Bethlehem 21 Project

Environmental Sustainability for a Better Life:
An Integrated Approach for Localizing Agenda 21 in the Bethlehem District

Basic Concepts & Information

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Sustainable Development

What Does Sustainable Development Mean?

Sustainable development as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development is the "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)

Sustainable development calls for a future in which environmental, social and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and improved quality of life. Development and protection of the environment should be linked in order to protect ecosystems and manage natural resources, which are essential for fulfilling basic human needs and improving living standard for all, without increasing their use beyond the earth's carrying capacity. Thus, the efforts to build a truly sustainable way of life require the integration of action in three key areas (United Nations, 2001):

> *Sustainable Development*
>
> *Sustainable development has three pillars: environment, society and economy. Considering them as overlapping circles of the same size, the area of overlap in the center is human wellbeing.*
> *As the environment, society and economy become more aligned, the area of overlap increases, and so does human wellbeing.*
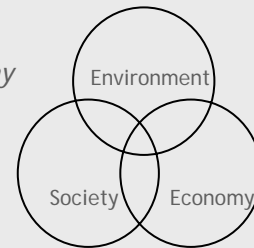
- **Economic Growth and Equity**: today's interlinked, global economic systems demand an integrated approach in order to foster responsible long-term growth while ensuring that no nation or community is left behind.

- **Conserving Natural Resources and the Environment**: To conserve our environmental heritage and natural resources for future generations, economically viable solutions must be developed to reduce resource consumption, stop pollution and conserve natural habitats.

- **Social Development**: throughout the world, people require jobs, food, education, energy, health care, water and sanitation. While addressing these needs, the world community must also ensure that the rich fabric of cultural and social diversity, and the rights of workers, are respected, and that all members of society are empowered to play a role in determining their futures.

Some of the most important **challenges** facing the world today include (United Nations, 2001):

- Alleviating **poverty,** especially in rural communities, where the majority of the world's poor live;

- Improving the ability of all countries, particularly developing countries, to meet the challenges of **globalization**, including greater capacity building and the transfer of financing and environmentally friendly technologies;
- Promoting responsible **consumption** and **production** patterns, to reduce waste and over-reliance on natural resources;
- Ensuring that all people have access to the **energy** sources needed to improve their lives;
- Reducing environment-related **health** problems that account for many of the illnesses in the world today; and
- Improving access to **clean water**, to reach those who today must rely on unsafe and unsanitary sources to raise their children and maintain their livelihoods

What are the Key Principles of Sustainability?

There is no one set of principles of sustainable development. The following six principles are based on the research done by those who contributed to the manual entitled "Our Community Our Future" and on their experience of what is most applicable to local councils: (Cotter, B. and Hannan, K., 1999)

- **Integration** - the effective integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in decision making.

- **Community involvement** - sustainability cannot be achieved, nor significant progress made toward it, without the support and involvement of the whole community.

- **Precautionary behavior** - where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

- **Equity within and between generations** - fairness and equal access to opportunities both in our lifetimes, as well as for future generations.

- **Continual improvement** - the declining environmental situation means there is an imperative to take immediate action to become more sustainable and to make continual improvement.

- **Ecological integrity** - to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

What are the Characteristics of a Sustainable Community?

A sustainable community is a community that flourishes because it builds a mutually supportive, dynamic balance between social wellbeing, economic opportunity, and environmental quality. In a sustainable community, decisions must consider and account for long-term impacts and consequence; interdependence of natural and social systems; participatory, inclusive, and transparent decision making processes; equity between different groups in society and equity between generations; and proactive prevention, or anticipating and preventing problems before they occur. The following is the three basic characteristics of a sustainable community:

Environmentally Sound: Decision-making focuses on reducing the impacts of population growth and development on natural resources and the environment.

Economically Productive: Community members make local capital investments that will sustain local human and natural resources and yield adequate financial returns to those investments.

Socially Just: Equitable access to resources and decision-making processes foster the distribution of foods and benefits across all sectors to the community.

It should be indicated that the specific characteristics of a sustainable community differ from one community to another based on the community's sustainability vision that should be articulated jointly by the community members and the local authority.

Agenda 21 and the Earth Summit

What Is Agenda 21?

Agenda 21 is the comprehensive programme for action to achieve sustainable development agreed to by delegates from most countries of the world at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, known as the *Earth Summit*, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992.

Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a blueprint of action for the 21st century to achieve sustainable development.

Agenda 21 is a powerful long-term vision for balancing economic and social needs with the capacity of the earth's resources and ecosystems.

Agenda 21 addresses the pressing problems of today and aims at preparing the world for the challenges of the 21st century in the context of a global partnership for sustainable development. This partnership must build on the consensus that a balanced and integrated approach to environment and development concerns must be taken to fulfill the basic needs of nations, improve living standards for all, protect the ecosystems on which people depend for their wellbeing, and achieve a safer and more prosperous future. It must also build on the principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and on the Statement of Principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests, adopted also at the Earth Summit. (United Nations, 1992)

Earth Summit

The Earth Summit, a landmark conference, put sustainable development on the map. It was a major success in raising public awareness about the need to fully integrate environmental and social considerations into economic development policy.

A Summary Guide to Agenda 21
Agenda 21 is divided into 4 sections and 40 chapters covering all areas relating to sustainable development. The following provides a brief description of each section (United Nations, 1992). The complete text of Agenda 21 can be found at UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Website: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21toc.htm

Section 1: Social and Economic Dimensions, Chapters 2-8
This Section examines the adverse social and economic issues and outcomes of unsustainable development and resource use.

Chapter 2 – International Cooperation to Accelerate Sustainable Development in Developing Countries and Related Domestic Policies advocates for market pricing mechanisms that account for environmental costs. It additionally calls for consistency of policy and practice between trade and the environment.

Chapter 3 – Combating Poverty advocates for strategies that combat poverty, both as a cause and effect of environmental degradation. These include sustainable levels of

economic growth, employment growth, income generation and local community empowerment.

Chapter 4 – Changing Consumption Patterns examines global market imbalances in the patterns of consumption and production and advocates for more efficient and environmentally sustainable resource use.

Chapter 5 – Demographic Dynamics and Sustainability focuses on population growth issues. It advocates for strategies to stabilize population and increase health and educational standards at the local level.

Chapter 6 – Protecting and Promoting Human Health Conditions addresses primary world health issues, such as adequate nutrition, communicable diseases, primary health care, water quality, urban health challenge and health risks from environmental pollution.

Chapter 7 – Promoting Sustainable Human Settlement Development examines the deterioration of human settlement conditions and proposes several program areas to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements. These are: providing adequate shelter for all; improving human settlement management; promoting sustainable land-use planning and management; promoting the integrated provision of environmental infrastructure: water, sanitation, drainage and solid-waste management; promoting sustainable energy and transport systems in human settlements; promoting human settlement planning and management in disaster-prone areas; promoting sustainable construction industry activities; promoting human resource development and capacity-building for human settlement development.

Chapter 8 – Integrating Environment and Development in Decision Making provides strategies for an integrated response to environmental, social and economic considerations through four broad program areas: integrating environment and development at policy, planning and management levels; providing effective regulatory and legal framework; making effective use of market and economic instruments and other incentives; and establishing systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting.

Section II: Conservation and Management of Resources for Development, Chapters 9-22
This section deals with the protection of natural resources and their sustainable management.

Chapter 9 – Protection of the Atmosphere primarily addresses three atmospheric issues- climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion and trans-boundary air pollution.

Chapter 10 – Integrated Approach to the Planning and Management of Land Resources provides a framework for developing an integrated approach to sustainable land resources use. The chapter proposes the set up of sustainability and environmental impact indicators, an ecosystemic approach to land use planning and promotes public participation.

Chapter 11 – Combating Deforestation provides an integrated framework approach to the planning and management of forest conservation and forest resources. It primarily advocates for the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity and forest resources while meeting expanding human needs. The chapter additionally promotes the use of economic measures as well as community consultation.

Chapter 12 – Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Combating Desertification and Drought discusses improved land, water, afforestation and revegetation management strategies to combat and reverse rising land degradation, salinity, desertification and soil erosion.

Chapter 13 – Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development focuses on halting the deterioration of mountain ecosystems, which, in turn, impact profoundly on biodiversity preservation and human well being. Afforestation, soil preservation strategies and creating alternatives to unsustainable livelihood practices are among primary programs proposed.

Chapter 14 – Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development recognizes that major reform in economic, agricultural and environmental policies is required to provide adequate food for an expanding population. Programs primarily target the increase of food production and food security, improving the capacity of higher potential agricultural land and land conservation strategies.

Chapter 15 – Conservation of Biological Diversity asserts the dependence of human quality of life on the variety and variability of genes, species, populations and ecosystems, therefore national strategies for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources should be developed. The chapter also calls for the enforcement of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Chapter 16 – Environmentally Sound Management of Biotechnology provides notions of the opportunities for biotechnology to contribute to sustainable development through enabling the development of better health care, enhanced food security through sustainable agricultural practices, improved supplies of potable water, more efficient industrial development processes for transforming raw materials, support for sustainable methods of afforestation and reforestation, and detoxification of hazardous wastes.

Chapter 17 – Protection of the Oceans, all Kinds of Seas, Including Enclosed and Semi-Closed seas, and Coastal areas and the Protection, Rational Use and Development of their Living Resources reviews the protection, sustainable use and integrated management of oceans and seas. Program areas include marine environment protection, water resources conservation strategies and the sustainable use and conservation of marine living resources.

Chapter 18 – Protection of the Quality and Supply of Freshwater Resources: Application of Integrated Approaches to the Development, Management and Use of Water Resources examines the protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources and promotes an integrated approach to planning and management.

Chapter 19 – Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals, Including Prevention of Illegal International Traffic in Toxic and Dangerous Products reviews the assessment of risks entailed in the use of chemicals. The chapter also deals with national risk reduction programs and proposes activities intended to improve detection and prevention of the illegal international traffic in Toxic and dangerous products.

Chapter 20 – Environmentally Sound Management of Hazardous Wastes proposes four program areas which are: promoting the prevention and minimization of hazardous waste; promoting and strengthening institutional capacities in hazardous waste management; promoting and strengthening international cooperation in the management of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes; and preventing illegal international traffic in hazardous wastes.

Chapter 21 – Environmentally Sound Management of Solid Wastes and Sewage-Related Issues primarily sets a series of national programs that allow for waste minimization, environmentally sound waste reuse, recycling, disposal and treatment, and extending waste service coverage.

Chapter 22 – Safe and Environmentally Sound Management of Radioactive Wastes proposes activities relevant to the safe management, transportation, handling and disposal of radioactive wastes.

Section III: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups, Chapters 24-32
This Section focuses on empowerment of local populations and alliance building between various social partners to ensure all major groups are actively involved in all program areas of Agenda 21.

Chapter 24 – Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development aims to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all development activities, primarily through focusing on the removal of obstacles faced in public life and the provision of services.

Chapter 25 – Children and Youth in Sustainable Development attempts to develop a greater role for youth and their representative agencies in planning and resource management at all levels.

Chapter 26 – Recognizing and Strengthening the Role of Indigenous People and their Communities recognizes the special relationship between many indigenous communities and their environments. It primarily focuses on the need for involving indigenous people and their communities at the national and local levels in resource management and conservation strategies established to support sustainable development strategies as well as the need for strengthening their active participation in the national formulation of policies, laws and programs relating to resource management and other development processes that may affect them.

Chapter 27 – Strengthening the Role of Non-government Organizations: Partners for Sustainable Development highlights the vital role of non-governmental organizations in providing a focus for community involvement - program design, delivery, community education and social cohesion - in sustainable development activities.

Chapter 28 – Local Authorities' Initiatives in Support of Agenda 21 stresses the pivotal role of local authorities as local environmental planners in working toward sustainable development and urges each council to develop its own Local Agenda 21.

Chapter 29 – Strengthening the Role of Workers and their Trade Unions points out the role that unions and workers need to embrace in order to be full participants in the implementation and evaluation of activities related to Agenda 21. It proposes the accomplishment of several objectives including the reduction of occupational accidents, injuries and diseases and the provision of workers' education, training and retraining, particularly in the area of occupational health and safety and environment.

Chapter 30 – Strengthening the Role of Business and Industry provides a rationale for how responsible entrepreneurship is vital for developing effective strategies for achieving balanced development and environmental protection.

Chapter 31 – Scientific and Technological Community primarily pushes for improving communication and cooperation among the scientific and technological community, decision makers and the public as well as improving ways in which governments seek and receive scientific information.

Chapter 32 – Strengthening the Role of Farmers recognizes the cogent role of farmers and rural communities as managers and custodians of natural resources and asserts the importance of their involvement in developing regional policies and programs.

Section IV: Means of Implementation, Chapters 33-40
This section addresses the substantial need for financial resources to undertake the proposed actions of Agenda 21 and strengthen the capacity of institutions. It also emphasizes the role of science, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, education and cooperation for capacity building in achieving sustainable development.

Chapter 33 – Financial Resources and Mechanisms provides ideas for developing the substantial and new arrangements necessary for the funding of Agenda 21 programs particularly in developing countries.

Chapter 34 – Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technology, Cooperation and Capacity-Building defines the conditions under which environmentally sound technologies should be transferred between countries for the benefit of the global environment. To this end, there is particular emphasis on scientific and technological information access particularly to developing countries.

Chapter 35 – Science for Sustainable Development discusses the role of science in sustainable development and asserts the support of new scientific research programs to strengthen interdisciplinary research related to environmental degradation and rehabilitation; and the set up of demonstration models of different types (e.g., socio-economic, environmental conditions) to study methodologies and formulate guidelines.

Chapter 36 – Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training emphasizes the importance of education in making sustainable development central to the planning and conduct of activities in all spheres of life. As such, the chapter focuses on

attempting to incorporate environmental training into cross-disciplinary curricula, particularly public awareness and education programs on environmental issues.

Chapter 37 – National Mechanisms and International Cooperation for Capacity Building in Developing Countries encourages endogenous capacity building mainly in developing countries, with emphasis on the respective roles of public, private and government organizations as experts.

Chapter 38 – International Institutional Arrangements discusses the necessary arrangements for supporting sustainable development at a global level, with a focus on the changing role of existing institutions and objectives that are necessary. To this end, the primary recommendation is the creation of a UN Commission for Sustainable Development to review and evaluate the implementation of Agenda 21.

Chapter 39 – International Legal Instruments and Mechanisms explores avenues for improvements in the effectiveness of existing and future international law on environment and development, taking into account both universal principles and the particular and differentiated needs and concerns of all countries.

Chapter 40 – Information for Decision-Making is divided into two parts - Bridging the Data Gap and Improving Information Availability. These focus primarily on improved data collection, dissemination and state of the environment reporting. Additionally, there is emphasis on recognizing local and indigenous knowledge.

The Other Outcomes of the Earth Summit

In addition to Agenda 21, the Earth Summit - officially the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - produced two statements of principles and two international agreements. These are:

The Principles of Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

Rio Declaration is a set of 27 principles adopted at the Earth Summit to guide the international community in its efforts to achieve sustainable development. These principles define the rights of people to development, and their responsibilities to safeguard the common environment.

Rio Declaration

Rio Declaration is a set of 27 principles to guide future development.

The Rio Declaration states that the only way to have long term economic progress is to link it with environmental protection. This will only happen if nations establish a new and equitable global partnership involving governments, their people and key sectors of societies. They must build international agreements that protect the integrity of the global environmental and developmental systems.

The Rio principles are: (United Nations, 12 August 1992)

Principle 1: Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

Principle 2: States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, but without causing damage to the environment of other States or areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

Principle 3: The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Principle 4: In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process, and cannot be considered in isolation from it.

Principle 5: All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world.

Principle 6: The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority. International actions in the field of environment

and development should also address the interests and needs of all countries.

Principle 7: Nations shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

Principle 8: To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and promote appropriate demographic policies.

Principle 9: States should cooperate to strengthen endogenous capacity-building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies.

Principle 10: Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

Principle 11: States shall enact effective environmental legislation. Environmental standards, management objectives and priorities should reflect the environmental and developmental context to which they apply. Standards applied by some countries may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic and social cost to other countries, in particular developing countries.

Principle 12: States should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation. Trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. Unilateral actions to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country should be avoided. Environmental measures

addressing transboundary or global environmental problems should, as far as possible, be based on an international consensus.

Principle 13: States shall develop national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage. States shall also cooperate in an expeditious and more determined manner to develop further international law regarding liability and compensation for adverse effects of environmental damage caused by activities within their jurisdiction or control to areas beyond their jurisdiction.

Principle 14: States should effectively cooperate to discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer to other States of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health.

Principle 15: In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Principle 16: National authorities should endeavor to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

Principle 17: Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.

Principle 18: States shall immediately notify other States of any natural disasters or other emergencies that are likely to produce sudden harmful effects on the environment of those States. Every effort shall be made by the international community to help States so afflicted.

Principle 19: States shall provide prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States on activities that may have a significant adverse transboundary environmental effect and shall consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith.

Principle 20: Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

Principle 21: The creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world should be mobilized to forge a global partnership in order to achieve sustainable development and ensure a better future for all.

Principle 22: Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

Principle 23: The environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected.

Principle 24: Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary.

Principle 25: Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.

Principle 26: States shall resolve all their environmental disputes peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Principle 27: States and people shall cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership in the fulfillment of the principles embodied in this Declaration and in the further development of international law in the field of sustainable development.

The Statement of Principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests

The Statement of principles for the sustainable management of forests is a set of principles adopted at the Earth Summit to contribute to the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and to provide for their multiple and complementary functions and uses. It indicates that all types of forests embody complex and unique ecological processes which are the basis for their present and potential capacity to provide resources to satisfy human needs as well as environmental values, and as such their sound management and conservation is of concern to the Governments of the countries to which they belong and are of value to local communities and to the environment as a whole. (United Nations, 14 August 1992)

The Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Framework Convention on Climate Change is a legally-binding agreement, opened for signing at the Earth Summit, entered into force on 21 March 1994. It has 165 signatories and 186 parties. Its ultimate objective is the *"stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system"*. The Convention on Climate Change sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. It recognizes that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. (United Nations, May 1992).

The Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity is a legally-binding agreement that has been signed so far by 168 countries and came into force on 29 December 1993. It represents a dramatic step forward in the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. (United Nations, 1993)

Local Agenda 21

Where did Local Agenda 21 come from?

Agenda 21 called upon local authorities, "the level of governance closest to the people", to take a course of action to implement that blueprint by entering into a consultative process (dialogue) with the citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopting **"a Local Agenda 21"**.

> *Local Agenda 21*
>
> *A local Agenda 21 is a local sustainability action strategy developed by a local council in partnership with the citizens and local organizations, to meet Agenda 21 objectives and create a more sustainable community than today.*

Chapter 28 of Agenda 21, entitled "Local Authorities' Initiatives in Support of Agenda 21", notes the pivotal role of local councils in localizing Agenda 21 and fulfilling its objectives:

"Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies." (United Nations, 1992)

Local councils are recognized as being fundamental in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development at a local level. Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would acquire from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations the information needed for formulating the best strategies for their communities. The process of consultation would also contribute to increasing household awareness of sustainable development issues. (United Nations, 1992)

Who is Promoting Local Agenda 21?

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), which is a membership association of local governments from around the world dedicated to the prevention and solution of environmental problems through local action, spearheaded an international effort, known as *Local Agenda 21 (LA21)*, to organize municipalities around sustainability initiatives and assist them in developing their own Local Agendas 21 (Quaid, A., 2002).

ICLEI's Members

Since 1990, ICLEI has been involved with improving local governments' capacity to create more sustainable communities.

More than 492 local governments that have made a unique commitment to sustainability, make up ICLEI. Among the members are Aalborg (Denmark), Rome (Italy), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Ottawa (Canada), Los Angeles (USA), Bursa (Turkey), Barcelona (Spain), Coalition of 21 Municipalities (Greece), and Islamic Capitals and Cities (Saudi Arabia). The complete list of members can be found at the ICLEI Website which is: www.iclei.org

In the United States of America, the ICLEI's LA21 program is entitled Communities 21. This program works with US local governments to develop municipal policies that aim at protecting natural resources and the environment, improving quality of life within a community and achieving economic prosperity. (Quaid, A., 2002)

In Europe, the ICLEI initiated the LA 21 program by preparing the First European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns that was jointly convened by the City of Aalborg and the European Commission in 1994 in Aalbrog, Denmark. The conference resulted in launching the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign that aimed at promoting development towards sustainability at the local level and to support European local authorities in the development and implementation of appropriate policies and actions. It also resulted in the adoption of the Charter of European Cities & Towns towards Sustainability "*Aalbrog Charter*" in which Local Agenda 21 processes were engaged. At the Forth European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, known as Aalborg +10, that was convened in 2004, the European local authorities adopted "Aalborg Commitments" through which they confirm their shared vision of a sustainable future for their communities which is: (City of Aalborg, 2004)

"Our vision is of cities and towns that are inclusive, prosperous, creative and sustainable, and provide a good quality of life for all citizens and enable their participation in all aspects of urban life."

The Aalborg Commitments are: (City of Aalborg, 2004)

1) **Governance** – Commitment to energizing the decision-making processes through increased participatory democracy. Therefore, they will work to further develop a commonly shared long-term vision for a sustainable city or a town; build participation and sustainable development capacity in the local community and municipal administration; and invite all sectors of local society to participate effectively in decision-making.

2) **Local Management towards Sustainability** - Commitment to implementing effective management cycles, from formulation through implementation to evaluation.

3) **Natural Common Goods** – Responsibility to protect, preserve and ensure equitable access to natural common goods. Therefore they will work, throughout their community, to reduce primary energy consumption, and increase the share of renewable energies; improve water quality, save water, and use water more efficiently; promote and increase biodiversity, and extend and care for designated nature areas and green spaces; improve soil quality, preserve ecologically productive land and promote sustainable agriculture and forestry; and improve air quality.

4) **Responsible Consumption and Lifestyle Choices** – Commitment to adopting and facilitating the prudent and efficient use of resources and to encouraging sustainable consumption and production. Therefore, they will work, throughout their community, to avoid and reduce waste, and increase re-use and recycling; manage and treat waste in accordance with best practice standards; and avoid unnecessary energy consumption.

5) **Planning and Design** – Commitment to a strategic role for urban planning and design in addressing environmental, social, economic, health and cultural issues for the benefit of all.

6) **Better Mobility, Less Traffic** – Recognition of the interdependence of transport, health and environment and the commitment to strongly promoting sustainable mobility choices.

7) **Local Action for Health** – Commitment to protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of their citizens.

8) **Vibrant and Sustainable Local Economy** – commitment to creating and ensuring a vibrant local economy that gives access to employment without damaging the environment.

9) **Social Equity and Justice** – Commitment to securing inclusive and supportive communities. Therefore they will work to develop and implement programmes to prevent and alleviate poverty; ensure equitable access to public services, education, employment opportunities, training, information, and cultural activities; foster social inclusion and gender equality; improve community safety and security; and secure good quality and socially integrated housing and living conditions.

10) **Local to Global** – Commitment to assuming their global responsibility for peace, justice, equity, sustainable development and climate protection.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) has two main programs that promote Local Agenda 21 initiatives, namely the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) and the Localizing Agenda 21 Programme (LA21). The SCP is a program for the development of a sustainable urban environment, founded on broad-based and meaningful public participation. This programme was established in the early 1990s. Today, the programme is active in more than 40 cities around the world. Activities concentrate on building capacities in urban planning and management at the local, national and regional levels. City partners follow a designed step-by-step process. This process utilizes City Environmental Profiles, City Consultations, and Working Groups to address priority environmental issues in a participatory way. (UN-Habitat: Localizing Agenda 21)

UN-Habitat

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.

The LA21 program, which started in 1995, offers a multi-year support to local authorities and their partners to undertake a Local Agenda 21 process in order to locally contribute to the implementation of the Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda. The support is specifically targeting secondary cities in Kenya, Senegal, Morocco, Vietnam, Brazil, Cuba and Peru. (UN-Habitat: Localizing Agenda 21)

Habitat Agenda

The Habitat Agenda is the main political document that came out of the Habitat II conference in Istanbul, Turkey 3 to 14 June 1996. Adopted by 171 countries, at what was called the City Summit it contains over 100 commitments and 600 recommendations on human settlements issues. The full text of the Habitat Agenda can be found at the UN-Habitat Website: http://www.unhabitat.org/

Why Should Local Authorities Engage in a "Local Agenda 21" Process?

The engagement of local authorities in a "Local Agenda 21" process would bring about several benefits including: (Quaid, A., 2002)

- A cleaner, healthier environment for present and future generations.
- Local policy that is representative of ecosystem limits as well as the community's needs and values.
- Creative solutions fostered by integrated decision making that emphasizes collaboration among local authority departments.
- Stronger community and local government partnerships.
- Creation of a more socially just society.
- Cost savings – effective policy integration and smart long-term planning can save resources and money

What are the Elements of a Local Agenda 21?

Developing a Local Agenda 21 or a Local Sustainability Action Strategy is crucial to making progress towards sustainability because it involves community participation with the local authority and core elements that form the basis for achieving a more sustainable community. A Local Agenda 21 should build upon existing national and local strategies and action plans to better integrate environmental, economic and social concerns. The elements of a Local Agenda 21 are:

A. An **Assessment** of the community's current environmental and socioeconomic conditions as well as of the institutional arrangements, structures and practices.

B. A **Shared Sustainability Vision Statement** that declares the community's vision for a more sustainable community than today, formulated through a participatory process involving all sectors of the community. Key areas of concern are also identified.

C. **Sustainability Goals** for key areas of concern "**Key Area Vision Statements**" informed by the assessment findings and correspond to the direction set by the shared sustainability vision statement.

D. **Sustainability Targets** based on the extent to which the local authority is committed to achieve the key area vision statements or goals within a desired time period.

E. **Actions & Projects** that meet or contribute to attaining the identified sustainability goals and targets.

F. **Mechanisms for Implementation** that detail the responsible bodies for undertaking the actions, the relative priority of actions, timeframes of implementation and proposed sources of funding.

G. **Mechanisms for Monitoring** that detail how progress will be monitored and how the Strategy will be evaluated.

Progress since the Earth Summit

The Road from Rio to Johannesburg

At the **1992 Earth Summit** in Rio de Janeiro, the roadmap for achieving sustainable development "Agenda 21" was adopted and there have been extensive efforts by governments, international organizations, local authorities, business, citizen groups and individuals to implement sustainable development. The Commission on Sustainable Development was created to monitor and report on implementation of the Earth Summit agreements. Accordingly, Five years later in 1997, a special session of the UN General Assembly, known as the **Earth Summit**+5, was convened in New York to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21. Ten years after the 1992 Earth Summit, the goals of Agenda 21-the integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development- have not been fully realized in spite of the efforts made.

The following presents some of the **major achievements** in the period from 1992 and the first quarter of 2002 based on the information presented in a fact sheet prepared by the United Nations (United Nations Department of Public Information, 2002):

Participation by Key Stakeholders:

- National Agenda 21s have been prepared by a range of countries, establishing how Agenda 21 will be translated into action at the country level. These strategies have frequently been developed by National Councils for Sustainable Development—multi-stakeholder participatory bodies set up in more than 80 countries, mostly developing countries.

- Over 6,000 cities and towns worldwide have created their own "**local Agenda 21**" to guide their long-term planning.

- Ever-increasing numbers of businesses have embraced sustainable development and have adopted the "triple bottom line" approach that takes into account economic, social and environmental factors. Several major business organizations espousing sustainability—such as the World Business Council on Sustainable Development—have grown extensively.

- The UN Commission on Sustainable Development, which was set up to monitor implementation of the Rio/Earth Summit agreements, has met annually since *1993*, and has pioneered innovative arrangements for the participation of civil society in UN talks, especially through multi-stakeholder dialogues.

Poverty Reduction and Social Development:

- Conferences that have followed the Earth Summit — such as the *1994* Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the *1995* Social Summit in Copenhagen, the *1995* Women's Conference in Beijing, and the *1996* Habitat II Conference in Istanbul — have reinforced the commitment to sustainable development and adopted action plans to build on Agenda 21 in specific areas.

- In September *2000* at the **United Nations Millennium Summit**, 147 world leaders agreed to a set of time-bound and measurable development **goals** central to the objectives in Agenda 21.

The Millennium Development Goals and Targets are:

The Millennium Development Goals are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions— income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion— while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. They are also basic human rights—the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter, and security as pledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Millennium Declaration. (UN Millennium Project, 2005)

Goal 1 - Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	**Target 1**: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day
	Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
Goal 2 - Achieve universal primary education	**Target 3**: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
Goal 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women	**Target 4**: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
Goal 4 - Reduce child mortality	**Target 5**: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
Goal 5 - Improve maternal health	**Target 6**: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
Goal 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	**Target 7**: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
	Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
Goal 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability	**Target 9**: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources
	Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
	Target 11: Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Goal 8 - Develop a global partnership for development	**Target 12**: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction— nationally and internationally)
	Target 13: Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries' exports, enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction)
	Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions)
	Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term
	Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth
	Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
	Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies

Financing and Trade:

- The **Global Environment Facility** (GEF) — with the World Bank, the UN Development Programme and UNEP as implementing agencies — was launched experimentally in 1991 and, after the Earth Summit, was restructured to become the main source of multilateral lending to developing countries and countries in transition for global environmental projects. In its first decade, the GEF provided $4.2 billion to projects, and has attracted more than $11 billion in co-financing. At the last replenishment, in 1998, 36 countries pledged $2.75 billion to the GEF. The third replenishment was still under discussion during that time.

- The World Trade Organization, at its fourth Ministerial meeting in Doha in November *2001*, adopted a declaration stating: "We are convinced that the aims of upholding and safeguarding an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, and acting for the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development can and must be mutually supportive."

- At the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico in March *2002*, governments reaffirmed the commitment to sustainable development, and donor countries promised a total of $30 billion in additional resources through 2006.

Climate Change:

- The **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**, opened for signing at the 1992 Earth Summit, entered into force on 21 March *1994*. The Convention has 165 signatories and 186 parties, but most industrialized countries did not meet the voluntary goal of reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2000.

- In December *1997* in **Kyoto**, Governments agreed on a **Protocol** to this Convention by which industrialized countries would accept legally binding targets to reduce their emissions of six greenhouse gases by an average of 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-2012. The Protocol, which has been signed by 84 countries and ratified by 54 parties, will enter into force when ratified by 55 countries representing 55 per cent of industrialized country emissions. During that period, only two industrialized countries have ratified the Protocol.

Biological Diversity:

- The **UN Convention on Biological Diversity**, opened for signature at the 1992 Earth Summit and since signed by 168 countries, entered into force on 29 December *1993*. The Convention obligates countries to protect plant and animal species through habitat preservation and other means. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, to reduce the risks of trans-boundary movement of living modified organisms and ensure the safe use of modern biotechnologies, was adopted in January **2000** and has been ratified by 17 countries. The parties to the Convention are now tackling issues concerning sharing the benefits of genetic resources with people in the country of their origin.

Desertification:

- The **UN Convention to Combat Desertification** — which was called for at the Earth Summit — entered into force in December *1996*. Desertification, or the degradation of arid and semi-arid lands, affects the livelihood and food supply of over 900 million people worldwide, especially in Africa. The convention calls for a truly participatory approach to the problems in drylands, and 179 countries have joined the Convention. But the resources available for implementation have been limited.

Marine Resources and Pollution:

- The **UN Fish Stocks Agreement** to regulate fishing on the high seas, negotiated as an outgrowth of the Earth Summit, was adopted in December *1995* and entered into force in December *2000*. The agreement aims to prevent over fishing and ease international tensions over competition for dwindling fish stocks by relying on regional fisheries management. It contains key conflict settlement provisions to deter illegal fishing.

- Recognizing that one billion people live in urban centers along coastlines, and that about 80 per cent of marine pollution comes from land-based sources, in *1995* governments adopted the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

Toxic Chemicals:

- To regulate the nearly 4 million tons of toxic waste that cross national borders each year, in 1989 countries adopted the **Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes**, administered by UNEP and since ratified by 121 countries. In *1995*, the treaty was strengthened to outlaw the export of toxic waste from developed to developing countries, which often do not have the technology for safe disposal. In *1998*, over 100 governments adopted an international treaty, negotiated under Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) auspices, on the sharing of information on trade in hazardous chemicals and pesticides.

- Growing out of discussions in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development on the need to contain and eliminate various toxic chemicals, countries agreed in *2001* on the **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants**, concentrating on the elimination of 12 harmful chemicals known as the "dirty dozen", including PCBs, dioxins and DDT. The treaty now has 126 signatures and 5 ratifications.

Forests:

- Building on the Forest Principles adopted in Rio, an Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, which met for two years under the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, adopted over one hundred action proposals in March *1997*. To monitor implementation and build consensus on further steps — for example, a

possible forest treaty — the Panel became the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests at the Earth Summit+5 session in June 1997. Starting with its first session in *2001*, the UN Forum on Forests has focused on proposals to limit deforestation and generate more resources for the forestry sector. The Forum is working to determine an international legal framework for forests by 2005.

Ozone Depletion:

- In a highly successful process that predated the Earth Summit, countries have been phasing out ozone-depleting substances in accordance with the 1987 **Montreal Protocol**, which was strengthened in *1996*. Largely as a result of the treaty, total consumption of chlorofluorocarbons declined from about 1.1 million tons in 1986 to 156,000 tons in 1998.

Small Islands:

- As decided at the Earth Summit, in 1994 a UN conference was held in Barbados to address the special concerns of Small Island developing States. Recognizing that small islands, because of their size and isolation, were vulnerable to many development constraints, climate change and natural disasters, over 100 countries agreed to tackle the challenges faced by the islands in a partnership. In *1999*, in a five-year review of the **Barbados Conference**, the UN General Assembly found that, while small island nations had pursued the conference's objectives, the international community still had not committed the resources needed.

Johannesburg Summit 2002

In order to move from concepts to action, adopt concrete steps and identify quantifiable targets for a better implementation of Agenda 21, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, known as **Johannesburg Summit 2002**, was convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September *2002*.

Johannesburg Summit 2002

Johannesburg Summit 2002 focused on turning plans into concrete actions

Some of the Summit's major **accomplishments** include: (United Nations Department of Public Information, 2003).

- A universal reaffirmation of the commitment to the full implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals.

- Adoption of a Political Declaration **"Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development"** and a Plan of Implementation **"Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development"** detailing the priorities for action.

- Strengthening the concept of sustainable development and the important linkages between poverty, the environment and the use of natural resources.

- The emergence of partnerships by and between governments, civil society and the private sector as a viable mechanism to pursue sustainable development in a way that complements government action. More than 300 partnership initiatives were announced during the Summit process, committing more than $200 million in new and additional resources.

Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development

In Johannesburg Summit 2002, the World leaders reaffirmed their commitment to work towards sustainable development as stated in "Johannesburg Declaration": (United Nations, 2002)

16. We are determined to ensure that our rich diversity, which is our collective strength, will be used for constructive partnership for change and for the achievement of the common goal of sustainable development.

17. Recognizing the importance of building human solidarity, we urge the promotion of dialogue and cooperation among the world's civilizations and peoples, irrespective of race, disabilities, religion, language, culture or tradition.

18. We welcome the focus of the Johannesburg Summit on the indivisibility of human dignity and are resolved, through decisions on targets, timetables and partnerships, to speedily increase access to such basic requirements as clean water, sanitation, adequate shelter, energy, health care, food security and the protection of biodiversity. At the same time, we will work together to help one another gain access to financial resources, benefit from the opening of markets, ensure capacity-building, use modern technology to bring about development and make sure that there is technology transfer, human resource development, education and training to banish underdevelopment forever.

19. We reaffirm our pledge to place particular focus on, and give priority attention to, the fight against the worldwide conditions that pose **severe threats to the sustainable development** of our people, which include: chronic hunger; malnutrition; **foreign occupation**; **armed conflict**; illicit drug problems; organized crime; corruption; natural disasters; illicit arms trafficking; trafficking in persons; terrorism; intolerance and incitement to racial, ethnic, religious and other hatreds; xenophobia; and endemic, communicable and chronic diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

20. We are committed to ensuring that women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all the activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium development goals and the Plan of Implementation of the Summit.

21. We recognize the reality that global society has the means and is endowed with the resources to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development confronting all humanity. Together, we will take extra steps to ensure that these available resources are used to the benefit of humanity.

22. In this regard, to contribute to the achievement of our development goals and targets, we urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts reach the internationally agreed levels of official development assistance.

23. We welcome and support the emergence of stronger regional groupings and alliances, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development, to promote regional cooperation, improved international cooperation and sustainable development.

24. We shall continue to pay special attention to the developmental needs of Small Island developing States and the least developed countries.

25. We reaffirm the vital role of the indigenous peoples in sustainable development.

26. We recognize that sustainable development requires a long-term perspective and **broad-based participation** in policy formulation, decision-making and implementation at all levels. As social partners, we will continue to work for stable partnerships with all major groups, respecting the independent, important roles of each of them.

27. We agree that in pursuit of its legitimate activities the private sector, including both large and small companies, has a duty to contribute to the evolution of equitable and sustainable communities and societies.

28. We also agree to provide assistance to increase income-generating employment opportunities, taking into account the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of the International Labour Organization.

29. We agree that there is a need for private sector corporations to enforce corporate accountability, which should take place within a transparent and stable regulatory environment.

30. We undertake to strengthen and improve governance at all levels for the effective implementation of Agenda 21, the Millennium development goals and the Plan of Implementation of the Summit.

Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Johannesburg Summit concluded with countries committing themselves to a wide range of actions in several areas including water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture, and biodiversity and ecosystem management and setting firm targets and timetables to achieve results as outlined in the Summit's Plan of Implementation. Some of the highlights are set out below: (United Nations Department of Public Information, 2003)

Water & Sanitation
Recognizing that clean drinking water and adequate sanitation are necessary to protect human health and the environment, governments reaffirmed the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015, and matched this with a new target to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015.

Energy
Countries committed themselves to increasing access to reliable and affordable energy services, enhancing energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewable energy, and phasing out, where appropriate, energy subsidies.

Health
Recognizing an urgent need to address the causes of ill health, governments:
- Reaffirmed the Millennium Development Goal to reduce, by 2015, mortality rates for infants and children under 5 by two thirds, and maternal mortality rates by three quarters.
- Recommitted themselves to agreed targets to reduce HIV prevalence among young men and women aged 15-24 by 25% in the most affected countries by 2005 and globally by 2010, as well as to combat malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases.
- Set new goals: to ensure, that by 2020, chemicals are not used and produced in ways that harm human health and the environment; to enhance cooperation to reduce air pollution; and to improve developing countries' access to environmentally sound alternatives to ozone depleting chemicals by 2010.

Agriculture
Improving agricultural productivity was a major Summit focus because most of the world's poorest people eke out a living through subsistence agriculture on marginal lands. As a result, countries agreed that the Global Environment Facility should help finance and support the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management
Governments committed to take action that will significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010; reverse the current trend in natural resource degradation; restore fisheries to their maximum sustainable yields by 2015 and prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by 2004; crack down on illegal logging that contributes to deforestation; and improve developing countries' access to environmentally sound alternatives to ozone depletion chemicals by 2010.

At the **national level**, the Summit called on all countries to take immediate steps to formulate **national strategies for sustainable development** and to begin implementation efforts by 2005, with international cooperation supporting the needs of developing countries. It also recommended that governments enact and **enforce "clear and effective" laws** that support sustainable development, develop and strengthen the necessary infrastructure and promote public participation in implementation.

Local Action 21: The Next Phase of Local Agenda 21

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development **Local Government Session** in Johannesburg, local government leaders from around the world adopted the Johannesburg Call in which they committed themselves to the sustainable development of the planet and people and called for an evolution from Local Agenda 21 to Local Action 21. They stated that *"We also commit ourselves to developing very practical, realistic Action Plans and to implement them through Local **Action 21** programs to realize these goals."* (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 2003)

Accordingly, the local government leaders as well as representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-HABITAT and the World Health Organization (WHO), joined ICLEI in launching *Local Action 21* as the next phase of Local Agenda 21. ICLEI continues to encourage all local authorities to engage in Local Agenda 21 processes and involve citizens and stakeholders in sustainable development planning to jointly agree on a vision, goals and a local action plan towards sustainability. Once a Local Agenda 21 has been agreed, local authorities should continue their efforts with citizens and stakeholders to engage in Local Action 21 strategies aimed at:

> *Local Action 21*
>
> *Local Action 21 was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development Local government Session as a* ***motto*** *for the second decade of Local Agenda 21.*
>
> *Local Action 21 is a* ***mandate*** *to local authorities worldwide to move from agenda to action and ensure an accelerated implementation of sustainable development.*
>
> *Local Action 21 strengthens the Local Agenda 21* ***movement*** *of local governments to create sustainable communities and cities while protecting global common goods*
>
> (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 2003)

- Removing barriers to local sustainability;
- Generating global benefits from local action; and
- Ensuring unwavering implementation of sustainable development.

Local Action 21 has three main action areas, which are:
1) Creating sustainable communities and cities
2) Protecting global common goods
3) Applying principles, policies, practices and mechanisms for Local Governance and management

First Action Area - Creating sustainable communities and cities

Local Action 21 calls for specificity in order to create sustainable communities and cities. Communities must go beyond general sustainable development planning and address specific barriers to sustainability, such as poverty, social conflict, unhealthy environment and natural or industrial disasters and economic crises. The most effective action will focus on the priority concerns of individual communities. Four

strategies have been defined for Local Action 21 within the framework of the first action area. These are: (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 2003)

Strategy one: Viable Local Economies

The first strategy towards creating sustainable communities and cities aims to eradicate poverty, addressing the First Target of the UN Millennium Development Goals. Poverty cannot be alleviated where structures maintain inequality, and it is also important to create a supportive framework for local and foreign direct investment, access to modern technology, local entrepreneurship and diversification of local production as well as improved market access for locally-produced products. Public-private partnerships may be a vehicle to support this. A basic requirement is the careful development of local human resources through education and vocational training.

Strategy Two: Just, Peaceful and Secure Communities

The second strategy aims to address the social aspect of sustainability and the ability of a community to allay tensions, prevent violence and create a foundation for peace. The methodology of Local Agenda 21 (building consensus on community visions and goals) may help to moderate social conflicts where they prevail and form a major obstacle to sustainable development. In order to become just and peaceful, communities must overcome the high degree of inequality, gender disparity, and social exclusion that exists in many places, providing supportive conditions for the development of viable local economies and the alleviation of poverty.

Strategy Three: Resilient Communities and Cities

The third strategy aims to address the ability of communities to be prepared for, and cope with, unexpected events such as natural, industrial, or health disasters, and economic crises. Urban resilience will have a positive impact on the quality of life for the poor who are most affected by disasters and crises. Because investment seeks low risk, managing cities towards greater resilience will create better conditions for investment and thereby help to create viable local economies.

Strategy Four: Eco-efficient Cities

The forth strategy aims to address the environmental issues related to air quality, energy efficiency, integrated water resources management, waste stream management, eco-mobility, and others. Through the efficient use of natural resources and switching from fossil to solar energy in its various forms (renewable), more stable environmental conditions can be provided to the community and its economy in the longer term. An eco-efficient city is better prepared for future global environmental resource conditions.

Second Action Area - Protecting global common goods

Sustainable development calls for an integrated approach to creating sustainable communities and cities. Every policy, plan or action meant to create liveable cities must, at the same time, protect the global common goods upon which people's lives and livelihoods depend. Global common goods that local governments are determined to protect include air, climate, water, soil, biodiversity, health and food. Through Local Action 21, local governments should contribute to the implementation of

relevant actions mentioned in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 2003)

International Campaigns and Programmes:
Local governments are engaged in a number of international campaigns and programs designed to protect global common goods. These include: (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 2003)

Local Climate and Air Quality Action
ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection Campaign™ (CCP) works with over 550 local governments worldwide to cut emissions that cause global warming and air pollution. These cities account for 8-10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Actions that reduce these emissions not only contribute to climate protection but also improve quality of life in communities.

Local Water Action
ICLEI's Water Campaign provides local governments with a framework to support their unique water management efforts. The Campaign identifies three activity areas for specific targeted action: municipal operations, the urban community, and the local watershed.

Local Land Use and Soil Action
Local governments have started building networks and developing programs and campaigns that address land use management and soils protection. Efforts include ICLEI's European Soils Network, the Soil and Lands Alliance of European Cities and Towns, and the proposed international Cities against Desertification program.

Local Health Action
The World Health Organization's (WHO) Healthy Cities network is designed for advanced healthy cities that are willing to work in close partnership with the WHO and each other on urban health development. Cities currently involved in the forth phase (2003-2007) are working on three core themes: healthy ageing, healthy urban planning and health impact assessment.

Third Action Area – Applying Principles, Policies, Practices and Mechanisms for Local Governance and management

Local governments should continue engaging in Local Agenda 21 participatory planning processes to involve all sectors of their local communities in the development of long-term action plans towards sustainability. They should introduce and apply principles, policies, practices and mechanisms for local governance and management. For instance, ICLEI's members have applied the following mechanisms: (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 2003)

- *eco*BUDGET® model which is an environmental budgeting mechanism developed by ICLEI parallel to financial budgeting in order to ensure the ongoing control of environmental quality and the use of natural resources through the periodic (annual) setting of targets, controlling and reporting.

- **Triple Bottom Line** planning and reporting mechanism to achieve sustainable development as it provides information on social, economic and environmental performance and supports the accountability of municipal decision makers and managers.

The Status of Local Agenda 21 Implementation in Europe and Italy

Europe

The European local authorities which committed themselves to work towards sustainability signed up to the Charter of European Cities & Towns towards Sustainability "Aalbrog Charter" and joined in the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign. *Table 1* outlines the number of signatories to the Aalborg Charter. It is evident that Spain and Italy, whose 882 and 794 signatories, respectively contribute to 74.09% of the total number of signatories of the Charter. Among the other countries, the United Kingdom and Germany contribute to 4.47% and 3.54% of the total number of signatories, respectively.

Table 1 Signatory Local Authorities of the Aalborg Charter

Country	Number of Local Authorities	%
Austria	26	1.15
Croatia	22	0.97
Finland	31	1.37
France	36	1.59
Germany	80	3.54
Greece	69	3.05
Italy	794	35.10
Portugal	25	1.11
United Kingdom (UK)	101	4.47
Spain	882	38.99
Sweden	23	1.02
Others	173	7.65

Reference: (City of Aalborg, May 2004)

In the period from March 2000 and October 2001, a research project entitled "Local Authorities Self-Assessment of Local Agenda (LASALA)" was conducted to evaluate the implementation of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) in Europe. The project was implemented by ICLEI - European Secretariat (project coordinator) and other partners from UK, Finland, Portugal, Italy, and Hungary. The LASALA project aimed at: (Project Team LASALA, 2001)

- Establishing a common model for the evaluation of LA21 and more broadly for local sustainability across Europe;
- Helping in the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation process on the progress of local sustainability processes throughout Europe;
- Evaluating the progress and results of the implementation of the Aalborg Commitments;
- Permitting the identification of good practices in a wide range of local authorities and their dissemination to the other local authorities in all Europe; and
- Providing feedback into the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign and helping in its future development.

For the purpose of the project, Europe was divided into six macro-regions: Central-Western, North-Western, South-Western, Southern, Central-Eastern, and Northern and Baltic Countries. Two types of questionnaires, quantitative and qualitative, were utilized as tools in the self-assessment process in order to: (Project Team LASALA, 2001)

- Know the undertaken steps by local authorities to apply the sustainable development policies through LA21 process;
- Help local authorities in identifying the obstacles and the potentialities to make progress towards the urban sustainable development;
- Know the role and capabilities, as well as the autonomy level, of local authorities within the communities; and
- Assess the level of implementation of the Aalborg Commitments.

Assessment Results

1. Involvement of Local Stakeholders in LA21 Processes

According to the assessment results, 24 cases of good practices were selected based on the **Involvement of Local Stakeholders in LA21 processes**. The following represents the analysis results regarding the establishment of LA21 forums and the participation of local stakeholders in such forums: (Project Team LASALA, 2001)

The Establishment of LA21 Forums: In Western Europe, almost 90% of the activated LA21 processes arrived at the establishment of a LA21 Forum. This percentage is lower for Southern Europe (70%), and in Scandinavia (less than 40%).

- The Active Participation by the **functionaries of local authorities** in LA21 Forums – In Western Europe, 80% of the processes which organized forums had participation by the functionaries (highest value), while in Southern Europe, 60% of them had participation by the functionaries (lowest value).

- The Active Participation by the **Councillors of local authorities** in LA21 Forums – In Western Europe, 60% of the processes which organized forums had participation by the councillors, while in Southern Europe, 40% of them had participation by the councillors.

- Participation of the **public sector** in LA21 Forums – A good involvement was recorded by the services sector in Southern Europe.

- Participation of **non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** in LA21 Forums – Active participation of NGOs, especially the ones having an environmental agenda, in LA21 Forums was noticed. The NGOs were involved in about 60% of the processes which organized forums all over the European regions.

- Participation of the **young people** – A good participation was recorded.

- Participation of **other social groups**, such as disabled people – Not good enough participation was recorded.

It should be noted that the involvement of stakeholders was evaluated as good in the definition of the priorities and actions, while it was week in the definition of objectives and budget.

2. **Approaches Adopted by Local Authorities Towards the Eco-efficient Urban Management**

The following represents the assessment results regarding the adoption of sustainable development policies by local authorities in strategic sectors, as an approach towards the eco-efficient urban management: (Project Team LASALA, 2001)

Use of renewable resources: The adopted policies focused on limiting the use of electric power and encouraging the use of renewable resources, especially through the activation of municipal energetic plans. However, little attention was done to the tourism policies.

Quality of air, water, and soil:
- Air policies were adopted for the energetic saving in Scandinavia, for monitoring in all regions and for traffic planning in Western and Southern Europe.
- Water quality, protection of water resources and reduction of wastewater were the main issues tackled in Scandinavia, Western and Eastern Europe. However, in southern Europe, the reuse of water is the main problem.
- Major attention was done in all areas related to the reclamation of contaminated sites, as well as to the use of appropriate agricultural techniques;

Dangers for human health: This problem did not emerge as relevant in none of the regions.

Biodiversity: The problem of coexistence and integration between species was tackled in Scandinavia, whereas already exist several plans for biodiversity also adopted in Eastern Europe. In Western and Southern Europe this problem has not yet received proper attention by local authorities.

Reduction of CO_2 and relation local-global: The problems connected to the emissions of gases are seen in a local rather than global dimension, and major attention is paid to the individual production (especially deriving from vehicles and domestic heating). In Eastern Europe, the problem of deforestation is of great importance.

Approach to the social equity: Social equity is not considered as a local interest, rather as a national or international interest.

Territorial planning:
- Territorial planning policies exist by law in all regions.
- The level of awareness regarding the integration of sustainability within planning has slightly increased although the recovery of degraded areas, in some regions, is not considered as a local interest.

Improvement of public transportation and development of ecological means of transportation: The increment of public transportation and the disincentive to the use of private transportation are policies adopted only in Scandinavia and in Western Europe. Major attention was paid to the pedestrian and bike areas in the Southern and Eastern European countries.

3. Level of Adaptation of Local Authorities to the Needs Imposed by LA21

The following represents the assessment results regarding the level of adaptation of local authorities to the needs imposed by LA21: (Project Team LASALA, 2001)

- A good political commitment was evaluated towards the LA21 process, often deriving by the ratification of the Aalborg Charter, and underlined by the direct involvement in the process of a **Mayor** or a high manager.

- The level of political consensus on the LA21 Plan of Action was high in almost all countries, as well as the percentage of local authorities (73%) indicating the presence of financial support to the process deriving from Forums, NGOs, private sector, European Union, and national, regional or municipal governments. Although in the majority of cases this support is guaranteed for short periods (1-2 years).

- The use of human resources employed full time in the process is recorded especially in Western Europe (80%), while the remaining are mostly voluntary workers.

- The awareness about terminologies and concepts related to sustainable development is highly improving. However, in Southern Europe doubts still exist on how to translate concepts into practices, while in Western Europe and Scandinavia there is a major concern regarding the possibility of interaction of the different environmental, economic, and social aspects within the process. There are other doubts concerning the **difficulty in solving the conflicts** and the difficulty of communication between local authorities and citizens.

- The level of cooperation and interchange among the different local authorities was satisfactory.

- The support received by local authorities from the national and regional governments; was not good enough, while that given by the European Union was good.

Italy

A great majority of the Italian local authorities at all governmental levels (i.e. municipalities, provinces, mountain communities, parks and regions) are officially members of the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign and of the Italian National LA21 Network, which was formed to coordinate the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) processes in Italy. These are 850 local authorities, constituting around 94% of the total number of local authorities in Italy. They have been engaged in the different phases of the Local Agenda 21 process, which are identified as follows:

- Phase 1. Process activation;
- Phase 2. Process organization;
- Phase 3. Participation –forum;
- Phase 4. Problems analysis;
- Phase 5. Local Agenda 21 action plan definition;
- Phase 6. Local Agenda 21 action plan implementation; and
- Phase 7. Monitoring the implementation of Local Agenda 21 action plan.

A national survey was conducted in 2002 and 2004 by the FocusLab Research Centre in partnership with the Italian National LA21 Network to analyze and evaluate the Italian Local Agenda 21 state of implementation. The first survey, conducted in 2002, provided the first description of the Italian situation of Local Agenda 21 implementation, laying the basis for the following survey, conducted in 2004. 439 and 535 local authorities took part in the first and second surveys, respectively. (FocusLab Research Center and Italian National LA21 Network, 2002 & 2004)

Survey Results

1. LA21 Start-up

In accordance with the 2004 survey results, **361 local authorities** (67% of the 535 authorities that participated in the survey) have operatively **started a LA21 process** and in particular 255 among them had followed in details the assigned questionnaire for the survey (FocusLab Research Center and Italian National LA21 Network, 2004). Whereas, the 2002 survey revealed that 241 local authorities (55% of the 439 that participated in the survey) have started a LA 21 process (FocusLab Research Center and Italian National LA21 Network, 2002). Accordingly, it can be noted that the number of Italian LA21 processes effectively started has risen consistently.

Geographical Distribution of Local Authorities Involved in LA21 Process
The ongoing LA21 processes are well spread throughout Italy from North to South. *Figure 1* shows the geographical distribution of the local authorities which started a LA21 process in Italy. It can be noted that in 2004 a prevailing concentration of LA21 process was found in the North-East regions (31%), while a minor diffusion of the process was found in the South and Islands regions (15%) (FocusLab Research Center and Italian National LA21 Network, 2004).

Distribution of Local Authorities Involved in LA21 Process by their Local Governmental Level

The local authorities, at all governmental levels, are engaged in the LA21 process as shown in *Figure 2*. It can be noted that in 2004 municipalities represented the most active authority in this field (71%), followed by provinces (16%), mountain communities (7%), parks (5%) and regions (1%) (FocusLab Research Center and Italian National LA21 Network, 2004). However, the provinces have notably increased their commitment to LA21 since 2002. Accordingly, it emerges that LA21 is utilised as a tool at all governmental levels also in non-urban contexts.
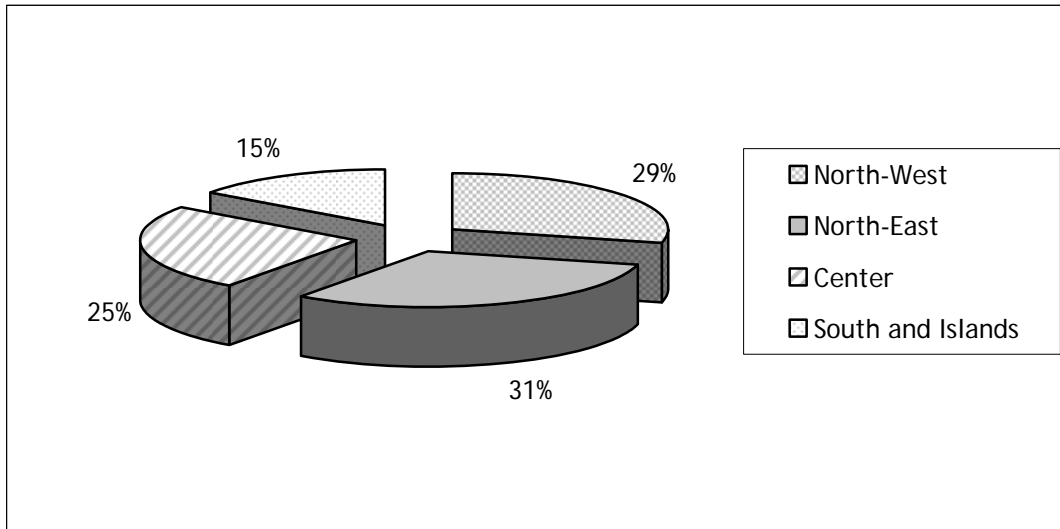

Figure 1   Geographic Distribution of Local Authorities Involved in LA21 Process, 2004
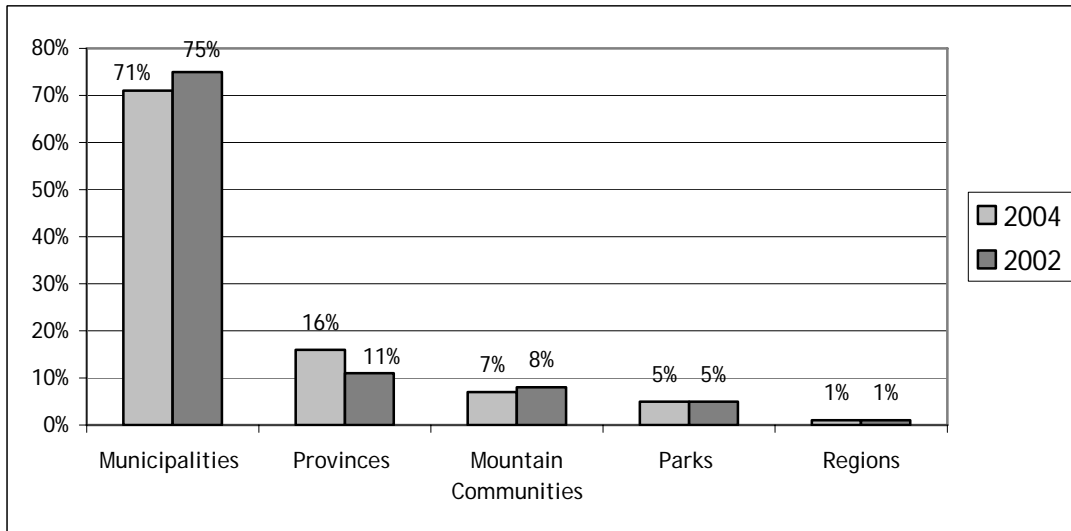

Figure 2   Distributions of Local Authorities Involved in LA21 Process by their Governmental Level

2. State of Local Agenda 21 Implementation by Phases

Regarding the implementation of the abovementioned phases of LA21 process in Italy in 2004, *Figure 3* indicates the following: (FocusLab Research Center and Italian National LA21 Network, 2004)

- 34% of the Italian local authorities (summing up phases 1and 2) were at the beginning of the first LA21 process phases, activation and organization;
- 9% of the authorities established the LA21 Forum;
- 12% of the authorities were involved in problem analysis;
- 23% of the authorities formulated their action plans;
- 14% of the authorities put their action plans into practice; and
- 8% of the authorities implemented monitoring activities of their action plan.

In comparison with 2002, it can be noted that the number of local authorities who were at the first two phases of LA21 process decreased by 22%, whereas the number of those which arrived at a definition of the action plan or at the phases of implementation and monitoring increased by 17%, 10% and 6%, respectively. This means that the number of local authorities which are facing the planning and operative phases have increased since 2002.
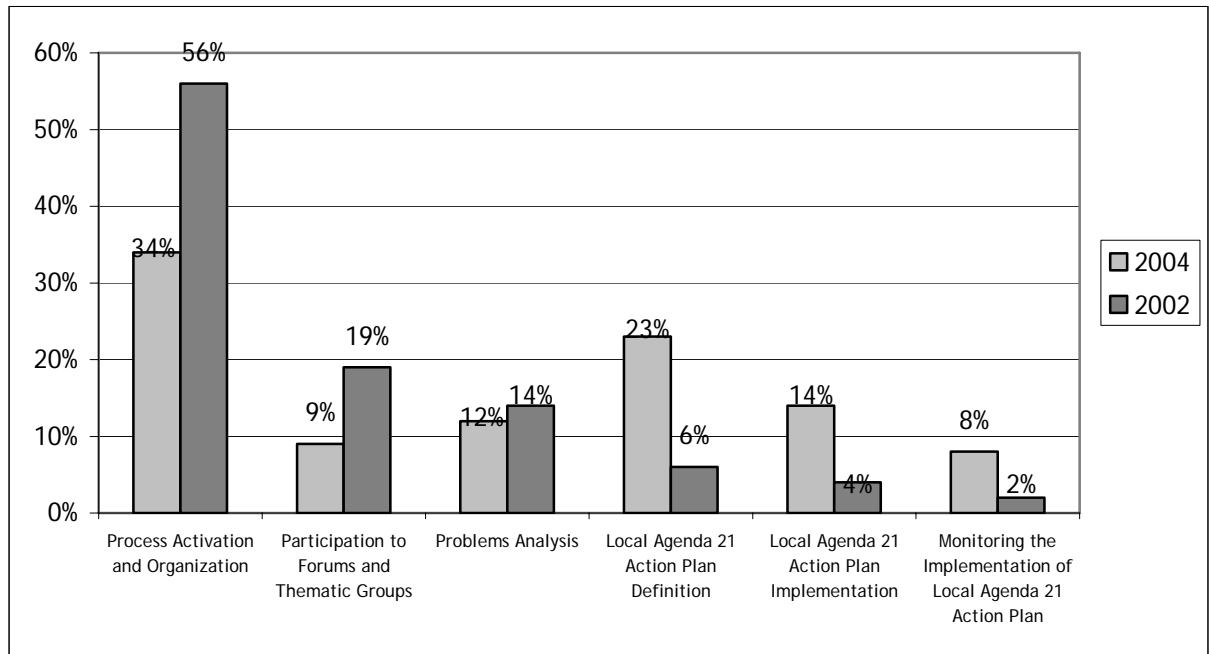

Figure 3   Phases of LA21 Implementation by Local Authorities

3. Perspectives of Local Authorities Regarding Priority Actions to Develop and Improve LA21 Process

The interviewed local authorities were asked to identify priority actions in order to develop and improve LA21 process and plans. In order of priority they indicated the need of the following (*Figure 4*): (FocusLab Research Center and Italian National LA21 Network, 2004)

- More coordination of sustainable development policies at the regional, provincial and municipal level (70%);
- More integration of LA21 Plans in the policies (62%);
- More funding from ministries (60%);
- More active and responsible role of the different sectors of the local community (59%);
- More information and training (59%); and
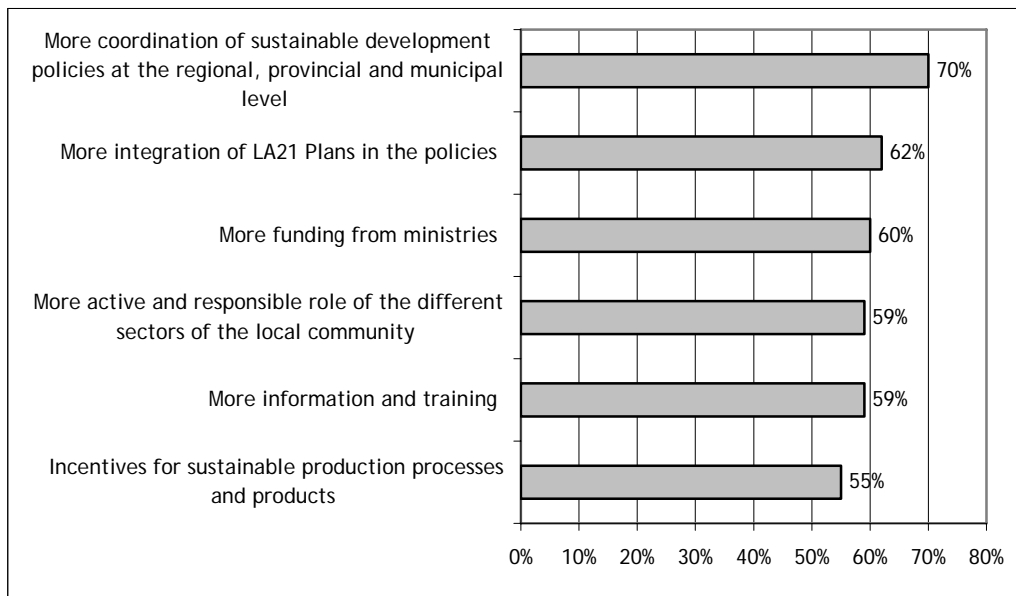- Incentives for sustainable production processes and products (55%).

Figure 4   Priority Actions as Indicated by Local Authorities to Develop and Improve LA21 Process, 2004

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