

Background:

Understanding that the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development are not independent of one another, this working group will focus primarily on environmental issues.

The environmental pillar refers to the laws, regulations, and other policy mechanisms concerning environmental issues. These issues include air and water pollution, solid waste management, ecosystem management, maintenance of biodiversity, and the protection of natural resources, wildlife and endangered species.

Participants who responded to key regional issues mentioned: climate change; global warming; the environment and human rights (persecution of activists); modern and renewable energy; ecological development (ending natural resource depletion); reverse air pollution and improved water management; and better control natural resource extraction.

While the environmental pillar is not a new area, it is difficult to integrate and enforce in international agendas. For that, it is crucial that the different levels of government (national, regional, local, etc.) pay sufficient attention to environmental goals with the support of credible policy instruments. Those instruments may include, for example, economic incentives and market-based instruments such as taxes and tax exemptions, tradable permits, awareness campaigns and educational activities.

While the SDGs are cross cutting, several specific address environmental aspects, such as:

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of ecosystems, etc.

SDG16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development

Can you please discuss, from your own experience:

- Success stories or positive experiences amongst members/participants that should figure into the actualization of these SDGs? Do you have experiences of rapid change of culture towards environmental issues amongst decision-makers/citizens?
- Key factors that determine or impede advancement of the environmental pillar?
- What needs to happen to encourage these factors or turn the factors into practice (new policies, changes in policies, regulation, additional financing, different skills)?