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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development  
First meeting  
Luxembourg, 3-4 April 2006  
Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

NATIONAL AGENDA 21  
Submitted by the Ministry of Finance, Norway

This meeting is organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD

## I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Norwegian government presented a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) to the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. To transform the strategy into a more concrete and policy oriented guide for policies, it was decided to develop a Norwegian Action Plan for Sustainable Development, National Agenda 21 (NA 21).

NA 21:

1. Was presented by the Norwegian government to the Parliament in its main economic policy document -The National Budget - in the Fall of 2003.
2. The coordination of the follow up is the political responsibility of the Minister of Finance. To aid the minister in this task, a group of State Secretaries has been established chaired by The Ministry of Finance.
3. The follow up policies to enhance sustainable development in Norway is reported on in the yearly National Budgets.
4. It is now based on a core set of sustainable development indicators developed by an experts group consisting of natural scientists and economists.
5. The new Norwegian government has decided to follow the same governance procedures and will probably present a revised NA 21 next year.

## II CONTENT

The point of departure is economic development which is the main focus of over all policies in both developed and developing countries. The challenge is to ensure that long term developments and policies ensure environmental and social sustainability.

The following main policy areas have been established:

- Climate, ozone and long-range transported air pollution;
- Biodiversity and Cultural change
- Natural resources;
- Hazardous substances;
- Sustainable economic development;
- Social areas.

## III MEASUREMENT

The two main drivers or determinants of sustainable development are:

- Technological advance or developments;
- Developments of the total resource base or capital base widely defined. I.e: Financial capital, real capital, human capital, natural capital, environmental capital and social capital.

A main indicator of sustainable development is thus developments of a nations National Wealth (pr capita). But in addition one needs measures or indicators of all of the above mentioned capital categories, inter alia because:

- Single measurements of National Wealth, like Gross Domestic Product (GDP), have their limitations;
- For example, the services of environmental capital is not traded in markets, have no prices, and should thus be measured directly;
- To assure sustainable development, there are critical levels of natural and environmental capital that must be maintained;
- Serious climate change and destroying biological diversity can cause serious damage to future economic developments and must be avoided.

A set of 18 core indicators of sustainable development for each of the above mentioned policy areas and main national capital categories was presented in The National Budget for 2006.

## IV GOVERNANCE

I think all of this has contributed to put sustainable development closer to the core policy agenda in Norway. In addition, I think it has made a positive difference that sustainable development is coordinated by The Ministry of Finance with the responsibility for economic-, tax-, and budgetary policies, and that sustainable development policies are presented regularly to the Parliament in the main economic policy documents of the Cabinet.

## REFERENCES

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- Smith, Simard and Sharpe: "A proposed approach to environment and sustainable development indicators based on capital". A report prepared for the Canadian National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy's Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators Initiative. Ottawa 2001.