elements to review NSDSs: horizontal mechanisms; vertical mechanisms; implementation mechanisms and processes; participation mechanisms, processes and organisations, and monitoring and reviewing processes.

[13] The organisations identified in this paper are, as much as possible, a representation of the *current* institutional structure. Some indication of historical changes is given where it appears relevant and information was available.

(i) Administration and implementation

The allocation of responsibilities for administration and implementation of sustainable development on a national scale is important in determining effectiveness (Niestroy, 2005, 2007; Swanson & Pintér, 2006). The rationale for this element was to profile the nature of the government institution(s) that undertook responsibility for the production of an NSDS (and more broadly, for sustainable development), how these actions and processes were reviewed, and how expert advice was incorporated into policy decision-making.

(ii) Integration

Ensuring that government action and intent is implemented in a holistic and coordinated way means robust mechanisms of both horizontal and vertical integration within government are highly important.[14] Integration can be achieved through a broad range of means. This element incorporates both the organisations charged with integration of sustainable development policy and the mechanisms used to achieve this.

(iii) Participation

Stakeholder involvement is a way to foster ownership of and involvement in sustainable development priorities and outcomes. Göll and Thio (2008) conclude that due to the difficulty or absence of a single answer to governance for sustainable development, it is more important to ensure that the idea of sustainable development is well diffused throughout the community and the nation. *Agenda 21* (UNCED, 1992: Section III, Chapter 23) emphasises that sustainable development should be undertaken through participation and shared decision-making with civil society. Furthermore, encouraging and embracing participative governance legitimises plurality in stakeholders' positions (Sarewitz, 2000). The participation of non-governmental actors is particularly important for the development of an NSDS, and for debate on national sustainable development, by: bringing knowledge and experience; enhancing democratic and reflexive processes; emphasising ownership by the non-government sector, and encouraging social and government action (Meadowcroft, 2007; Niestroy, 2007).

The participation element has been broken down in this paper into stakeholder participation and public participation/ownership. This has been done to distinguish between the strict consultation process (as already occurs for most policy development processes) and the more dialogic and educative processes that occur with the public, which are likely to increase public 'ownership' of the process, encourage participation in sustainable development schemes and reduce information asymmetries.[15]

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[14] Horizontal integration refers to the integration between ministries, departments and agencies (i.e. within central government bodies). Vertical integration refers to integration between central, regional, district and local governance.

[15] Meaning information about a transaction that is available to the parties involved in unequal degrees, resulting in an unfair exchange.

(iv) Monitoring and reporting on indicators

Sarewitz (2000) argues that the complex nature of science (for instance, the science that underlies many environmental problems such as climate change) means it is often difficult to capture the need for change and the uncertainties that such science embodies, making policy that responds to this complexity and uncertainty difficult to 'get right'. Instead, Sarewitz (2000) suggests that the way in which science can best be incorporated into governance is through monitoring (measurement) and assessment. Monitoring and reporting on indicators of social and cultural, environmental and economic performance is a vital part of understanding how governance for sustainable development is achieving its goals; the use of statistics also makes it easier to identify and assess any trade-offs that are made (OECD, 2006). Furthermore, concerted monitoring can help track gradual change and reveal early warning signs that socio-ecological resilience is at risk (Folke et al., 2001). Monitoring and reporting on indicators focuses on facts and figures, in contrast to independent review (see below), which reports on the effectiveness of processes and people.

(v) Independent review

Independent review both during and at the end of a significant process is critical for developing and enhancing public trust. Whether the process relates to the life of an institution, a strategic plan or an important work programme, we would argue that the requirement to report back to the public on the design and degree of implementation is an essential part of a significant government planning initiative. For example, we believe the recent Royal Commission on Genetic Modification would have benefited from an independent review of the degree to which government had implemented the Commissioners' recommendations, in view of the level of public investment, public risk and public participation in the process (see Sustainable Future, 2008: 99).

Without such a commitment to a transparent and independent review, work programmes may falter due to a lack of public commitment or wider public participation. Furthermore, lessons to be gained from inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes of previous initiatives will not be identified and learnt, preventing the development of better institutions, strategies and work programmes in the future. Consequently, because NSDSs have significant implications for current and future generations, and public commitment is needed to progress sustainable development, they require high levels of transparency and independent review during the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases.

2.4.3 Institutions of note

Each country has one or a number of institutions that have a key role to play in advancing sustainable development, and in particular an NSDS. For the purposes of background information we discuss each of these briefly below. Importantly, there are a number of key distinctions and findings, which we take forward into Reports 4 and 5. Report 5 takes three of these nine countries and looks at their latest NSDSs to see what elements they contain.

3. The Institutional Frameworks of Nine Countries

This section describes the institutional framework of each of the nine selected countries with respect to the five elements discussed above. Each country is discussed in terms of its progress towards an NSDS,[16] and institutions of note. A summary of all five elements of the current framework for each country is contained in a table at the end of each subsection.

3.1 Australia

NSDS Status: Released 1992.[17]

While the UNDESA Division for Sustainable Development recognises Australia as implementing an NSDS, this situation is a little unclear. The *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* (NSESD) (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 1992) was released in 1992, but it appears that there has been no review or update of the document since that time. The implementation of the NSESD was initially overseen by the Intergovernmental Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development (ICESD), set up in the mid-1990s (DEWHA, 1992). However, evidence of the continued existence of this committee and its activities has proved difficult to find.[18]

A set of sustainability indicators was developed in 2000 by Environment Australia (now the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts [DEWHA]). These have since been reported on once, in 2002 (Environment Australia, 2002). DEWHA also undertakes a range of additional environmental indicator measuring and monitoring.

In 2004, the federal government took a new approach to environmental budgeting and sustainability funding with the *2004 Sustainability Strategy for the Australian Continent* (Commonwealth Treasury, 2005). This document contains sustainable development-type goals, promoting integrated management of a number of systems (OECD, 2007a). It is unclear whether this process was considered successful or not — there is also no indication of why the process was not repeated.

16 A list of NSDSs by country can be found in Sustainable Future, 2007b: Appendix 8.

17 Each box reflects the actual text used, as indicated in the background research. For example: released, reviewed, revised or launched.

18 A search on DEWHA's website for 'ICESD' did not reveal any material dated after 1997. There was no mention of it being disbanded or replaced. Difficulties locating information on sustainable development in Australia may in part be due to recent restructuring of ministries and consequent lags in reorganising the availability of information online. See, for instance, http://www.environment.gov.au/esd/index.html

At the state and territory level, nearly all administrations have adopted development strategies (with the exception of the Northern Territory), some of which constitute SDSs, though often strategies do not 'headline' sustainability (OECD, 2007a: 153). For each of the state/territory administrations, different institutions are given responsibility for sustainable development. Both the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and South Australia have individual Offices of Sustainability (the latter being part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet), while Queensland incorporates its sustainability activities within the Environmental Protection Agency. Vertical coordination is also promoted through *Local Agenda 21* projects, at both local and regional levels.

Horizontal integration mechanisms are unclear. However, the NSESD forms a framework upon which governmental sustainability decisions are undoubtedly made. While it appears that separately, departments and regional and local government undertake a number of sustainable development actions, lack of central direction makes the current Australian institutional framework difficult to understand and therefore evaluate.

3.1.1 Institutions of note

Australia has no specific institution responsible for sustainable development planning or implementation (OECD, 2007a); however, there are two significant institutions of note.

(i) Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

The Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) was established on 3 December 2007, as the department of the Australian Federal Government responsible for conserving Australia's cultural and environmental heritage.[19] DEWHA takes part in a number of environmental councils, committees and forums, with the power to:

> facilitate consultation and cooperation between governments, develop policy jointly, and take joint action to resolve issues which arise between governments in the Australian Federation. (DEWHA, n.d.[a])

DEWHA considers itself to be 'at the forefront of delivering the Australian Government's environment and sustainability policies' (Commonwealth Treasury, 2005: 3). DEWHA states that its work towards ecologically sustainable development is 'primarily focused on implementing the recommendations [of *Local Agenda 21* and the NSESD]' (DEWHA, n.d.[b]).

[19] See http://www.environment.gov.au

(ii) Decentralised institutions like the Commissioners for the Environment or the Premier's Roundtable on Sustainable Development

Due to the federal nature of Australian governance, sustainability governance typically takes a decentralised approach, with different institutions in different states. For instance, both ACT and the state of Victoria have a Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability who is responsible for independent review of the state's sustainable development and environmental performance (ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, n.d.; Victoria Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, n.d.). South Australia, on the other hand, has a Premier's Roundtable on Sustainable Development comprising experts from a range of sectors, who provide advice on sustainability to the state government (Department of the Premier and Cabinet [SA], n.d.).

3.1.2 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3, below.

Table 3 Australia

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Intergovernmental Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• State-level expert panels/ roundtables
Integration	Horizontal	• Expectation to include principles of the NSESD
	Vertical	• State/territorial authority • *Local Agenda 21*
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Unclear
	Public participation/ownership	• Unclear
Monitoring	Indicator development/ monitoring	• Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (e.g. ACT, Victoria)

3.2 Canada

NSDS Status: In progress, see below.

The Federal Sustainable Development Act (2008) was passed in June by the Canadian Parliament, the result of a Private Member's Bill tabled by the Hon. John Godfrey in November 2007. The impetus for this bill lay in a report by the David Suzuki Foundation titled *Toward a National Sustainable Development Strategy: Putting Canada on the path to sustainability within a generation*, as well as a strongly critical report by the CESD in 2007, which indicated that the departmental SDSs were continuously below expectations (CESD, 2007: 39).

This new Act requires the government to create and implement a government-wide sustainable development strategy and to regularly evaluate the environmental consequences of its actions. The Act also creates a Sustainable Development Advisory Council made up of representatives from the Aboriginal communities, business, labour, and the environmental movement to advise the government on its sustainable development strategy.

Since 1995, under amendments to the Auditor General Act (1985), all 31 departments and agencies of the federal government have been required individually to produce sustainable development strategies (SDSs) every three years. Federal guidelines are provided for these strategies (Government of Canada, 1995) and the SDSs (as well as their implementation) must meet the expectations of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD), part of the Auditor General's Office. Reporting on departmental SDSs is required in the annual Department Performance Reports (IISD, 2004a).

Without an NSDS, it is difficult to identify the lead organisation in promoting sustainability in Canada. However, Environment Canada (Canada's Ministry for the Environment) is the lead agency for assisting departments to develop their own SDSs. In 2000, Environment Canada developed a number of cross-government 'themes', though these did not succeed in capturing the participation of all departments (IISD, 2004a). The 1995 publication *A Guide to Green Government* (Government of Canada, 1995) also helps enhance horizontal coordination, through aligning departmental SDS expectations.

Environment Canada has recently led the task of coordinating the development of departmental SDSs (Government of Canada, 2006). Its stewardship is primarily enacted through its roles as chair of the Interdepartmental Network on Sustainable Development Strategies, a committee specifically dedicated to coordinating horizontal integration,[20] and chair of the Deputy Minister Sustainable Development Coordinating Committee, described as the 'federal government's senior forum on sustainable development' (Government of Canada, 2000: 7).

[20] The Interdepartmental Network on Sustainable Development Strategies developed eight horizontal themes for interdepartmental coordination and collaboration (see HRD, 2002: 24).

The national sustainability indicators (the Canadian Sustainability Indicators — CESI) were first released in November 2006, as part of a joint initiative of the ministries of Environment, Statistics and Health.[21]

It is unclear how vertical coordination is promoted in Canada. However, territorial authorities may take their own approaches to promoting sustainable development, including using the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights.[22] For instance, in Ontario there is the office of the Environmental Commissioner which oversees citizens' rights under the Environmental Bill of Rights.[23]

3.2.1 Institution of note: Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development

The CESD was formed in 1995 by the Canadian government to monitor SDSs developed by government departments and agencies (as required under amendments to the Auditor General Act [1985]). The purpose of the CESD is to:

> provide sustainable development monitoring and reporting on the progress of category I departments towards sustainable development, which is a continually evolving concept based on the integration of social, economic and environmental concerns, and which may be achieved by, among other things,
>
> (a) the integration of the environment and the economy;
> (b) protecting the health of Canadians;
> (c) protecting ecosystems;
> (d) meeting international obligations;
> (e) promoting equity;
> (f) an integrated approach to planning and making decisions that takes into account the environmental and natural resource costs of different economic options and the economic costs of different environmental and natural resource options;
> (g) preventing pollution; and
> (h) respect for nature and the needs of future generations.
>
> (Auditor General Act, 1985: s21.1)

The Commissioner, reporting to the Auditor General, undertakes the review of the departmental SDSs that produce reports annually and, in the past, has provided departments with guidelines for reporting and planning.[24] Additionally, the Commissioner has the power to make 'expectations', as is expressed in the 2006 guidelines, underlining the need for departments to go beyond business-as-usual.[25]

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21 There are also a number of other indicator sets (environmental and economic) used by the federal government of Canada — for more information see http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/countr/canada/2007indprofile_Canada.pdf

22 The complete Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights is available at http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_93e28_e.htm

23 For more information see http://www.eco.on.ca/eng/

24 See, for instance, the 2003 guidance publication, OAG (2003).

25 See OAG (2006).

3.2.2 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4, below. Note that Canada does not currently have an NSDS; therefore the following table assesses the administration and implementation of the SDSs of the 31 individual departments.

Table 4 Canada

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• Individual federal department or agency • Guidance from Environment Canada • 'Expectations' from Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• Unclear
Integration	Horizontal	• Individual ministries and agencies required to produce sustainable development strategies • Cabinet Committee on Economic Growth and Long-Term Prosperity
	Vertical	• Unclear
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Individual departments, under *A Guide to Green Government* • National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy
	Public participation/ownership	• Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
Monitoring	Indicator development/ monitoring	• Official indicators, a combined initiative of Environment Canada, Statistics Canada and Health Canada • Use of a range of other environmental, economic and health indicators
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development

3.3 Finland

NSDS Status: Approved 1998, latest version released 2006; reviewed every two years.

Finland's latest NSDS (Finnish Prime Minister's Office, 2006) was released in 2006, eight years after the government approved a Government Programme for Sustainable Development (ESDN, n.d.[a]). The precursors to the NSDS include *Finnish Action for Sustainable Development*, a response in 1995 to *Agenda 21*. The current plan is to review the NSDS every two years, with the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD) being responsible for reporting to Parliament.

The Finnish Environment Institute is responsible for the monitoring of sustainability indicators, a range of which have been developed (Finnish Ministry of the Environment, n.d.[a]). Thirty-four key indicators have been integrated into the NSDS, with a wider set of indicators also used to help monitor the effectiveness of the strategy (FNCSD, n.d.[a]). An evaluation of how sustainable development was faring in Finland was undertaken in 2003 using these indicators (Finnish Ministry of the Environment, 2003).

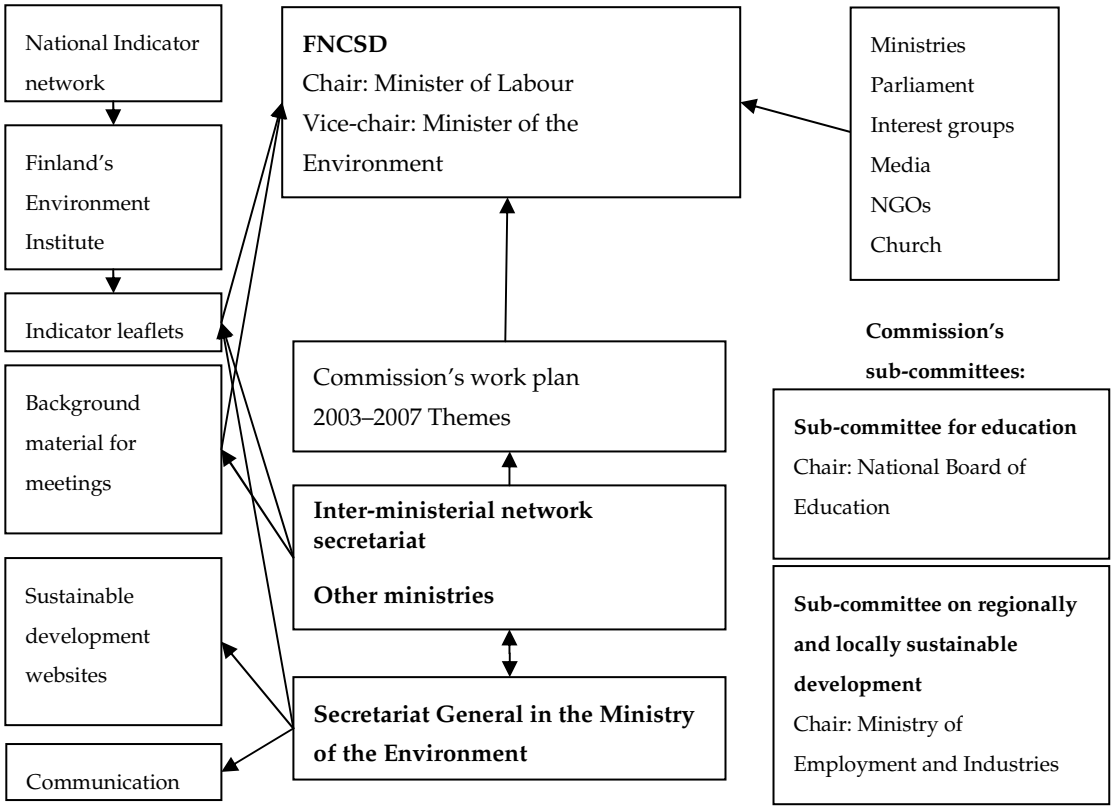
In order to promote local and regional sustainable development, the FNCSD created a subcommittee on regional and local sustainable development designed to promote integration between central and local levels and coordination between local authorities (FNCSD, n.d.[b]).

Horizontal integration is also promoted through the participation of all relevant ministries in the preparation of the NSDS. The 2006 NSDS was directed by a group of senior civil servants from the ministries of Finance, Environment, Social Affairs and Health.

3.3.1 Institution of note: Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development

The FNCSD was formed in 1993 by the Finnish government, to promote and progress sustainable development in Finland (FNCSD, n.d.[c]). The FNCSD acts as a forum for debate about sustainable development, and reports findings to the Ministry of the Environment. The workload of the Commission is decided by an 'interministerial secretariat' (FNCSD, n.d.[c]). It plays a number of important roles in Finland's approach to sustainable development, including taking responsibility for stakeholder participation in NSDS planning, promoting public participation, assisting development of the NSDS, assisting review of the NSDS, and encouraging integration. Figure 2 below gives a good indication of the framework and functions of the FNCSD. Formerly, one of the perceived strengths of the FNCSD was that its chair was the Prime Minister (Niestroy, 2005). However, in mid-2007 this was changed, and the Council is now chaired by the Minister of Labour (ESDN, n.d.[a]). The FNCSD's work plan is developed by a Sustainable Development Secretariat, an inter-ministerial group that meets up to ten times a year (FNCSD, n.d.[c]).

Figure 2 The Finnish National Committee for Sustainable Development
Source: FNCSD, n.d.[c]



Stakeholder participation is pursued through the national partnership programme in sustainable development, whereby the FNCSD and two Parliamentary Committees (Environment and Future) work together to promote stakeholder participation in a number of action areas.[26] The FNCSD emphasises that it takes a facilitative role, guiding the process but not the content (Finnish Ministry of the Environment, n.d.[b]). Participation is also emphasised in the NSDS development process, with stakeholders being encouraged to prepare their own SDSs in parallel to the national process (OECD, 2006).

[26] For more information, see http://www.ymparisto.fi/download.asp?contentid=9479&lan=en

3.3.2 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 5, below.

Table 5 Finland

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (NSDS development) • Ministry of the Environment (NSDS implementation)
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development
Integration	Horizontal	• Sustainable Development Secretariat
	Vertical	• Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development Sub-committee on regional and local sustainable development • *Local Agenda 21*
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Joint partnerships between Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development and Parliamentary Committees (Future and Environment)
	Public participation/ownership	• Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development
Monitoring	Indicator development/ monitoring	• Finnish Environment Institute
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Unclear

3.4 Germany

NSDS Status: Published 2002, reviewed 2005.

Germany first published an NSDS in 2002. In 2005 it was reviewed, updated and re-released. The Chancellor and the Federal Chancellery is the lead agency of sustainable development in Germany — this is mainly achieved through the existence of the States Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development (Green Cabinet), an inter-ministerial group of representatives that works collaboratively on sustainable development policy matters. In August 2005, the Federal Cabinet approved the document *Landmark Sustainability* (German Federal Cabinet, 2005), providing the basis for sustainable development policymaking and intentions in Germany.

In 2006, the German Bundestag initiated the creation of the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development. The Advisory Council is a cross-party group that develops policy advice, encourages parliamentary sustainability pursuits and examines international approaches to sustainability in order to enhance sustainable development in Germany (German Bundestag, n.d.). The Advisory Council also provides parliamentary support for the Green Cabinet and the German Council for Sustainable Development (Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development, 2004).

A set of 21 sustainable development indicators have been developed (Die Bundesregierung, n.d.). These are monitored and reported on every two years by the Federal Statistical Office, and help inform policy and the NSDS process.

Vertical integration is primarily promoted through *Local Agenda 21* projects and through a managing network known as the National Service Agency for Local Agenda 21 (Bundesweite Servicestelle Lokale Agenda 21), established in 2002. More than 20% of local authorities participate (ESDN, n.d.[b]). *Local Agenda 21* action has been widespread, with extensive networks throughout Germany (Kern et al., 2004). Vertical coordination is also promoted through regional authorities (referred to as Länders) being expected to produce their own SDSs (or similar). A working group has also been formed between federal and Länder ministers (ESDN, n.d.[b]). However, locating information on these, their implications and their effectiveness has proven difficult.

Public participation in the NSDS drafting process has also been promoted through an online forum to allow all citizens to propose ideas and contribute to the shape of the document.[27]

[27] This forum is available at: http://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/DialogNachhaltigkeit/dialog-nachhaltigkeit.html

3.4.1 Institution of note: German Council for Sustainable Development

The German Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [RNE]) was first established in 2001 by the German government. Consisting of 15 public figures, the Council was set up to advise the Federal Chancellery on sustainable development. In 2007, Chancellor Angela Merkel provided the Council with a new mandate to encourage and enhance Germany's sustainability efforts, and to advise government on sustainable development policy, target-setting and the NSDS (RNE, n.d.[a]). Furthermore, the Council has an express objective of fostering social dialogue, participation and understanding of the sustainable development process (RNE, n.d. [b]). The latter objective is promoted through a number of projects, including the federal campaign 'Citizens initiate Sustainability', designed to stimulate sustainable development activity at local and regional levels, and a number of communications projects (RNE, 2008).

3.4.2 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 6, below.

Table 6 Germany

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• States Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development (Green Cabinet) chaired by the Federal Chancellery
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Unclear
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• German Council for Sustainable Development
Integration	Horizontal	• Green Cabinet
	Vertical	• *Local Agenda 21* by local authorities • National Service Agency for Local Agenda 21 • Some federal-Länder collaboration
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• German Council for Sustainable Development
	Public participation/ownership	• German Council for Sustainable Development
Monitoring	Indicator development and monitoring	• Federal Statistical Office
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Unclear

3.5 Ireland

NSDS Status: Released 1997, reviewed 2002 and 2007.

Ireland takes a top-down approach[28] to the coordination of national sustainable development. Responsibility for the development of the NSDS is given to the environment ministry (the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government [DEHLG]).

Ireland's first NSDS — *Sustainable Development: A strategy for Ireland* — was released in 1997 (DEHLG, 1997), and a review was undertaken in 2002 in the lead-up to the Johannesburg Summit in September that year. The NSDS builds upon smaller national strategy policy documents such as the National Climate Change Strategy (Comhar, n.d.[a]). *Towards 2016*, a partnership agreement between the government and social partners, committed the Irish government to another review of the NSDS in 2007 (ibid.).

In order to promote horizontal integration, a parliamentary subcommittee was set up with the release of Ireland's first NSDS in 1997; this is part of a multi-departmental environment network (Niestroy, 2005: 183). This subcommittee was renamed the Joint Committee on Environment and Local Government in 2002 (Niestroy, 2005) and is currently known as the Joint Committee on Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Houses of Oireachtas, n.d.).

Ireland's Comhar Sustainable Development Council is listed as one of the bodies responsible for horizontal integration on the European Sustainable Development Network database, though the terms of reference of Comhar do not indicate that this is one of its roles (Comhar, n.d.[b]; ESDN, n.d.[c]).

Vertical integration of sustainable development in Ireland is undertaken mostly through two avenues: the Environmental Partnerships Fund[29] and the National Network of Local Agenda 21 (ESDN, n.d.[b]).

3.5.1 Institution of note: Comhar, Sustainable Development Council of Ireland

Ireland's Sustainable Development Council, Comhar, was established by the Irish government in 1999. The Council has a largely advisory role and reports to the Minister for the

[28] The top-down approach is characterised by a national strategy for sustainable development or *National Agenda 21*-type process, whereas a bottom-up process uses a distributed departmental approach, so that responsibility for sustainable development is assigned to individual agencies or departments (Swanson & Pintér, 2006).

[29] The Environmental Partnerships Fund was established in 1997. The fund finances local-level projects that aim to raise awareness about sustainable development and complement the NSDS.

Environment, within the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. It was developed as a:

> forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues surrounding Ireland's pursuit of sustainable development. It plays an important part in the development and implementation of policy in this regard. (DEHLG, n.d.)

Membership is for three-year terms. There are 25 members, comprising stakeholders from five 'pillars':

- The state sector;
- Environmental NGOs;
- Social and community NGOs;
- Professional and academic sectors, and
- Economic sector (Comhar, n.d.[b]).

The terms of reference of Comhar are to:

- Advance the national agenda for sustainable development;
- Evaluate progress in this regard;
- Assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation, and
- Contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards. (Comhar, n.d.[b])

Comhar is structured in three-year work programmes which typically comprise four working groups. Extra groups may also be established to address other pertinent issues. The Council gives:

> careful consideration to the most appropriate vehicles to disseminate its message. In this regard, its work and outputs may take a number of forms, as appropriate to particular issues, including:
>
> - advice to Ministers, to specific sectors, or to the general public;
> - opinions on critical issues in relation to the environment and sustainable development;
> - recommendations on policy development;
> - research and preparation of reports; and
> - sponsorship, conferences/seminars or other means to raise awareness. (Comhar, 2005: 2)

Promotion of public participation in the national sustainable development process is also supplemented by the work of Information on the Environment (ENFO).[30] ENFO is a government agency that aims to provide information on environmental and sustainable development matters in order to foster awareness and thus facilitate partnerships with the public, thereby promoting sustainable development and the protection of the environment for future generations (ENFO, n.d.).

[30] For more information see http://www.enfo.ie/

3.5.2 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 7, below.

Table 7 Ireland

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Comhar (SD Council) (in part)
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• Comhar
Integration	Horizontal	• Joint Committee for Environment, Heritage and Local Government • Comhar (in part)
	Vertical	• Environmental Partnerships Fund • National Network of Local Agenda 21
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Comhar
	Public participation/ownership	• Comhar • ENFO
Monitoring	Indicator development/monitoring	• Environmental Protection Agency (environmental indicators) • Central Statistics Office • National Economic and Social Committee (sustainability indicators)
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Unclear

3.6 Republic of Korea (South Korea)

NSDS Status: Launched 2006.

South Korea's NSDS, launched in 2006, is based on the 2005 *National Vision for Sustainable Development* (Roh, 2005). In July 2007, the Republic of Korea's National Assembly passed the Framework Act on Sustainable Development, creating a legislative basis for sustainable development governance and creating a national pathway for sustainable development in Korea (PCSD, 2007a). The Act requires the government to develop an NSDS that covers 20 years, and to develop and implement an action plan every five years (ibid.). The Act also commits local authorities to develop their own sustainable development strategies and creates the basis for national and local sustainable development commissions (ibid.).

Korea has developed a set of 77 sustainable development indicators, organised into three sectors, 14 themes and 33 sub-themes (PCSD, 2007b).[31]

Review processes are carefully planned, with the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development (PCSD) organising an international peer review process. The first such process took place in 2007 with a shared learning and review workshop for the Korean NSDS, with representatives from China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam participating, as well as observers from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the UNDESA (PCSD, 2007c). The PCSD is also responsible for reviewing medium-term action plans.

The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for overseeing coordination of central government effort (IISD, 2004b). Vertical integration is pursued both through the work and composition of the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development and through local sustainable development commissions, as well as requirements for local authorities to undertake strategic planning.

[31] For a copy of Korea's SD indicators, see http://ww.unescap.org/esd/sustainable/eei/meeting/Jan2007/documents/3h.%20EGM_EEI_Paper_Jong-Hwan%20KIM.pdf

3.6.1 Institutions of note: Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development

The Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development (PCSD) was created in September 2000, by the government of Korea, on the behalf of President Kim Dae-Jung. The initial mandate of the PCSD was to:

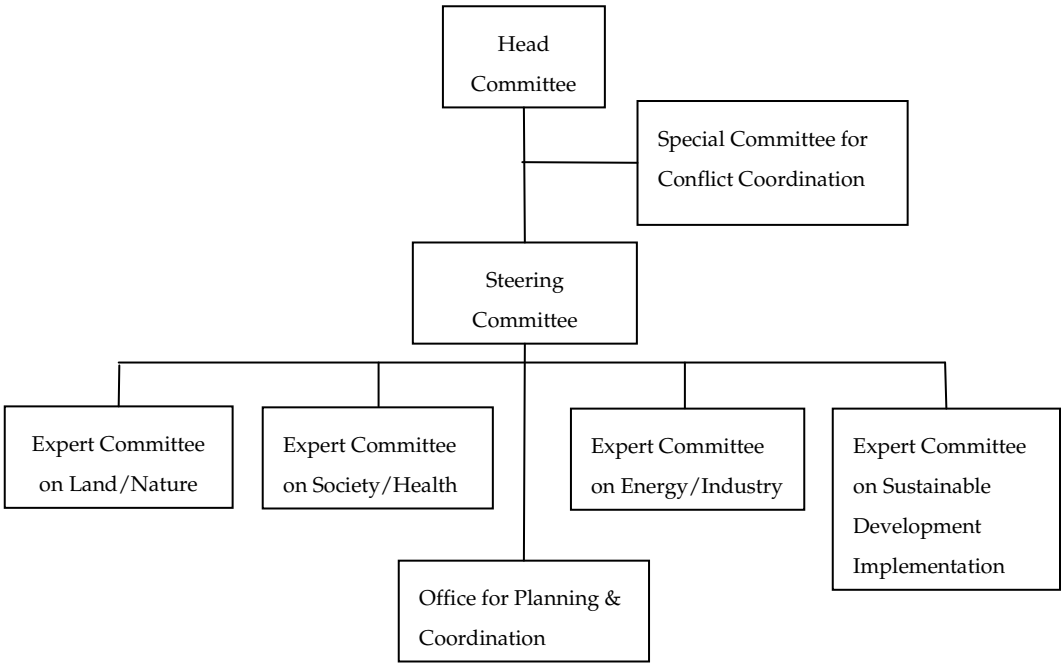
- set basic directions for major national policies
- establish plans that would strike a balance between preservation and development
- provide advice on global agreements on environment (PCSD n.d.[b])

This mandate has since been expanded to include:

- establish[ing] and implement[ing] major policies including water and energy
- deal[ing] with social conflicts related to national sustainable development (ibid.)

The PCSD comprises a number of committees. These include steering and integrating committees that help promote good governance, and a series of expert committees that help identify and review policy options (PCSD, n.d.[a]). The structure is indicated in Figure 3 and the functions and composition of the committees are listed below. Vertical coordination and local participation is considered to be very high within Korea (OECD, 2008: 451–2).

Figure 3 The Structure of Korea's Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development
Source: PCSD, n.d.(a)



Head Committee

Responsible for deliberation and resolution of main sustainable development policies.

- Fewer than 35 members
- Government commissioners: 12 commissioners including Ministers
- Appointed commissioners: sectoral experts from academia, economy, industry and civil organisations appointed by the President

Special Committee for Conflict Coordination

Responsible for deliberation and resolution of the issues on preventing and resolving social conflicts related to sustainable development.

- Fewer than 50 members
- Local representatives: heads of local metropolitan governments and recommended representatives of civil organisations in cities and provinces appointed by the President (32 members)
- Professional representatives: appointed commissioners from the Head Committee

Steering Committee

Responsible for prior review and coordination of the issues proposed to the Head Committee.

- 12 members
- Chairperson, managers, commissioners of general affairs

Expert Committees

Responsible for identification and review of policy tasks and the organisation and operation of research teams.

- Fewer than 30 members per expert committee (PCSD, n.d.[a])

3.6.2 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 8, below.

Table 8 South Korea

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development coordinates international peer review of NSDS • Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development reviews medium- and long-term action plans
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development
Integration	Horizontal	• Office of the Prime Minister
	Vertical	• Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development • Local sustainable development commissions
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development
	Public participation/ownership	• Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development
Monitoring	Indicator development/ monitoring	• Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Unclear

3.7 Sweden

NSDS Status: Presented 2002, revised 2004 and 2006.

Sweden first presented its NSDS in 2002, with a later revision in 2004 that elaborated on its goals and vision (Swedish Ministry of the Environment, 2004). A second NSDS revision occurred in 2006 (Government of Sweden, 2006) which included a set of 12 headline indicators for sustainable development.

The Ministry of the Environment (ME) currently takes the lead in the sustainable development process in Sweden, although an internal Division for Sustainable Development (Swedish Ministry of the Environment, n.d.) also exists. Between 2004 and mid-2007, Swedish sustainable development was coordinated by the Ministry of Sustainable Development (MSD) — this body has since been restructured into other government departments. As a result of this restructuring it is unclear whether such a unit still exists and how else horizontal integration is pursued. In 2007, the Commission for Sustainable Development was created. This advisory group was formed to contribute to the NSDS process and review. The former MSD incorporated a Coordination Unit for sustainable development, with responsibilities for coordination between government departments and agencies (ESDN, n.d.[d]). In general, there is an expectation that departments incorporate the principles of the NSDS in their activities (ibid.), though how this is undertaken is not explained.

A first set of sustainability indicators was developed by Statistics Sweden and published in 2001 (Statistics Sweden, 2001). A group of five 'green indicators' (energy use, acidifying substance emissions, carbon dioxide emissions, urban air benzene levels, and nitrogen and phosphorus discharges into the sea) have been included in the Budget Statement every year since 1998 (Environmental Advisory Council, 1999; IISD, 2004c).

There is a high degree of diffusion of the *Local Agenda 21* processes among municipalities (local-level authorities). With the second NSDS revision in 2006, the Swedish government also encouraged local authorities to develop their own SDSs in line with the national vision (ESDN, n.d.[d]).

3.7.1 Institution of note: Commission on Sustainable Development

The Swedish government set up the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2007. Its intentions are to examine priority policy areas including climate change and international cooperation on sustainable development, to contribute to the NSDS process and review, and to analyse matters of national importance with an integrated approach (Government Offices of Sweden, n.d.). Within the mandate for the Commission is also the task of helping Sweden prepare for its turn as President of the Council of the European Union in late 2009. Interestingly, the Commission's 'remit will expire at the end of Sweden's Presidency' (ibid.) unless the decision is made to extend it. Chaired by the Prime Minister, the Commission consists of members from government, industry, academia and NGOs, and operates as an advisory body.

3.7.2 Summary

The restructuring of the Swedish government and civil service over the last few years (which saw a change in government) has made it difficult to track the relevant organisations and their responsibilities. It is also unclear why restructuring — particularly the restructuring of the MSD into the ME and the abolishment of the Sustainability Council — came about and whether this was a rationalisation of tasks, a refocus of priorities or a politically motivated move. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 9, below.

Table 9 Sweden

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• Ministry of the Environment • Commission on Sustainable Development
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Unclear
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• Commission on Sustainable Development
Integration	Horizontal	• Unclear
	Vertical	• *Local Agenda 21*
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Commission on Sustainable Development
	Public participation/ownership	• Unclear
Monitoring	Indicator development/ monitoring	• Statistics Sweden
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Unclear

3.8 The Netherlands

NSDS Status: Adopted 2003, reviewed 2006–07.

VROM-Raad (The Netherlands Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment) is responsible for the development of the NSDS and other sustainable development policy work.

The Netherlands first adopted an Action Plan for Sustainable Development in 2003, with a first review in 2006–07. While the government argues that this is an NSDS,[32] international peer reviewers of the document dispute this (Dalal-Clayton & Krikhaar, 2007).

While there are no dedicated sustainable development indicators for measurement and monitoring, a range of suggested indicators were published in 2005 by The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (RIVM, 2005).

According to the European Sustainable Development Network, The Netherlands has four main horizontal coordination mechanisms:

1. An inter-ministerial 'Contact Persons Group' comprising representatives of eight ministries that meets tri-weekly and has responsibility for the preparation and implementation of the NSDS Action Plan;
2. Monthly meetings of representatives from the environment, economy, transport, agriculture and foreign affairs ministries to assist transition to sustainable development;
3. A number of government initiatives, including the requirement of every department/ministry to include sustainable development principles in their financial statements, including in policy design and implementation, and
4. The use of sustainable impact assessments for new investments and policy initiatives (ESDN, n.d.[e]).

Vertical coordination mechanisms are generally pursued through *Local Agenda 21* projects. However, vertical coordination, communication and integration of activity between central and regional/local governance are seen to be weak (ESDN, n.d.[e]).

[32] See the ESDN website http://www.sd-network.eu/ (ESDN, n.d.[e]).

3.8.1 Institution of note

There is no dedicated Sustainable Development Council or Commission in The Netherlands, but there are a number of independent advisory bodies whose roles include reviewing matters relevant to sustainable development. The most relevant to this paper is the VROM-Raad (The Netherlands Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment) which is responsible for the development of the NSDS. Others include the RMNO (Dutch Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment), The Netherlands Council for the Rural Area (RLG), the Social and Economic Council, the Scientific Council for Government Policy and the Waaden Sea Council.[33] Advisory bodies have a strong role in Dutch governance, as under the Constitution the government must take advice from them (RLG, n.d.).

[33] Links to these institutions are available at http://www.eeac-et.org/bodies/netherlands/nl_frame.htm

3.8.2 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 10, below.

Table 10 The Netherlands

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• VROM — Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Ministry for the Environment
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM-Raad) • Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment (RMNO) • Council for the Rural Area (RLG) • Waaden Sea Council
Integration	Horizontal	• Contact Persons Group — representatives from eight ministries • SD transition group meetings of representatives of five ministries • SD reporting in departmental financial statements • SD impact assessment of major government purchasing and policy initiatives
	Vertical	• *Local Agenda 21* processes
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Unclear
	Public participation/ownership	• Unclear
Monitoring	Indicator development and monitoring	• No decisive indicators, but a range suggested by the Environmental Assessment Agency (RIVM)
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Unclear

3.9 United Kingdom

NSDS Status: Published 1994, 1999, 2005; reviewed 1997, 2003–2005.

The United Kingdom (UK) has been an active participant in progressing sustainability. While some consider the comprehensiveness of the UK's NSDS to be very good (Swanson & Pintér, 2006), other opinions are somewhat mixed (Russel, 2007).

The environment ministry (the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [Defra]) is the lead agency for sustainable development. The UK approach to sustainable development is principle-based — these principles are set out in a framework (*One Future — Different Paths*) that is shared by the UK government, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Scottish Executive and the Welsh National Assembly (Defra, 2005). The latest NSDS, *Securing the Future*, was published in 2005 (HM Government, 2005).

The UK's first NSDS was published in 1994. In 1997 the incoming Labour government's review of the NSDS identified that involvement of ministries outside Defra was minimal, resulting in a concerted effort to enrol the participation of all departments (SDC, 2004). Following the review a more comprehensive and wide-ranging NSDS, titled *A Better Quality of Life,* was released in 1999. The most recent UK NSDS (2005) includes a framework that aims to guide government policy across the board and requires individual departments to develop their own Sustainable Development Action Plans (SDAPs) in line with the NSDS — this approach therefore addresses both the temporal and the sectoral integration necessary for pursuing sustainable development (Steurer, 2008: 3). This is an indication of how review processes are invaluable in the development of any national sustainable development strategy or framework, and how increased departmental involvement is desirable.

Horizontal integration is promoted through two methods. Firstly, a Ministerial Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development in Government (a subcommittee of the Energy and the Environment Committee) has been established with the task of promoting sustainable development in all central government departments and agencies. The objectives of this committee are to improve the sustainable running of government organisations, particularly through the SDAPs, and to report as necessary to the Cabinet Committee on Energy and the Environment (ESDN, n.d.[c]). The requirement of each department to produce an SDAP that is in line with the NSDS was implemented in order to assist departments in their reporting and to improve performance.

The second coordination mechanism is the use of sustainable development task forces, established by the State Secretary for Environment in 2002 (ESDN, n.d.[c]). These task forces have been set up in order to create action on particular sustainability issues. They comprise government officials and often ministers across government, as well as regularly involving private- and voluntary-sector stakeholders. There are currently five government task forces: the Sustainable Procurement Task Force; Sustainable Tourism Working Group; Sustainable Development Programme Board; Behaviour Change Forum, and the Sustainable Development Task Force. Other related task forces in the sustainability area include the Business Task Force on Sustainable Consumption and Production, and the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable (Defra, n.d.[a]). The nature of these task forces is such that they can change and respond to different pressures and priorities through time.[34]

Between the UK countries (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales) the shared framework, *One Future — Different Paths*, is used to vertically coordinate efforts (see Figure 4 below) (Defra, 2005). Individually, the executive governments of each country then undertake and implement their own sustainable development efforts.

Regional and local integration is managed through a number of different channels. In England, Regional Assemblies are responsible for determining high-level strategy arrangements in line with the UK NSDS. These can be in the form of Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks (RSDFs), Integrated Regional Strategies (IRSs) and/or Integrated Regional Frameworks (IRFs), although the decision on which of these is applied is made by the Regional Assembly (Defra, n.d.[b]). A range of documents have been developed to assist the Regional Assemblies in these tasks and broader sustainability efforts.[35] Each Regional Assembly makes a pledge or challenge to improve its environmental performance, often through dedicating it to reducing or making zero its carbon footprint, or reducing environmental impact.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), first established in 1999, have responsibility for Regional Economic Strategies (strategic plans that span at least ten years) for each of England's nine regions.[36] They are charged with promoting regional sustainable development and providing policy advice to central government (RDA, n.d.).

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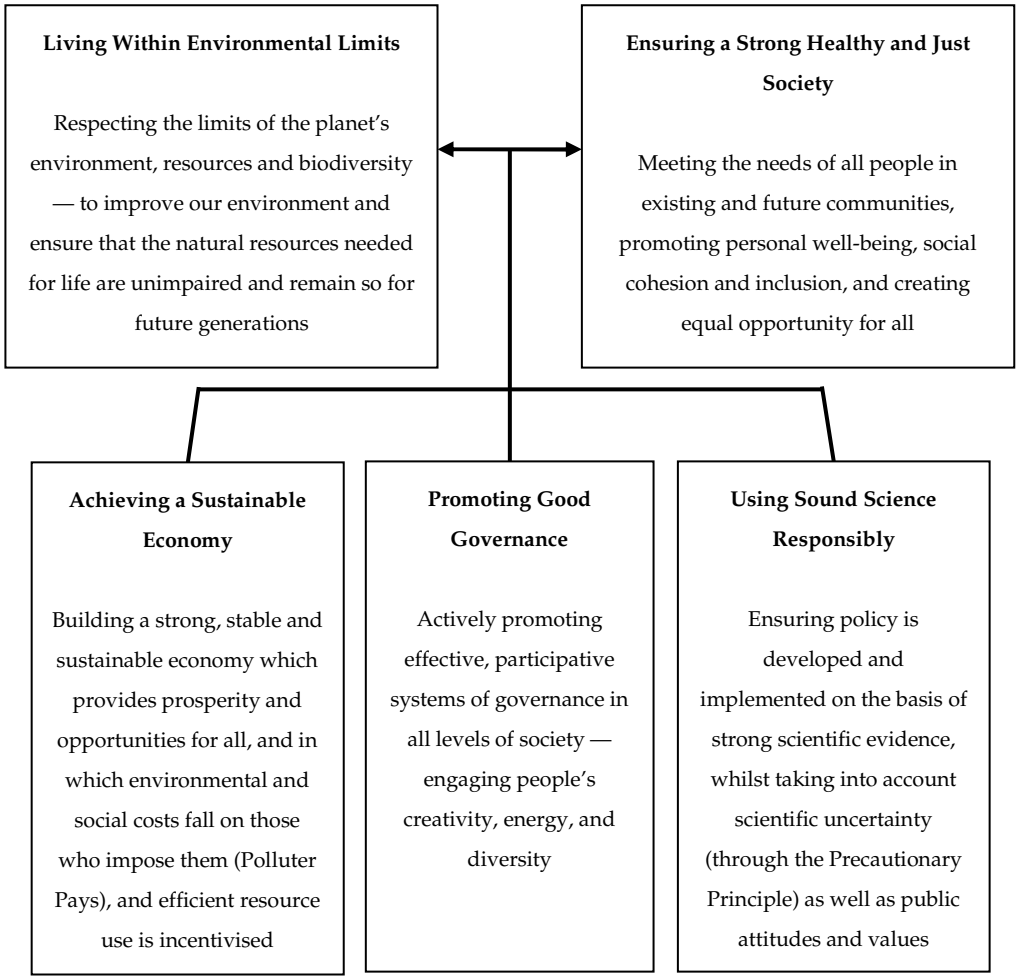
34 Previous task forces that are no longer in existence include the Sustainable Buildings Task Group and the Sustainable Development Education Panel.

35 For example, the *Guidance Note for Regional Assemblies on Best Practice for Embedding Sustainable Development in their Existing Core Functions* (Defra, 2007a); *Leading by Example: Securing the future in the government office network* (Defra, 2007b), and *Securing the Future through Partnership and Innovation in the English Regions* (Defra, 2007c).

36 For more information see http://www.englandsrdas.com/

Figure 4 The Principles of the United Kingdom's Shared Sustainability Framework
Source: Defra, 2005



3.9.1 Institution of note: Sustainable Development Unit

Following changes to the structure of government in 2001, the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) shifted from its previous location as part of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) to the newly formed Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (SDU, n.d.). Since 1997, the role of the SDU has been to embed, monitor and report on sustainable development across Whitehall and the UK. This includes taking responsibility for, and overseeing the implementation of, the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy and oversight of its domestic implementation; the international Sustainable Development Dialogues (with China, India, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil), and ensuring the sustainability of new communities — in particular Defra's interests in the land-use planning system (including the Planning Reform White Paper), housing supply, sustainable buildings and construction, strategic transport issues and the Olympics. The SDU also sponsors the Sustainable Development Commission; see below (Defra, n.d.[a]).

3.9.2 Institution of note: United Kingdom Sustainable Development Commission

The UK Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is a non-departmental public advisory body which was set up in 2000 to report to the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales, and the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. The SDC was born from foundations set by two earlier initiatives, the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development and the British Government Panel on Sustainable Development (SDC, n.d.).

The SDC is responsible for promoting public participation and providing policy advice. It is also an independent watchdog on how sustainable development is being progressed in the UK (this latter responsibility was created with the 2005 NSDS). The Commission can review sustainable development policy (such as budgets and spending reviews), review departmental SDAPs, conduct in-depth reviews on particular themes, appraise cross-governmental performance (such as the use of indicators and the operation of government agencies) and undertake 'state of the nation' progress reporting (SDC, 2005).

The UK Sustainable Development Commission co-exists with other non-departmental advisory public bodies that have a more environmental focus, such as the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP). Interestingly, the RCEP, created in 1970, has included a focus on sustainable development in many of its recent studies, for example *The Urban Environment* (RCEP, 2007).

3.9.3 Summary

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 11, below.

Table 11 United Kingdom

Element	Sub-element	Responsibility
Administration and Implementation	Who is responsible for NSDS development/direction?	• Sustainable Development Unit within the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
	Who undertakes internal NSDS review?	• Unclear
	How is advisory/expert function incorporated?	• Sustainable Development Commission • Regional Development Agencies
Integration	Horizontal	• Ministerial Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development in Government, including individual departments' SDAPs and reporting • Government Task Forces
	Vertical	• Shared framework • Regional Assemblies' responsibilities • Regional Development Agencies
Participation	Stakeholder involvement	• Sustainable Development Commission
	Public participation/ownership	• Sustainable Development Commission
Monitoring	Indicator development/ monitoring	• Sustainable Development Unit in Defra • National Statistics
Independent Review	Reporting to the public on the design (input), implementation (process) and completion (output) phases	• Sustainable Development Commission

4. Conclusion

This paper reviews the institutional frameworks of nine countries and finds a number of similarities and differences. The research found that all nine countries apply the five institutional elements — administration and implementation, integration, participation, monitoring, and independent review — yet no institutional framework is the same. This paper therefore draws the same conclusion as Volkery et al., that there is no single framework, and therefore *no single recipe*:

> The *choice of the strategic approach* often reflects the long-standing institutional framework-conditions, policy cultures, and regulatory styles. One approach might fit the specific circumstances for action in one country, but may fail to address the circumstances for action in another country. Countries have to adopt an approach that meets their specific needs and fits with their institutional framework conditions — there is no single recipe. (Volkery et al., 2006: 2050)

What became clear is that 'high-level central government' involvement was necessary in order to progress a successful NSDS. This was supported in discussions with United Nations staff,[37] who advised that from their experience, international best practice suggested that the most effective NSDS resulted from the Prime Minister's office providing 'high-level government leadership', in other words, the equivalent of our Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This was supported by Darren Swanson and László Pintér in their summary of a similar study (see below). Because of the importance of leadership, this concept is explored further in Appendix 2 of Report 4.

> The NSDS is at a critical juncture in its development. This is because the NSDS in most applications is still not sufficiently linked to existing government planning, reporting and budgeting processes. This is a serious weakness because this type of integration is a good proxy for the overall effectiveness of NSDS governance. But with this challenge we see an enormous opportunity emerging. At the same time that governments are advancing the NSDS and its associated governance structures (often championed by environment departments), governments via finance-related departments are also making important and innovative advances in government accountability systems (e.g., annual departmental planning and reporting). For purposes of improved accountability, transparency and efficiency, these innovations from finance-related departments bring aspects of strategic public management to the fore, and in many of the same ways as does the NSDS. This occurs in the form of high-level government goals and targets which are identified and systematically monitored and reported to facilitate continuous improvement and adaptive policymaking. And both of these current efforts — the NSDS and the government accountability system, have a common purpose — that being to navigate real progress toward advances in the quality of life of its citizens. (Swanson & Pinter, 2006: 2)

[37] This discussion occurred during a meeting with United Nations staff on 6 August 2008.

Interestingly, many countries had created a unique institution specifically to progress sustainable development, one that was both independent of central government and sufficiently resourced to provide quality advice to government. For samples of terms of reference for Sustainable Development Councils, see Appendix 3 of Report 4.

Importantly, due to the lack of evaluation as to how effective these international structures have been, we cannot draw conclusions to the extent we had hoped. However, it is still advantageous for New Zealand to look at the various frameworks that have been designed by other countries to meet their United Nations commitments, in this case the publication of their country's NSDSs.

Although it is important for New Zealand to look to international leaders so that we might learn from their successes and failures, it is also important that these proven frameworks are assessed for their relevance to this country. In particular, our unique culture and values, geographical location, strategic resources and governance structure must be considered in determining the optimal framework for New Zealand.

Report 4, *Institutions for Sustainable Development: Developing an optimal framework for New Zealand*, takes a closer look at New Zealand's current institutions to see if an NSDS can be achieved through the existing framework or whether new institutions need to be created.

Abbreviations

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
Defra	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK)
DEHLG	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Ireland)
DETR	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (United Kingdom)
DEWHA	Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (Australia)
EEAC	Network of European Environment and Sustainable Development History Councils
ENFO	Information About the Environment/Eolas Ar An Comhshaoil (Ireland)
ESDN	European Sustainable Development Network
EU	European Union
FNCSD	Finland's National Commission on Sustainable Development
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
MSD	Ministry of Sustainable Development (Sweden)
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
NSESD	National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (Australia)
PCSD	Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development (Korea)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RCEP	Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (United Kingdom)
RNE	German Council for Sustainable Development (Germany)
SDAP	Sustainable Development Action Plans (United Kingdom)
SDC	Sustainable Development Commission (United Kingdom)
SDS	Sustainable Development Strategy
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
VROM-Raad	The Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (The Netherlands)

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