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CONCEPT NOTE ON WORKING GROUPS

Concept Note on MCSD working groups

Background and Assessment

As per the Rules of procedure, between two MCSD meetings, dedicated working groups explore and debate on specific sustainable development issues. MAP Coordination Unit coordinates the different working groups on a permanent basis. According to their respective domains of competence, specific MAP Regional Activity Centers or specialised programmes can be given the responsibility to steer the working groups and provide technical and organisational support. The results of the working groups are presented to the MCSD that then makes recommendations to the Contracting Parties.

The extent to which the results of the working groups influence country policy processes (i.e. translate into effective impact through policy reforms, measures and action) and foster MSSD implementation highly depends on the acceptability and implementability of their results. If the Contracting Parties decide to accept the MCSD Recommendations, that is often the case, then the acceptability is guaranteed. However, the issue of implementability remains because the working groups tend to produce only policy recommendations. They do not propose operational guidance that would support the countries and guarantee effective implementation. Without getting involved in implementation, the Working groups need to provide for this missing link between recommendations and action, so that their results insert more naturally into the different country and regional processes (i.e. MSSD and NSSD but also EuroMed Partnership and the related instruments such as Horizon 2020).

While focusing on thematic areas, most working groups do not exclusively address the technical aspects as they often touch upon cross cutting issues (capacity building, information, participation, mobilization of financial resources; etc.) that are duly recognised in the MSSD. In general, the recommendations produced by the different Working groups all have implications on the human and financial resources available in the countries, requiring for instance measures for capacity building, information, participation, mobilization of financial resources. Without necessarily considering the establishment of specific working groups on cross cutting issues, one should be able to systematically ensure that the implications of the recommendations made by different working groups on cross cutting issues are coherent and feasible (i.e. not excessively demanding on the national institutions with regard to their human and financial resources). In this respect, essential linkages between different themes (e.g. energy and transport) have to be factored into the working group functioning. Implementability of the results of the Working groups therefore requires a strong coordination between the Working groups.

In order to provide for coordination between working groups, increase effectiveness and achieve impact, the MCSD Secretariat has to ensure that the working groups have similar structure, modus operandi and reporting procedures. The use of a common format would help monitor quality performance and increase synergies, particularly on cross cutting issues.

Proposal

Based on the preceding elements, the Steering Committee may:

- agreed on the role and functions of the different working groups
- identify a number of common principles to focus their contribution to the working groups
- discuss criteria and indicators to monitor the functioning of the working groups.

The working groups could be characterized as follows:

purpose, objectives, terms of reference and expected outputs
time span, work plan with milestones, meetings, venue, tentative dates, tasks and deliverables,
working procedures, monitoring, information and reporting.
possible synergy and partnership with other RACs as well as SD initiatives in the Region
outside MAP

Based on this formatted information, working group profiles would be made available to the different partners and stakeholders, through the different websites of the MAP components. Moreover the use of a common format would help to monitor and evaluate the MCSD work programme as a whole thus fostering self-reflection and improvement.

The Secretariat would strive to support this very important process by attending working group meetings as appropriate, thoroughly contributing to the information flow and also bringing financial support, if necessary and according to the approved budget.