

## **Development-Environment Ministerial Meeting 4 April 2006. Norway's views.**

The importance of the environment for development is a well established fact. This linkage is reflected in the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment states that "development policies aimed at reducing poverty that ignore the impact of our current behaviour on the natural environment may well be doomed to fail." Our common understanding should be based on the fact that environment policy and development policy are mutually reinforcing.

Raising awareness is essential. The main challenge is how to integrate the environmental dimension better into developing countries' plans and strategies for development. Long-term efforts are necessary to develop strong and competent environmental institutions and legislation. Civil society, both NGOs and private sector, have important roles to play. Boosting corporate environmental and social responsibility is crucial.

Environmental impact assessments are an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into development planning. We welcome the OECD guidance on strategic environmental assessment. Norway is now considering how this can be applied in the energy sector. We are looking forward to discussing the application of the guidance at the international conference on impact assessments, in Stavanger, Norway 23-26 May 2006.

We believe that Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) play an important role in directing development towards sustainability. Adaptation to climate change, reducing the loss of biodiversity, improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation and reducing persistent toxic compounds are fundamental measures related to combating poverty. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an important instrument for implementing the MEAs. We welcome the declaration on integrating climate change adaptation into development cooperation. At the same time, we must not forget the importance of mitigation: Postponing mitigation will increase the need and costs for adaptation.

The environment is one of Norway's focus areas in its international development policy. We aim at being in the forefront, and will launch an action plan this summer, which is being developed in close cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment. We intend to concentrate our efforts on a few areas, taking a holistic approach and ensuring complementarity of bilateral and multilateral efforts. Building development-environment synergies for implementing international environmental agreements is essential in this process.

The OECD's analytical and methodological efforts are widely recognised. In many cases, the OECD's work on emerging instruments and mechanisms represents the state of the art. This is one of the OECD's strengths. The OECD's norms based on best practice are widely applied. The fact that the OECD Ministers of International Development and the Environment are meeting to discuss ways of integrating the environment into development policies sends a clear message not only to OECD member countries but also to partner countries. We hope that the outcome of this meeting has a catalytic effect on governments, development cooperation agencies and other international organisations, bringing environment and development policies together in a more coherent and mutually reinforcing way.