Will second wave environmentalism learn from the errors of the first wave?

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Sustainable development people must be pinching themselves in delight. No longer trapped in a cul-de-sac at the margins of the development debate, they find themselves at the centre - buoyed by the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel report on sustainability, the forthcoming Rio Summit, and the new momentum imparted by Durban to the global climate talks. Rio, in particular, holds out the promise of agreement on new global sustainability goals: revenge, some will say, for the way in which the Millennium Development Goals reordered development a decade ago, moving the focus of action away from sustainability plans towards MDG financing and Poverty Reduction Strategies.

Before celebrating, however, it might be worth reining in the exuberance and asking why it was exactly that 'sustainable development' did not swing it the first time around - when Gro Harlem Bruntland led the writing of Our Common Future in 1987, and at the first Rio Conference, the Earth Summit, in 1992. The reasons are instructive, and point the way to what must be done if the same fate is not to befall 'second wave' environmentalism in 2012. I wrote about this a year ago, in a piece entitled 'Is it time to take an environment conference seriously?'. Today, I see three key issues.

First, the environmental community failed last time to convey the relative urgency of tackling soil, water, air and other impending natural resource catastrophes. This is not to say they didn't try, nor that they themselves were not passionate believers and enthusiastic proselytisers. However, the doom-laden projections of the Club of Rome had largely been discredited, in theory, and apparently, examining price trends, in practice. More important, the key word is 'relative'. The wider development community did recognise the importance of soil erosion, water quality, the health of oceans, biodiversity and looming peak oil. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, these problems seemed to be less urgent than the more immediate concern of a 'lost decade' characterised by debt crises, structural adjustment, increasing poverty, and famine in Africa. What price biodiversity when Argentina had defaulted on its debts and Mexico was about to face a currency crisis? What price water management, when war was causing famine in South Sudan? No wonder that in 1990, the World Bank's World Development Report focused on the core issue of poverty, and the new flagship report from UNDP on its twin, human development. Underpinning both was the need for growth, a concept which seemed to be at odds with environmental imperatives.

Critics will certainly say that this version of history traduces the concept of 'sustainable development', which deliberately widened the debate by defining three legs of sustainability, viz environmental, social and economic – the last of these certainly including growth. Indeed, the Bruntland Report led with seven strategic priorities, the first of which was 'reviving growth' and the second 'changing the quality of growth', in both cases to accelerate sustainable poverty reduction. Thus, industrialised countries were charged with growing at 3-4% p.a., and developing countries at rates of 5-6%. Growth needed to be of higher quality, meaning less material and energy intensive, and also more equitable.

What is interesting, though, is to ask how much of this analysis was adopted by the action programme coming out of Rio, Agenda 21. My second charge is that not enough was carried across: in particular, that Agenda 21 lacked a convincing narrative on growth. The word is not mentioned among the 27 'Principles' of the Rio Declaration, and only a few times (46 to be precise, but most of those are about growth in population or disease threats or forests) in nearly 300 pages of text in Agenda 21. The closest the document comes to substantive policies is a bland page on 'sound economic policies', mostly concerned with fiscal rectitude, transparency, and the need to encourage the private sector.

This reflects a third issue, that the Rio conference and Agenda 21 set an agenda which became the stamping ground for environmental ministers rather than economic development ministers – this despite the presence in Rio of over 100 Heads of State. In the years that followed, there was probably too much focus on discussion in specialist environmental institutes like IIED, IISD and WRI, not enough in more generalist institutes like IDS or ODI. In the latter group, as I know from experience, environmental research tended to be concerned more with local resource management than with national and global economic transformation. As Bruntland argued, there was a clear reciprocal link between poverty and environmental sustainability at local level: the report continually emphasises that poor people are forced to degrade their environment, and that a degrading environment increases poverty.

Thus, 'first wave' environmentalism offers three lessons to the second wave: first, establish the relative urgency of the topic; second, tell a good story about growth; and third, make sure to engage with the mainstream of economic development planning, and not be trapped behind an environmental stockade.

Some of these look easier than others. On the one hand, climate change has certainly made environmental issues more visible and pressing. On the other hand, the precedence of that topic is constantly challenged by concern for growth, jobs and better management of global financial crises. Do we think that rioters in Greece are more worried about climate change tomorrow or a cut today of 22% in the minimum wage? Similarly, as I observed in Durban, the private sector is optimistic about its capacity to roll-out new, green technology – but still dependent on Government subsidies which are hard to fund.

So, how did the High Level Panel tackle these challenges, and how is the Rio outcome document shaping up?

The High Level Panel had the credentials, led by Jacob Zuma and Tarja Halonen, and with a good mix of environmental and generalist leadership experience: a metereologist, several environmental ministers, but also Jim Balsillie, the former ceo of Blackberry, and Hang Seung-Soo, former Prime Minister of Korea, and Chair of the Board of the Global Green Growth Institute.

The final report makes a series of sharp points about the scale of the challenge, making good use of recent thinking about planetary boundaries and tipping points. In that sense, it begins to meet the first target, to establish the relative urgency of the topic. The report says that

> 'the long-term vision of the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability is to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and make growth inclusive, and production and consumption more sustainable, while combating climate change and respecting a range of other planetary boundaries. . . . We must recognize that the drivers of that challenge include unsustainable lifestyles, production and consumption patterns and the impact of population growth. As the global population grows from 7 billion to almost 9 billion by 2040, and the number of middle-class consumers increases by 3 billion over the next 20 years, the demand for resources will rise exponentially. By 2030, the world will need at least 50 per cent more food, 45 per cent more energy and 30 per cent more water — all at a time when environmental boundaries are throwing up new limits to supply. This is true not least for climate change, which affects all aspects of human and planetary health. . . . The current global development model is unsustainable. We can no longer assume that our collective actions will not trigger tipping points as environmental thresholds are breached, risking irreversible damage to both ecosystems and human communities. At the same time, such thresholds should not be used to impose arbitrary growth ceilings on developing countries seeking to lift their people out of poverty. Indeed, if we fail to resolve the sustainable development dilemma, we run the risk of condemning up to 3 billion members of our human family to a life of endemic poverty. Neither of these outcomes is acceptable, and we must find a new way forward.'

Note, though, that hitting the target means not just making the analytical case – that was achieved last time. The more difficult task is to embed the ideas in the intellectual and emotional consciousness of leaders and citizens around the world. Will environmental issues, this time, compete successfully in the market place for political capital? I've written elsewhere about how to message climate change, and how to manage the politics, but would also recommend more general works by Westen, Lakoff and Chip and Dan Heath. This, I think, is work in progress, to which we all need to contribute.

In terms of action, and whether the Panel has a convincing story on growth, it is encouraging that the report rests on three substantive legs, which are : (a) empowering people to make sustainable choices; (b) working towards a sustainable economy; and (c) strengthening institutional governance. The second leg, in particular, focuses on green growth topics: regulation, pricing, incentives, finance . . . There are related topics in other sections, also. The first section, for example, has text on employment and on the need for an 'ever-green revolution' in agriculture.

There are 56 recommendations in total, reproduced for ease of reference in Annex 1. There are no growth targets, as such, as in Bruntland, but the 56 include the following (lightly edited), which contain real content, indicate targets, and offer an agenda for change in the area of growth:

> '7. Governments should adopt and advance "green jobs" and decent work policies as a priority in their budgets and sustainable development strategies while creating conditions for new jobs in the private sector.

15. Governments and international organizations should work to create a new green revolution (in agriculture) — an "ever-green revolution" — for the twenty-first century that aims to at least double productivity while drastically reducing resource use and avoiding further loss of biodiversity, topsoil loss and water depletion and contamination.

20. Governments should work in concert with appropriate stakeholders to ensure universal access to affordable sustainable energy by 2030, as well as seek to double the rate of improvement in energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

27. Governments should establish price signals that value sustainability to guide the consumption and investment decisions of households, businesses and the public sector. In particular, Governments could:

(a) Establish natural resource and externality pricing instruments, including carbon pricing, through mechanisms such as taxation, regulation or emissions trading systems, by 2020; . . .

(d) Develop and expand national and international schemes for payments for ecosystem services in such areas as water use, farming, fisheries and forestry systems;

(e) Governments should move towards the transparent disclosure of all subsidies, and should identify and remove those subsidies which cause the greatest detriment to natural, environmental and social resources;

(f) Phase out fossil fuel subsidies and reduce other perverse or trade distorting subsidies by 2020.

28. Governments, other public institutions such as universities, and international organizations should develop sustainable development criteria for their procurement, with the aim of achieving a shift towards cost-effective sustainable procurement over the next 10 years, and should issue annual public reports on their progress as from 2015.

30. Governments should promote and incentivize the inclusion of long-term sustainable development criteria in investment and transactions conducted by companies, including financial transactions. Business groups should work with Governments and international agencies to develop a framework for sustainable development reporting, and should consider mandatory reporting by corporations with market capitalizations larger than $100 million.

32. Given the importance of large pools of private and sovereign capital to enable the transition to sustainable development, we call on the following entities to explore a range of measures to apply sustainable development criteria, including:

(a) The boards of sovereign wealth funds and of national and international public pension funds, as well as other major financial institutions, in their investment decisions;

(b) Governments or stock market regulators, to adopt or revise regulations in order to encourage their use;

(c) Stock exchanges, to facilitate their application in the analysis of companies and their reports on compliance;

(d) Governments, to develop incentives and create an enabling environment by making boards

> of directors attentive to them (fiduciary duty);
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> (e) Governments and credit rating agencies, to integrate them into their respective risk assessments.
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> 35. Governments, international financial institutions and major companies should work together to create incentives for increased investments in sustainable technologies, innovations and infrastructures, including through the adoption of policies and targets that reduce investor uncertainty; the promotion of public-private networks to support research and development; the development of risk guarantee schemes and the provision of risk capital; and seed financing.
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> 36. Governments should use public investment to create enabling frameworks that catalyse very substantial additional financing from the private sector, for example, through the provision of infrastructure, risk-sharing, viability gap funding or advance purchase commitments.
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> 37. Governments should seek to incentivize investment in sustainable development by shaping investor calculations about the future through, in particular, the greater use of risk-sharing mechanisms and the enhancement of certainty about the long-term regulatory and policy environment. Measures could include targets for renewable energy or conservation, waste reduction, water conservation, access to carbon markets through the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol or sustained prospects for public financing.'

This (necessarily idiosyncratic) selection indicates major areas of work around, taxation and fiscal policy, regulation and reporting, and partnerships with the private sector – in agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and many other sectors. That ticks the third box, of engagement, even leadership, beyond ministries of the environment.

So, well done the High Level Panel, you are worthy successors to Bruntland. The question now is whether the Rio meeting will do better than Agenda 21 in picking up these points.

Well, according to the official website, the Rio meeting will have two main themes, one of which is the green economy (the other is the institutional framework for sustainable development). That sounds like good news. Informally, there is lot of material accumulating on the website – reports, challenge papers, guides – much of it by stakeholder groups. Formally, there is a pile of official documentation from prepcoms, high-level dialogues and inter-sessionals. Perhaps the most important document is the 'zero draft' of the outcome document, published on 10 January and discussed in New York at the end of the month. Sure enough, this has a chapter on each of the main themes, including one on green growth. The chapter consists of only 19 paragraphs, however, and so far, there is minimal substance to the text, which is largely aspirational. For example, the opening paragraph is pasted in below. Hands up if you disagree!

> 'We are convinced that a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should contribute to meeting key goals – in particular the priorities of poverty eradication, food security, sound water management, universal access to modern energy services, sustainable cities, management of oceans and improving resilience and disaster preparedness, as well as public health, human resource development and sustained, inclusive and equitable growth that generates employment, including for youth. It should be

> based on the Rio principles, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and should be people-centred and inclusive, providing opportunities and benefits for all citizens and all countries.'

Presumably, the negotiators' job between now and June is to flesh out the content of the document. There is no formal record yet of how they got on in New York, but all the country statements can be read on the website. IISD summarised the outcome as follows:

> 'At the conclusion of the initial discussions, participants were pleased to note that some progress had been made, with the acceptance of the zero draft as the basis for negotiations and the commencement of negotiations. But they emphasized that the goal of an ambitious and action-oriented document will require equally ambitious negotiations in the 145 days between the end of the January consultations and the first day of Rio+20.'

Others are less charitable. Eurostep, for example, criticise the zero draft for being complacent and lacking ambition, not least on the green economy. Some similar responses can be tracked via the Earth Summit website of Stakeholder Forum. Fred Pearce, for example, had a scathing piece in the Guardian newspaper on 9 February, complaining about the politicians' 'flaccid agenda'.

I suppose I am inclined to be charitable, but time is short. There are fewer than 130 days left until the Summit kicks off in June. It seems to me the way is clear to avoid all three of the errors committed in the run-up to Rio twenty years ago. But that way will only be followed if negotiations escape the 'environmental trap'.

Annex I

High Level Panel on Sustainability: List of recommendations

Recommendations for empowering people to make sustainable choices

1. Governments and international donors should scale up their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate poverty and to reduce inequalities as top priorities for attaining sustainable development.

2. Governments should respect, protect and provide for human rights, including the right to take part in government directly or through freely chosen representatives, as recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

3. Governments should accelerate the implementation of commitments to advance gender equality and women's rights, including through the repeal of discriminatory laws and removal of formal barriers, the reform of institutions and the development and adoption of innovative measures to address informal and cultural practices that act as barriers. Particular emphasis should be given to:

(a) Ensuring that women have full and equal access to and control over productive resources through the equal right to own property and the right to inherit, and equal access to credit, financial and extension services along the entire value chain;

(b) Ensuring women's equal rights and opportunities in political decision making processes that are participatory, responsive, equitable and inclusive;

(c) Ensuring universal access to quality and affordable family-planning and other sexual and reproductive rights and health services.

4. Governments should consider establishing a global fund for education. This fund should be designed to attract support from Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, evolve out of the current World Bank Global Partnership for Education, and be tasked with closing the primary school education gap by 2015 so that there can be real hope for realizing Millennium Development Goal 2.

5. Governments should scale up their efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 on universal primary education by 2015, and establish a goal of providing universal access to quality post-primary and secondary education no later than 2030, emphasizing the skills and knowledge needed for sustainable growth and jobs.

6. Governments, the private sector, civil society and relevant international development partners should work together to provide vocational training, retraining and professional development within the context of lifelong learning geared to filling skills shortages in sectors essential to sustainable development. They should prioritize women, young people and vulnerable groups in these efforts.

7. Governments should adopt and advance "green jobs" and decent work policies as a priority in their budgets and sustainable development strategies while creating conditions for new jobs in the private sector.

8. Governments and business should build partnerships and provide start-up services for young entrepreneurs.

9. Employers, Governments and trade unions should take a comprehensive approach to advancing equality in the workplace, including by adopting principles of non-discrimination; measures to advance women into leadership roles; gender sensitive work-life and health policies; education, training and professional development targeting women and minorities; and commitments to measure and publicly report on progress.

10. Governments and business should recognize the economic benefits of enabling the full participation of women in the economy by putting in place economic policies that explicitly address the unique challenges that limit women, in particular:

(a) Allowing access for women farmers to land and resources;

(b) Improving women's access to capital and financial services;

(c) Improving access to markets through trade and technical assistance programmes and microfinance;

(d) Supporting the rise of women leaders in the public and private sectors.

11. Governments and other public authorities should promote open, transparent, balanced and science-based processes for developing labelling schemes and other mechanisms that fully reflect the impact of production and consumption, and work with the private sector to ensure that labelling, corporate reporting and advocacy are accurate, cost-effective and trustworthy so as to enable consumers to make informed choices, particularly in areas of high impact on human and natural systems, without creating barriers to trade.

12. Governments should make sustainable choices more easily available, affordable and attractive to consumers by setting, together with the private sector, sustainable product standards, in accordance with the best available technology and without creating trade barriers, and by applying price incentives and disincentives.

13. Government and non-governmental entities should promote the concept of sustainable development and sustainable consumption, and these should be integrated into curricula of primary and secondary education.

14. The Panel welcomes discourse on the ethical dimensions of sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012 among all stakeholders, based on relevant experience and instruments, including the Earth Charter, to inform Governments in their efforts to shift to sustainable development.

15. Governments and international organizations should work to create a new green revolution — an "ever-green revolution" — for the twenty-first century that aims to at least double productivity while drastically reducing resource use and avoiding further loss of biodiversity, topsoil loss and water depletion and contamination, including through the scaling-up of investment in agricultural research and development, to ensure that cutting-edge research is rapidly moved from laboratory to field. Governments should task FAO with working with key partners and stakeholders to initiate and coordinate this task, as that organization has a unique mandate to reduce the world food deficit.

16. Governments should work towards agreement on global principles for sustainable and responsible land and water investment deals, including ongoing efforts to promote responsible agricultural investment (RAI), with particular emphasis on protecting the rights and livelihoods of

poor people who depend on these basic resources, while ensuring environmental sustainability.

17. Governments should establish and scale up integrated water resource management schemes, bearing fully in mind that water plays multifaceted roles, including for drinking, sanitation, agriculture, industry and energy.

18. Governments should commit to the establishment of regional oceans and coastal management frameworks in major marine ecosystems, including through:

(a) Enhanced cooperation in oceans and coastal management involving relevant stakeholders;

(b) Marine and coastal planning by countries in regional areas, taking into account the specific needs, ecosystems and users in their area and supported by solid funding mechanisms to develop and implement these plans;

(c) Building the capacity of marine managers, policymakers and scientists in developing countries, especially small island developing countries and other coastal States;

(d) Enhanced monitoring and surveillance systems.

19. Where regional fisheries management organizations are operating they should seek to make their policies and practices consistent with and support coordinated regional oceans management. Regional fisheries management organizations, Governments and marine managers should focus on an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to deliver improved economic and environmental
benefits.

20. Governments should work in concert with appropriate stakeholders to ensure universal access to affordable sustainable energy by 2030, as well as seek to double the rate of improvement in energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. Governments and international organizations should promote energy-saving technologies and renewable energy through the incentivization of research and development and investment in them.

21. Governments should work with appropriate stakeholders to provide citizens, especially those in remote areas, with access to technologies, including universal telecommunications and broadband networks, by 2025.

22. Governments, international financial institutions and major companies should be encouraged to engage in international cooperation on innovation- and technology-oriented sustainable development on an enlarged scale, enhancing the technological capability of developing countries and taking full advantage of the potential roles played by climate-friendly technologies in dealing with global climate change and in developing a green economy. The agreements reached under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancun and Durban are a good step in this direction.

23. Countries should work to ensure that all citizens are provided with access to basic safety nets through appropriate national efforts and the provision of appropriate capacity, finance and technology.

24. Governments should develop and implement policies to manage the economic and social impacts of transition and enhance resilience — in particular through targeted social protection

programmes and policies and by scaling up humanitarian capacities to deal with increasing environmental stress and potential shocks, where appropriate.

25. Governments and international organizations should accelerate efforts to produce regional exposure and vulnerability assessments and appropriate precautionary strategies to prevent adverse impacts on social and natural systems that are fully focused on people's needs, with priority accorded to the special needs of Africa, small island developing States, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries.

26. Governments and international organizations should increase the resources allocated to adaptation and disaster risk reduction and integrate resilience planning into their development budgets and strategies.

Recommendations for a sustainable economy

27. Governments should establish price signals that value sustainability to guide the consumption and investment decisions of households, businesses and the public sector. In particular, Governments could:

(a) Establish natural resource and externality pricing instruments, including carbon pricing, through mechanisms such as taxation, regulation or emissions trading systems, by 2020;

(b) Ensure that policy development reflects the positive benefits of the inclusion of women, youth and the poor through their full participation in and contribution to the economy, and also account for the economic, environmental and social costs;

(c) Reform national fiscal and credit systems to provide long-term incentives for sustainable practices, as well as disincentives for unsustainable behaviour;

(d) Develop and expand national and international schemes for payments for ecosystem services in such areas as water use, farming, fisheries and forestry systems;

(e) Address price signals that distort the consumption and investment decisions of households, businesses and the public sector and undermine sustainability values. Governments should move towards the transparent disclosure of all subsidies, and should identify and remove those subsidies which cause the greatest detriment to natural, environmental and social resources;

(f) Phase out fossil fuel subsidies and reduce other perverse or trade distorting subsidies by 2020. The reduction of subsidies must be accomplished in a manner that protects the poor and eases the transition for affected groups when the products or services concerned are essential.

28. Governments, other public institutions such as universities, and international organizations should develop sustainable development criteria for their procurement, with the aim of achieving a shift towards cost-effective sustainable procurement over the next 10 years, and should issue annual public reports on their progress as from 2015.

29. Governments should develop standards for production and resource extraction to support the transition to a sustainable global economy. They should further encourage widespread adoption and uptake by business of voluntary sustainability principles derived from international agreements and conventions

30. Governments should promote and incentivize the inclusion of long-term sustainable development criteria in investment and transactions conducted by companies, including financial transactions. Business groups should work with Governments and international agencies to develop a framework for sustainable development reporting, and should consider mandatory reporting by corporations with market capitalizations larger than $100 million.

31. Businesses should seek to align their business practices with universally accepted principles concerning human rights, labour, environmental sustainability and the fight against corruption, such as those set forth in the Global Compact.

32. Given the importance of large pools of private and sovereign capital to enable the transition to sustainable development, we call on the following entities to explore a range of measures to apply sustainable development criteria, including:

(a) The boards of sovereign wealth funds and of national and international public pension funds, as well as other major financial institutions, in their investment decisions;

(b) Governments or stock market regulators, to adopt or revise regulations in order to encourage their use;

(c) Stock exchanges, to facilitate their application in the analysis of companies and their reports on compliance;

(d) Governments, to develop incentives and create an enabling environment by making boards of directors attentive to them (fiduciary duty);

(e) Governments and credit rating agencies, to integrate them into their respective risk assessments.

33. Governments, international institutions and international development banks should step up their efforts to promote sustainable development and to assess and monitor adequately the consequences of their policies in the social and environmental spheres. Multilateral and regional development banks and export credit agencies should apply sustainable development criteria, while considering country risks.

34. Governments and business should build strategic partnerships between themselves and local communities for the implementation of sustainable development investments.

35. Governments, international financial institutions and major companies should work together to create incentives for increased investments in sustainable technologies, innovations and infrastructures, including through the adoption of policies and targets that reduce investor uncertainty; the promotion of public-private networks to support research and development; the development of risk guarantee schemes and the provision of risk capital; and seed financing.

36. Governments should use public investment to create enabling frameworks that catalyse very substantial additional financing from the private sector, for example, through the provision of infrastructure, risk-sharing, viability gap funding or advance purchase commitments.

37. Governments should seek to incentivize investment in sustainable development by shaping investor calculations about the future through, in particular, the greater use of risk-sharing mechanisms and the enhancement of certainty about the long-term regulatory and policy environment. Measures could include targets for renewable energy or conservation, waste reduction,

water conservation, access to carbon markets through the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol or sustained prospects for public financing.

38. Governments and the financial sector should develop innovative partnerships to provide capacity-building and increased access to capital, as a means of incentivizing small and medium-sized enterprises and enabling them to take part in the new sustainable economy.

39. To measure progress on sustainable development, a Sustainable Development Index or set of indicators should be developed by 2014. To this end, the Secretary-general should appoint a technical task force, including relevant stakeholders.

Recommendations for strengthening institutional governance

40. As a basis for sustainable development, Governments should ensure the rule of law, good governance and citizens' rights of access to official information, public participation in decision-making and equal access to justice.

41. Governments should enable young people's participation in and influence on decision-making processes at the local, national and international levels. In addition, consultation processes and dialogue should be encouraged to incorporate voices from non-conventional networks and youth communities, such as Internet forums and opinion-making blogs.42. Governments should adopt whole-of-Government approaches to sustainable development issues, under the leadership of the Head of State or Government and involving all relevant ministries for addressing such issues across sectors.

43. Governments and parliaments should incorporate the sustainable development perspective into their strategies, their legislation and, in particular, their budget processes. To this end, they should take into account the economic, social and environmental dimensions of such issues as poverty eradication, job creation, inequality reduction, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, energy, climate change, biodiversity and green growth. They should explore ways to incorporate specific sustainability considerations into budget oversight, report publicly on relevant activities and make budgets accessible to their citizens.

44. Measures should be taken to strengthen the interface between policymaking and science in order to facilitate informed political decision-making on sustainable development issues. Representatives of the scientific community could be included as members or advisers in relevant national or local bodies dealing with sustainable development issues.

45. The Panel recognizes the universal aspiration to sustainable development. It also recognizes the diversity of national circumstances and of social, economic and environmental challenges. The Panel calls for a process to explore the concept and application of the critical issue of equity in relation to sustainable development, with a view to feeding the outcome into the Rio+20 process and its follow-up.

46. Bilateral donors, international institutions and development banks should step up their efforts to promote sustainable development in a comprehensive way and should monitor and report on the impact of their sustainable development policies on a regular basis.

47. As international sustainable development policy is fragmented and, in particular, the environmental pillar is weak, UNEP should be strengthened.

48. Governments should agree to develop a set of key universal sustainable development goals, covering all three dimensions of sustainable development as well as their interconnections. Such goals should galvanize individual and collective action and complement the Millennium Development Goals, while allowing for a post-2015 framework. An expert mechanism should be established by the Secretary-general to elaborate and refine the goals before their adoption by United Nations Member States.

49. The Panel endorses the Secretary-General's "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative, which should be implemented without delay.

50. The Secretary-General should lead a joint effort with the heads of relevant international organizations, including relevant United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, to prepare a regular global sustainable development outlook report that brings together information and assessments currently dispersed across institutions, and analyses them in an integrated way.

51. Governments and the scientific community should take practical steps, including through the launching of a major global scientific initiative, to strengthen the interface between policy and science. This should include the preparation of regular assessments and digests of the science around such concepts as "planetary boundaries", "tipping points" and "environmental thresholds" in the context of sustainable development. This would complement other scientific work on the sustainable development agenda, including its economic and social aspects, to improve data and knowledge concerning socio-economic factors such as inequality. In addition, the Secretary-General should consider naming a chief scientific adviser or establishing a scientific advisory board with diverse knowledge and experience to advise him or her and other organs of the United Nations.

52. Governments should consider creating a global sustainable development council to improve the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, address emerging issues and review sustainability progress, with meetings held on a regular basis throughout the year. This body could be a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and would replace the Commission on Sustainable Development. It would need to have a broad geographical and political membership and to fully engage relevant international institutions — including United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions — and non-State actors from civil society, the private sector and science.

53. Such a council would develop a peer review mechanism that would encourage States, in a constructive spirit, to explain their policies, to share experiences and lessons learned, and to fulfil their commitments.

54. Governments should also use existing institutions in a much more dynamic way, including by using the period between the holding in 2012 of Rio+20 and 2015 for deliberate review and experimentation, in order to incorporate tested solutions into any post-2015 development framework and institutional reform.

55. The Secretary-General should expedite the development of a sustainable development strategy for the United Nations system in order to contribute to coherence, better define responsibilities among United Nations bodies, reduce overlap and duplication and improve accountability for implementation. The strategy should be reviewed by all relevant United Nations bodies and governing boards, with a special effort being made to forge a unified view among countries common to all boards and processes.

56. The Secretary-General should make full use of the United Nations as the world's meeting place,

convening periodic high-level exchanges on sustainable development when leaders meet at the opening of the new session of the General Assembly. Such gatherings should be used to set the agenda and address emerging issues by bringing together Heads of State or Government, heads of international institutions and representatives of civil society and the private sector