



Adviesraad inzake beleidscoherentie
ten gunste van ontwikkeling
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Why is policy coherence so necessary to achieve the SDGs ?

Working paper reviewing the principles of policy coherence: PC, PCSD, PCD¹

Policy coherence promoting positive synergies across policies to achieve agreed objectives can only be to the benefit of the SDGs. As it is a central concept in the mandate of the Belgian *Advisory Council on Policy Coherence for Development* (CCPD-ABCO Council), the Council has organised a workshop to situate its different aspects in time and their usefulness in relation to each other.

This working paper reviews the outcome of these discussions and their follow up in the Council, according to three normative concepts of policy coherence that have emerged over the last 100 years:

- I. PC: the general concept of Policy Coherence (first half of the 20th century) ;
- II. PCSD: Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (2015);
- III. PCD: Policy Coherence for Development (1992; 2017);

Annex: Origin and Objectives of Policies for Sustainable Development.

Policy coherence in general aims to prevent policies from contradicting each other or from having unanticipated negative effects. But these three concepts have different histories and different institutional dimensions.

PC was originally only about policy objectives set by a government (national, federal, ...), whereas PCSD and PCD are about policies aimed at policy objectives which are common to different countries at the international level. PCSD and PCD are also about institutional arrangements to achieve these multilateral goals by improving the preparation and evaluation of development policies.

PC is currently one of the 3 guidelines of the Belgian Federal Plan for Sustainable Development (FPSD)². This plan also contains two decisions on PCD mechanisms and instruments.

The mission of the CCPD-ABCO is to ensure PCD, i.e. that the impacts of public policies from the North on the South, both development cooperation policies and other policies, do not counteract each other.

¹ Question raised in the workshop organized by the ABCO-CCPD during the Belgian SDGForum 2021, further discussed by the council in the course of 2021-2022 and contributing to workshops related to the VNR of the SDGForum 2022.

² Federal Plan for Sustainable Development adopted on the 1st of oktober 2021. https://www.duurzameontwikkeling.be/sites/default/files/content/fpdo_2021_nl.pdf (dutch version), [pfdd_2021_fr.pdf](https://www.developpementdurable.be/sites/default/files/content/pfdd_2021_fr.pdf) ([developpementdurable.be](https://www.developpementdurable.be)) (french version)

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I. PC : (Public) Policy Coherence

*Policy Coherence is defined by the OECD as the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies, creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives.*³

The OECD thus defines the broad PC concept of policy coherence (or incoherence) as the ability (or inability) of policies to synergise and reinforce each other to achieve objectives. The search for coherence is less about the ends than about the means, i.e. the public policies to be pursued to achieve agreed objectives.

The first chapter of this paper stresses that (I.1) policy coherence is not automatic, but that (I.2) a sustainable development plan can help to improve it.

I.1 PC is not automatic: ensuring policy coherence is one of the roles of the state

The elements of a political agreement (e.g. the chapters of a Government Declaration on the policies to be pursued by a government) are supposed to be logically related to each other, to complement each other, or anyway not to contradict each other. The role of the Prime Minister is to ensure this coherence, both in the government agreement and in the government's subsequent action throughout its mandate.

Recognition of the need for coherent public policies has varied over the last century. Recognised between the 1930s and the 1970s, it faded away in the 1980s to 2000s in the questioning of the role of the state, of the purpose of the public sector and of the role of *public policy* in general. In the Reagan/Thatcher years the *failures of public institutions* were seen as the main cause of all systemic failures, so the share of market forces in *mixed economies*⁴ increased relative to that of public intervention.

But at the beginning of the 21st century, it has (again) become clear that markets were unable to self-regulate the malfunctioning of monopolies and oligopolies. The destruction of natural resources, unemployment, growing income inequalities and financial crises have made public sector action increasingly necessary, both to enable democratic discussion and monitoring of objectives and to regulate market failures.

At present, the scale of the social costs observed is even leading the state to go beyond its role as a forum and regulator in favour of a return to the role of investor in order to meet the needs for public goods and public services in sectors of general interest such as health, energy, education, etc.

³ <https://globalnaps.org/issue/policy-coherence/>

⁴ Mixed economy: where the private and public sectors co-exist in relatively equal shares.

However, in order to reduce or eliminate *spillovers*⁵ and *trade-offs*⁶ between the possibly contradictory impacts of public policies carried out, it is first necessary to succeed in identifying them. Only constant vigilance by public authorities and stakeholders listening to and understanding each other can achieve this. No top-down planning could anticipate all the interdependencies between democratic decision-making mechanisms. And experience shows that the simple compilation of bottom-up contributions can lead to contradictory or even surreal results⁷.

This raises the question of a cross-cutting support process for the preparation of public policies that does not rely exclusively on cabinets and administrations. The latter are too compartmentalised in sectoral silos with short-term deadlines to feel the urgency of broadening their analysis beyond their own sector. The experience of RIAs (*Regulatory Impact Analysis*) and SIAs (*Sustainable Development Impact Assessments*) shows how difficult it is for the author of a regulation to extend his analysis to a systemic approach, using information that he does not have and with stakeholders he does not know.

I.2 PC in the Federal Sustainable Development Plan

One method adopted in Belgium is that of indicative and evolutionary planning by means of a *Federal Sustainable Development Plan* (FSDP) inserted in a strategic cycle of *Consultation-Planning-Monitoring-Evaluation*. Such a cycle has existed for 25 years in the framework of the law of 5 May 1997 on the coordination of federal sustainable development policy.⁸

One of the three guidelines of the FSDP adopted in October 2021 by the Belgian federal government is "B.2 Ensure policy coherence". The other two are "B.1 Accelerate the implementation of the objectives" and "B.3 Strengthen the exemplary role of the State".

The first opinion of the CCPD-ABCO (points 9 to 19) contributed to the formulation of guidelines B.1 and B.2 of the FSDP⁹. But the emphasis on these points in the structure of the PFDD also reflects the growing concern of the administrations themselves for policy coherence. Over the past 25 years, a growing number of administrative experts have become aware of the proliferation of interdepartmental networks whose coexistence duplicates work aimed at the same objectives of coherence. This reduces the time allocated to each of the possibilities for in-depth interactive work between departments in the preparation and implementation phases of cross-cutting sustainable development policies (poverty, gender, diversity, climate adaptation etc.).

⁵The *spillover effect* is when an event in a country has a ripple effect on the economy of another, usually more dependent country.

⁶ The *tradeoff* is a *situation* in which you must *accept* something in *order* to have something good

⁷ Sometimes they are closer to the real issues than any administration could be, but sometimes they come from a dream world that is difficult to relate to the reality of political issues.

⁸ See points 1 to 8 of the introduction to the Opinion of the CCPD-ABCO on the Draft PFDD

⁹ cf. note on "Amendments on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) in the PFDD"

Through the FSDP adopted last October, the federal government has thus already started to put the issue of coherence at the centre of federal policy-making and monitoring. Chapters II and III show the scope of the respective work streams of PCSD and PCD, acronyms referring to the political objectives of these policies.

II. PCSD : Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (2015)¹⁰

The first variation of the PC concept presented in this note is PCSD. Its name, *Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development*, indicates the objectives of policies whose coherence is targeted by this concept.

II.1 PCSD: Definitions by the United Nations and the OECD

It was the adoption in September 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals that determined the emergence of the concept of PCSD. It is therefore linked to the long-term process of paradigm shift - recalled in the Annex - which finally led the international community to move from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for developing countries alone to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by and for all countries of the world.

The 2030 Agenda¹¹ - as recalled in the annex - aims to achieve 17 universal goals - list of SDGs in the annex, each¹² of which has about ten targets (or "sub-goals") measurable by about ten indicators. *Achieving Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development* (PCSD) is target 17.4 of goal 17 of the Agenda, entitled "*Strengthen the means of implementation of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and revitalize it*".

It is in this context that the OECD defines PCSD as "*a policy-making approach and tool for integrating the economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainable development at all stages of national and international policy-making*"¹³. This policy coherence is sought in the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the North and South of the planet, from the local to the global level, for present and future generations.

II.2 PCSD and the four levers of governance by common objectives

¹⁰ The word « for » in this expression is sometimes replaced by « in favour of ».

¹¹ *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, september 2015, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

¹² Contrary to the mistake sometimes made in claiming that the 2030 Agenda replaces GDP with 17 indicators.

¹³ OECD, "What is Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development?", in *PCSD Partnership*, <https://community.oecd.org/community/pcsdpartnership>

The September 2015 multilateral agreement ¹⁴ also deals with the mode of governance needed to achieve the 2030 programme. This so-called *transformative governance, by common objectives*, refers to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

According to the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 (GSDR2019) governance is one of the *four levers* to bring about the necessary transformations for the success of the 2030 Agenda: *governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, science and technology*¹⁵. In other words what is needed is much more than a business as usual *incremental change*.

The 2030 Agenda is more than the sum of measurable goals, targets, and indicators. It is both a normative orientation and a guide for action for identifying and pursuing sustainable development priorities and creating coherence between policies and sectors, in all contexts - local, regional, national, transnational and global.

This requires action taking into account *the interlinkages across all goals and the holistic character of the 2030 Agenda*. Among the three final *calls to action* of the report concerning multilateral relations and resources needed to accelerate implementation and actions in every country and region to design and rapidly implement their own pathways, the second call is focused on the *prioritization of policy coherence* as follows:

*The four levers of change - governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology - should be coherently deployed and combined to bring about transformational change. All actors should strive for coordinated efforts and prioritize policy coherence and consistency across sectors.*¹⁶

II.3 Priority to policy coherence, yes, but for which public policies?

Although it is often said that the concept of "policy coherence" (PC) is only present in target 17.14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is clear that PC is present in two other targets of SDG17 of the 2030 Agenda: the targets 17.13 and 17.15.

¹⁴ *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* – <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

¹⁵ The Future is now. Science for achieving sustainable development. *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* (GSDR2019) – Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General; Co-chairs: Peter Messerli (Switzerland) – Endah Murniningtyas (Indonesia); the 13 Members of this Group includes Jean-Pascal van Ypersele (Belgium). Page xxi. <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/future-now-science-achieving-sustainable-development-gsdr-2019-24576>

¹⁶ Ibidem. Page xxxiii

Like all sustainable development goals, SDG 17 is broken down into many sub-goals or “targets”¹⁷. Three of them are related to *policy and institutional coherence*:

-17.13: *actions that enhance global macroeconomic stability including by promoting coordination and coherence of (all) policies*

- 17.14: *actions that enhance policy coherence for sustainable development*

- 17.15: *actions that respect each country's policy space and sovereignty with regard to the development and implementation of policies related to the SDGs.*

Taken together with Goal 16, that calls for “promoting peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development...”, these three institutional targets require a mode of governance which is “transformative” through the priority given to goals oriented and coherent cross-sectoral policy over sectoral policies towards sectoral goals of a siloed mode of development as follows:

The 2030 Agenda represents a new mode of governance, one ultimately defined not through legally binding international agreements, but through goals.

Governance by goals holds great potential, but success will depend on a number of institutional factors, including how States act on their commitments to the 2030 Agenda and how they strengthen related global governance arrangements and translate global ambitions into their national, subnational and local contexts.

Governments will need to prioritize policy coherence, overcome sectoral silos and align existing rules and regulations towards achieving the goals that are interlinked across sectors.

New integrated approaches that take into account systemic interactions and causal relationships between goals and policies are needed.

Governments will need to be open to transformative learning through experimentation and innovation, a mode of working that may be new for many government entities.

*Adequate State capacity is among the key factors for successful sustainable development policies*¹⁸.

¹⁷ Reminder: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are broken down by the United Nations into 169 sub-goals or “targets” (on average about ten per goal) whose achievement is measured by 232 “unique” indicators (in fact 247 indicators - including 12 repeated 2 or 3 times - to measure achievement of targets).

¹⁸ Ibidem. Page 29.

II.4 Followed (monitored), multi-actor and "reshaped" policies

Like target 17.15, GSDR2019 stresses that solutions are not unique and that, provided that decision-making processes have a scientific basis and good early warning systems¹⁹, each country has room for manoeuvre in exercising its authority. The GSDR nevertheless highlights the three qualities required of these policies²⁰:

- programmed and monitored : *All governments should incorporate targets and indicators into their national plans and budgets, formulate policies and programmes to achieve them, and create institutions that deal with uncertainties and risks, as well as systems for monitoring and evaluation.*

- multi-stakeholder: *The primary actors in policy design and implementation are governments, and they will be effective only when they work with other key actors, including the private sector and civil society organizations at the regional, multilateral and international levels.*

- "reshaped" according to the sustainable development patterns adopted by the country: *Inclusive governance that involves state and non-state actors will be able to support more effective policy interventions by changing the incentives of those in power to reshape their preferences in favour of sustainable development to accommodate the interests of previously excluded actors.*

Part II of the paper has shown that 'policy coherence' is as much about the domestic as it is about the external policies of 'transformative governance' required to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Part III will analyse the difference between the arrangements at different levels to ensure PCD (1992-2017) and PCSD (2015) and show how they can be mutually supportive.

III. PCD : Policy Coherence for Development (1992 ; 2017)²¹

The second variation of the PC concept presented in this note is PCD. The concept of *Policy Coherence for Development* largely predates that of PCSD, as it was born at the same time as sustainable development (1992). But PCD was initially defined in the sphere of Development Cooperation and not at the level of a country's overall policies like PCSD.

¹⁹*Governments drive implementation of the Goals in many ways. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, so governance approaches need to be diverse, tailored, innovative and adaptive, using science to support decision-making and develop early-warning systems that can pick up and authenticate weak signals. Ibidem page 30*

²⁰ Ibidem, page 30.

²¹ Translating into French as : "de", "pour le", "pour un", "en faveur du ou d'un", "au service du ou d'un" etc...

PCD²² was introduced under pressure from development NGOs in the 1990s against the dumping policies practised on certain products exported to developing countries by European countries. It was incorporated into EU law by the Maastricht Treaty (1992), strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty (2009), and reaffirmed in the new European Consensus on Development (2017).

III.1 PCD : European Union and Belgian definitions

At the European level, the concept of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is enshrined in Article 208 of the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 and recalled in the European Consensus on Development of 2017. Article 208 of the Lisbon Treaty defines PCD as the following commitment: "*The Union's development cooperation policy and that of the Member States shall complement and reinforce each other. The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries*".

At the Belgian level, PCD is also enshrined in article 8 of the law of 19 March 2013 on development cooperation: it is therefore a legal obligation for Belgium.

- The law of 19 March 2013 defines PCD as "*a process to ensure that the objectives and results of a government's development cooperation policies are not undermined by other policies of that government that have an impact on developing countries, and that these other policies support, where possible, the objectives of development*"²³. The law also set eight objectives for Belgian cooperation, including seeking maximum coherence between the different areas of Belgian development policy.

- PCD therefore aims, *at a minimum*, to ensure that Belgian policies that may have an impact on countries in the South do not run counter to the objectives of Belgian development cooperation (the *do no harm* principle) and, ideally, that they contribute positively to them. The idea is to reduce inconsistencies between different areas of Belgian policy by creating synergies between the public authorities to increase development effectiveness. In other words, coherence seeks to avoid that countries providing development aid take back with one hand what they give with the other.

²² PCD was originally defined by giving the word 'development' the geopolitically reduced meaning it had in 'development cooperation {of other countries}'. This meaning did not refer to the full range of policies pursued by a government for its own development.

²³ Loi relative à la Coopération [belge] au Développement, 19 Mars 2013, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2013031906&table_name=loi

The Belgian definition of PCD: stronger and more inclusive than its European definition

- Stronger: the European definition only speaks of "taking into account" the objectives of development cooperation, whereas the Belgian definition uses the verb "to ensure".

- More comprehensive: the objectives of European cooperation are defined more narrowly than the objectives of Belgian cooperation:

Lisbon Treaty (art. 208): EU cooperation has as its (relatively reductive) objective the reduction and eradication of poverty (*The Union development cooperation policy shall have as its primary objective the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty.*).

Law of 2013 on Belgian Development Cooperation (art.3): "*Belgian Development Cooperation has as its general objective sustainable human development*".²⁴ However, the adoption of the Agenda 2030 in 2015 based the Belgian approach to sustainable development on the 17 SDGs. The PCD of Belgian development cooperation therefore also aims today to ensure that at least the 17 SDGs are not undermined by other policies that have an impact on the countries of the South - and ideally that these other policies support the implementation of the 17 SDGs in the countries of the South.

III.2 Is the PCD, born in 1992, made redundant by the PCSD, born in 2015?

According to the European Commission's latest report on PCD in 2019: "*The new concept of PCSD in the 2030 Agenda seems to be confusing and perhaps even giving a false impression that the concept of PCD is no longer relevant. In some EU Member States, PCD has been partly or totally forgotten in favour of the PCSD, rather than being seen as a contribution to the broader concept of PCSD*"²⁵. Indeed, many actors have interpreted PCSD as simply replacing PCD - without understanding that one does not go without the other.

Yet the various international texts are clear. The new European Consensus on Development adopted in 2017, for example, states that "*The EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), which requires that the objectives of development cooperation are taken into account in any policy likely to affect developing countries. It is a crucial element for the achievement of the SDGs and an important contribution to the broader goal of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)*".²⁶ The OECD

²⁴ Ideally the term *sustainable human development* should not have been used, as the human dimension is central to sustainable development from the very origins of the concept (see Annex). If it is not human, development is not sustainable. And even less viable or sustainable for humanity.

²⁵ European Commission (2019), *Policy Coherence for Development: 2019 EU Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 16.

²⁶ European Commission (2017), *The New European Consensus on Development: "Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future"*, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf

Recommendation on PCSD²⁷ and the European Commission's 2019 PCD reports²⁸ are along the same lines. The PCSD does not therefore make PCD redundant. According to the European Commission, PCD even has an added value in that it is focused on the interests of the South: *"In the case of PCSD, since the SDGs are universal, policy makers have to ensure multi-directional coherence by pursuing multiple objectives at the global level, whereas for PCD, coherence is more focused: it is directed towards a single objective, which is the interest of developing countries"*²⁹. This is why the chapeau of one of the three guidelines of the Federal Sustainable Development Plan (FSDP) adopted in October 2021 by the Belgian federal government (all three guidelines B.1, B.2 and B.3 are cited in section I of this note) recalls the link between global crises, transnational effects of national and European policies and the indispensability of PCD.

FSDP Guideline B.2 Ensure policy coherence (6th paragraph of this heading) :

In view of the increasing importance of global crises and the transnational effects of national and of national and European policies, it is essential to recall the importance of the principle of policy coherence for development (PCD), as part of policy coherence for sustainable development, a principle that is crucial for achieving the SDGs, according to the definitions, obligations and recommendations at the European, Belgian and OECD levels.

III.3 What is the added value of PCD compared to PCSD?

PCD is targeted in particular at countries of the South, whereas PCSD is less exclusively focused on countries of the South. PCSD also encompasses the whole domestic dimension of sustainable development, i.e. the integration of economic, social and governance components of mutually consistent policies for the sustainable development of Belgium itself. NB: Today, the development policies of the countries of the South obviously concern all the components of sustainable development³⁰.

²⁷ OECD (2019), *Recommendation of the Council on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development*, <https://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/oecd-recommendation-on-policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development.htm>

²⁸ European Commission (2019), *Policy Coherence for Development: 2019 EU Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

²⁹ European Commission (2019), *Policy Coherence for Development: 2019 EU Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p.7.

³⁰ The mistake of pitting the concepts of development and environment against each other is still common. In 2021, for example, in the FRDO-CFDD's amendment no. 17 to the FSDP draft text: *The current focus on policy coherence for development (PCD) should be extended to policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD). It is not enough to look at the impact of Belgian policy on poverty and economic development in developing countries. We need to look at the impact on the different dimensions of sustainable development (ecological, social and economic) in both southern and northern countries.* <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/2021a09f.pdf> - page 5.

The added value of PCD in relation to policy coherence in general, or to PCSD, lies mainly in this emphasis on the importance of implementing the SDGs in the South. It reminds us that our Belgian, European or international policies have important impacts in these countries, and that it is also in our interest to encourage positive impacts while avoiding negative ones.

PCD is also much more strongly anchored in law than PCSD, as it has been integrated into several essential texts such as the Lisbon Treaty or the Belgian law on development cooperation (see point III.2 above). It has thus become a legal obligation for all EU Member States and Belgium in particular. By ensuring that policy coherence in the North can contribute to rather than undermine sustainable development in the South, PCD is thus an essential contribution not only to PCSD, but also to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. Whether we talk about sustainable development, PCD or PCSD, it is in any case imperative for Belgium to ensure coherence of all its policies towards sustainable development, worldwide. By adopting the 2030 Agenda, Belgium has committed itself to aligning all its policies without exception with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for itself and for third countries.

III.4 PCD mechanisms and tools

Different instruments and tools are needed to ensure coherence between policies, e.g. for ex-ante assessment of the possible impacts of envisaged policies (e.g. R.I.A) and ex-post monitoring of the effects of the policies carried out, measured through indicators or barometers. Their description would merit another note. By way of example, one instrument (B.2.2.1) and one mechanism (B.2.3.1) are included here, as a result of amendments made by the CCPD-ABCO in the preliminary draft Federal Plan for Sustainable Development (FPSD adopted in October 2021 by the Belgian federal government), where they were included in the 2nd guideline on Policy Coherence:

- B.2.2.1 "Deploying instruments": establish departmental focal points responsible for ensuring PCD in a coordination by the DGD of a working group dedicated to the evaluation of policy coherence, in particular via a transversal analysis of the large number of existing federal plans (cf: list of plans and strategies contributing to the SDGs on 13 pages annexed to the FSDP). Work planned in ongoing relationship with CCPD-ABCO.

- B.2.3.1 "Review the Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) mechanism" to strengthen the consistency of the Federal Authority's action. A review of the current RIA mechanism is planned by the federal government before the end of 2022 on the basis of the recommendations of the Impact Assessment Board, which will have to be based in particular *on the recommendations of the Principal Federal Advisory Councils*.

Annex : Sustainable Development (1987-2022)

A.1 Origin (1987)

In 1987, the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* (referred to in this appendix as "the Report") the *World Commission on Environment and Development* launched a series of definitions of sustainable development. These are the first definitions agreed in a report by an international panel of experts. Only one of them has become a universal reference. It is the one that appears at the beginning of chapter 2 of the Report entitled "Towards Sustainability".

Sustainable Development main definition according to Brundtland Report

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It contains within it two key concepts:
- the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given;
- and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

This definition has been little used, or misused, over the last 35 years for 3 reasons:

- its quote is often half-truncated to eliminate the reference to "the overriding priority to be given to the essential needs of the world's poor" and to the new notion of "limitations";
- the confusion between the reports and other international agreements on sustainable development³¹ and those related to climate change when that issue became more famous in the media;
- and the erroneous reduction of the notion of *development* to the access of poor countries to better socio-economic conditions, or even to *economic growth*.

Yet the introduction to the Report is clear that reductive (not "holistic") and linear (not "systemic") approaches are obsolete. It is also clear that the decisions to be taken on their own development as well as on global development concern rich countries at least as much as poor countries and concern all components of development.

This understanding of '*development*' that is not geographically limited to countries benefiting from official development assistance is important for a proper definition of PCD. It is present in the work of organisations with recognised expertise on development such as the CNCD-

³¹ Like the 27 principles of the *Rio Declaration* and the Rio 1992 Agenda 21 or the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, , ...

11.11.11 and the *European Center for Development Policy (ECDPM)*³², an independent think tank, and others. The definition of PCD in the box below even speaks of "international development".

ECDPM Policy Brief: Promoting Policy Coherence: Lessons learned in EU Development Cooperation

Policy coherence for development, or PCD, refers to the need for multiple policies from different sectors to work in unison rather than in opposition to each other, if international development is to be achieved. In Europe the argument for PCD was based on the recognition that EU efforts on development cooperation were often contradicted or undermined by other EU policies, both internal as much as external, to the extent that the EU was effectively taking back with one hand what it had given with the other. In some severe cases the EU was even taking back more than it gave.

A.2 Goals (2012-2015)

2001: The 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed in March (after a process guided largely by the expertise of developed countries within the OECD) expired in 2015. This was the first system of goals and targets for a development agenda agreed by all countries and all major global institutions... but only for developing countries.

2012-2015: According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the MDGs have galvanised unprecedented efforts to address the needs of the world's poorest. The international community had achieved enough in terms of governance by objectives that at the second Rio Conference (Rio+20 in 2012) it was able to expand on the previous challenge.

Since the MDGs had helped to stimulate and coordinate concrete progress for some countries in the past, the gamble could be repeated in other areas for the future of all countries. On this basis, the Rio+20 Conference took the decision of collectively defining global political objectives (i.e.: declined on all countries), in different more precise fields, with indicators periodically measuring their achievement. The Rio 2012 document called "The Future We Want" launched the negotiation of a set of Sustainable Development Goals to be adopted by the end of 2014³³.

³² ECDPM Policy Brief: Promoting Policy Coherence: Lessons learned in EU Development Cooperation, <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Promoting-Policy-Coherence-Lessons-Learned-EU-Development-Cooperation-CASCADES-Briefing-Note-ECDPM-September-2020.pdf>, September 2020.

³³ *The Future we want*, §248

§ 248 of the document "The Future We Want" which is the basis for the construction of the SDGs

We resolve to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals that is open to all stake-holders, with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the General Assembly.

An open working group shall be constituted no later than at the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the Assembly and shall comprise thirty representatives, nominated by Member States from the #ve United Nations regional groups, with the aim of achieving fair, equitable and balanced geographical representation.

At the outset, this open working group will decide on its methods of work, including developing modalities to ensure the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the United Nations system in its work, in order to provide a diversity of perspectives and experience. It will submit a report, to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate actions.

The post-2015 agenda of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "[Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)"³⁴ is far more ambitious than the MDG agenda. They are often categorised as "social, economic and environmental". This is a mistake because an effort has been made to incorporate, as far as possible, all the components of sustainable development in the elaboration of each of the 17 SDGs.

Moreover, it has been recognised for several decades that sustainable development has a fourth variable component that cuts across the first three: the institutional. It is especially obvious in the SDG16 and SDG17. These 17 SDGs and 169 sub-goals or "targets" thus have a double origin at the UN³⁵:

- the 1993-2015 work of ECOSOC's Commission on Sustainable Development, the most participatory of the UN's commissions (which diplomats nicknamed "Woodstock")
- the 2001-2015 work on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the UNDP, the oldest and largest UN agency.

³⁴*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* – <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

³⁵ This is not widely known because institutional silos and competition between silos is as high in the UN as anywhere. The websites of the organisation's agencies generally do not mention the two decades of work of the CSD, nor the Rio 2012 decision that launched this work on the SDGs. Nor does the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The corollary of these fragmentations in the information given by public institutions is always a great waste of public resources and a weakening due to the inconsistencies of the policies carried out. In this sense, the work on PCD can help save the UN.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Goal 1: Eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2: Eradicate hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3: Achieve health for all and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4: Achieve equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6: Ensure access to sustainably managed water supply and sanitation services for all
- Goal 7: Ensure access to reliable, sustainable and modern energy services for all at an affordable cost
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, shared and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. : Reduce inequalities within and between countries
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12: Establish sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to address climate change and its impacts*
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15: Conserve and restore terrestrial ecosystems, ensuring their sustainable use, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt the loss of biodiversity
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensure access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17: Strengthen the capacity to implement and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

*With the understanding that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international intergovernmental mechanism for negotiating global action on climate change.

Whatever the shortcomings of the SDGs, they represent a shift in the development paradigm from the MDGs. MDGs were constructed by experts and countries in the North to guide countries in the South, while SDGs were developed by civil society and all countries in a broad process as participatory as possible. This list of SDGs is thus as relevant to the PC as it is to the PCSD and PCD.