

# **Tinkering or Fundamental Reform? The Pros and Cons of Various Options for Strengthening Sustainable Development Governance**

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# Overall Goals of IFSD

## **MANDATE FROM NAIROBI-HELSINKI OUTCOME (FUNCTION):**

1. CREATING A STRONG, CREDIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE SCIENCE BASE AND POLICY INTERFACE
2. DEVELOPING A GLOBAL AUTHORITATIVE AND RESPONSIVE VOICE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
3. ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND COHERENCE WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
4. SECURING SUFFICIENT, PREDICTABLE AND COHERENT FUNDING
5. ENSURING A RESPONSIVE AND COHESIVE APPROACH TO MEETING COUNTRY NEEDS

# Overall Goals of IFSD

## MANDATE FROM NAIROBI-HELSINKI OUTCOME (FORM):

1. ENHANCING UNEP
2. ESTABLISHING A NEW UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
3. ESTABLISHING A SPECIALIZED AGENCY SUCH AS A WORLD ENVIRONMENT ORGANIZATION
4. REFORMING THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
5. ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND STREAMLINING EXISTING STRUCTURES

- **CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN FORM AND FUNCTION UNCLEAR**
- **OPTIONS ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE**

# Overall Goals of IFSD

## **BROADER PRINCIPLES FOR REFORM:**

1. AGREEMENT ON CORE PROBLEMS TO BE ADDRESSED
2. FORM SHOULD FOLLOW FUNCTION/SUBSTANCE
3. ANY REFORM SHOULD IMPROVE THE INTEGRATION OF THE THREE PILLARS OF SD, BUT ALSO GENERAL CONSENSUS ON NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE ENVIRONMENTAL PILLAR
4. GENERAL AGREEMENT ON CORE NORMATIVE UNDERPINNING OF SD (sovereignty over resources and no harm rule, need for policy space and ownership of SD; CBDR, polluter pays principle, precautionary principle, access to decision-making/participation).
5. IS THERE ROOM FOR "REGULATORY SPACE" FOR SD?

# Overall Goals of IFSD

## **HOWEVER, THERE IS ARGUABLY NO SHARED VISION OF SD**

- LACK OF SHARED VISION MAKES AMBITIOUS REFORM DIFFICULT
- LEAVES FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM, WHICH DOES NOT NECESSARILY SOLVE INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS (O. YOUNG)

## **POSSIBLE VISIONS:**

- INSTITUTIONAL REFORM FOR A GREEN ECONOMY TRANSFORMATION: SO FAR EXPLICIT LINK HAS NOT BEEN MADE BETWEEN THE TWO AGENDAS
- ARTICULATE A SET OF SD GOALS MODELED (AND INTEGRATED WITH) THE MDGS WITH MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS
  - PRO: CREATES BENCHMARKS AND ACCOUNTABILITY, FOCUSES EFFORTS
  - CON: POLITICALLY DIFFICULT – BUT RIO+20 COULD BEGIN A PROCESS THAT INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS COULD SUPPORT

## *Key Argument for IFSD*

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**It is possible to simultaneously strengthen overall coherence and implementation of the three pillars of SD and also strengthen the environmental pillar if options are not thought of as mutually exclusive. Much can be achieved by tinkering or modest reforms of current structures, though bold political commitment is required.**

**HOWEVER: Counterproductive to do one without the other.**

## **Option 1: Enhance UNEP**

- **Important for strengthening environmental pillar and builds on UNEP's successes and strengths**
- **Most proposed reforms can be accommodated without transformation into a specialized agency, even including universal membership (possible legitimacy-effectiveness trade-off?)**
- **However, lack of symbolic/political clout/autonomy**
- **Specific enhancement examples: capacity-building, particularly in scientific assessment and knowledge clearinghouse, clustering MEAs (where appropriate); strengthen EMG. Legally, virtually all possible without changing status of UNEP. Main concern is financial and structural overlap – former can be traded off with potential cost savings – latter, see option 5**

## Upgrading UNEP

	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
<b>UNEP upgrade to specialized agency (e.g., WEO)</b>	Enhanced legal and political status, greater autonomy and agenda-setting, decision-making could be “universalized” and tailored to env. pillar; enhanced ability to facilitate negotiations within its competence.	Requires detailed negotiations and political support for goals, scope of mandate and funding; legal hurdles (though driven by politics); universalization requires specific buy-in by members. WTO model probably not appropriate.
<b>UNEP upgrade to subsidiary body of UN with universal membership (e.g., UNEO)</b>	Similar to above in many respects (could still change name to UNEO). Would clarify status of GC/GMEF and streamline.	Similar political challenges, though less legal - UNGA resolution would universalize and subsidiary to UNGA). Already universalized in most respects, however.

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## **Option 4: Sustainable Development Council**

- **Some political momentum; more than tinkering, but evolutionary, not revolutionary proposal.**
- **Would replace or integrate the CSD functions into broader structure.**
- **Oversee new peer review process (likely models, OECD, ILO, not IMF). Would require increased capacity.**
- **Could go hand in hand with creation of Sustainable Development Board (Delivering as One) or could reformed UNDG be sufficient?**
- **Needs to work out division of labour with UNEP and UNDP not a replacement of either.**

## Option 4: Enhance/Reform CSD and ECOSOC

	<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
<b>Create Sustainable Development Council (see also details in Beijing background paper).</b>	Significant reform. Greater flexibility and responsiveness to emerging problems; potential capacity to monitor, review, implement decisions.	Risk of overwhelming environmental pillar if does not adequately integrate and work with UNEP/EMG; political hurdles, though could be formed with UNGA resolution. Relationship to ECOSOC unclear; need to avoid overlapping mandate.
<b>Enhanced ECOSOC</b>	Existing mandate and machinery would cover increased role, esp. monitoring implementation of agreements from earlier conferences.	ECOSOC has always had this capacity, but CSD and overall coordination have remained weak. May require a more focused council/enhanced mandate.

# **Option 5: Enhancing Institutional Reforms and Streamlining**

**KEY PRINCIPLE: “Embrace Complexity” but simplify administration, implementation/compliance, and delivery of assistance and services. Build on strengths of existing organizations.**

## **MOST PROMISING PROPOSALS INCLUDE:**

- **Build on Delivery as One (number of proposals, devil is in the details). A key element is greater support for national sustainable development plans.**
  - **Who leads and division of labour: Sustainable Development Board best option for integrating three pillars (if no SD Council, could be established by ECOSOC). If not, UNDP? UNEP? UNEP needs enhanced role, but work with existing institutional framework, not re-invent it.**

# **Option 5: Enhancing Institutional Reforms and Streamlining**

## **MOST PROMISING PROPOSALS INCLUDE (CON'T):**

- **Peer review mechanism (even if SD Council not successful). Will require increased administrative and technical capacity internationally to assist countries.**
- **Opportunity to strongly endorse/support work on the “environmental and social sustainability framework” led by the EMG and to fully integrate with Issue Management Group’s work on Sustainable Management. Corollary to peer review – internal to UN.**
- **Enhanced system-wide planning – CEB (system-wide) EMG (defined projects/priority areas within mandate).**
- **Broader economic coherence – integrate with WTO Coherence mandate as equal partner, but also lessons learned from failures/limits of that process.**

**Thank You**

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