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Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Partnerships for sustainable development are voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiatives by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and others that aim to contribute to the implementation of intergovernmentally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and/or the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The present report summarizes information on the 348 partnerships for sustainable development that have been registered to date with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and provides a more detailed summary of 74 partnerships that identify one or more of the themes in the current cycle — namely, transport, chemicals, mining, waste management and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns — as the primary focus of their work.

While these initiatives vary significantly in the sustainable development issues they seek to address and in their management structures, number of partners and scope of activities, they tend to share some common features as well. In particular, all registered partnerships aim to pool knowledge, skills and resources, find innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges and build knowledge networks that can contribute to informed decision-making.

This report serves as a basis for the Commission's discussion, during its eighteenth session, on the contribution of partnerships to the implementation of intergovernmentally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments.

* E/CN.17/2010/1.



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I. Introduction

1. The idea of voluntary, multi-stakeholder partnerships to facilitate and expedite the realization of sustainable development goals and commitments was an important contribution of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. As at 1 February 2010, a total of 348 such partnerships had registered with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, of which 74 had indicated that one of the themes for the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development was the primary focus of their activities.

2. Partnerships for sustainable development are special in nature; they are specifically linked to the implementation of globally agreed commitments in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), Agenda 21 and/or the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. However, as stressed at the Summit, these partnerships are not a substitute for Government responsibilities and commitments; they are intended to strengthen implementation by involving those relevant stakeholders that can make a contribution to sustainable development. Commitments by Governments remain the cornerstone of national, regional and global efforts to pursue sustainable development.

3. The Commission on Sustainable Development was designated by the Summit as the focal point for discussion on partnerships that promote sustainable development. At its eleventh session, in 2003, the Commission stressed that partnerships in the context of the Summit process and its follow-up should be developed and implemented in accordance with a set of agreed criteria and guidelines,¹ taking note of the preliminary work undertaken on partnerships during the preparatory process for the Summit, including the Bali guiding principles² and General Assembly resolution 56/76. Subsequently, the Assembly, in its resolutions 58/129, 60/215, 62/211 and 64/426, and the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2003/61, recognized the important contribution of partnerships for sustainable development to the implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development commitments and goals and the continuing efforts of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development to promote such partnerships.

4. The Commission agreed that information on partnerships for sustainable development should be made publicly available. As part of this information-sharing process, the secretariat of the Commission was requested to develop a partnerships website and database that would be accessible to all interested parties.

5. In February 2004, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat launched the Commission on Sustainable Development Partnerships for Sustainable Development website³ and database.⁴ The interactive web-accessible database contains information on registered partnerships based on voluntary self-reports from partnership focal points. These reports help to keep the partnerships database up to date and form the basis for summary reports prepared by the secretariat of the Commission.

¹ See E/CN.17/2003/6, chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution I, paras. 21-24.

² For the full text of the Bali guiding principles, see: http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/prepcom4docs/bali_documents/annex_partnership.pdf.

³ <http://un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships.htm>.

⁴ <http://esa.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/>.

6. The partnerships website and database of the Commission on Sustainable Development were redesigned in 2006 and again in 2007 to improve navigation and facilitate access to the various new information resources and tools. Features added to the partnerships website included a partnerships events calendar; searchable listings of web links; publications and articles related to partnerships; simplified access to registration and updating procedures as well as partnerships news; and an online discussion forum (e-forum) where members of registered partnerships could network and exchange experiences.

7. During its biennial review sessions, the Commission will discuss the contribution of partnerships to the implementation of the intergovernmentally agreed sustainable development goals and objectives with a view to sharing lessons learned and best practices, as well as identifying and addressing problems, gaps and constraints. The present report, containing synthesized information on partnerships, as requested by the Commission at its eleventh session, is submitted for consideration by the Commission at its eighteenth session with the aim of facilitating those discussions.

II. Partnership trends

8. Partnerships for sustainable development must have certain key characteristics (identified in the criteria and guidelines on partnerships set out at the eleventh session of the Commission, the Bali guiding principles and General Assembly resolution 56/76), including sectoral and geographical balance; multi-stakeholder involvement; a relationship to the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and a predictable and sustained resource base. The following sections explore some of these aspects and identify emerging trends within partnerships currently registered with the secretariat of the Commission.

A. Overall numbers

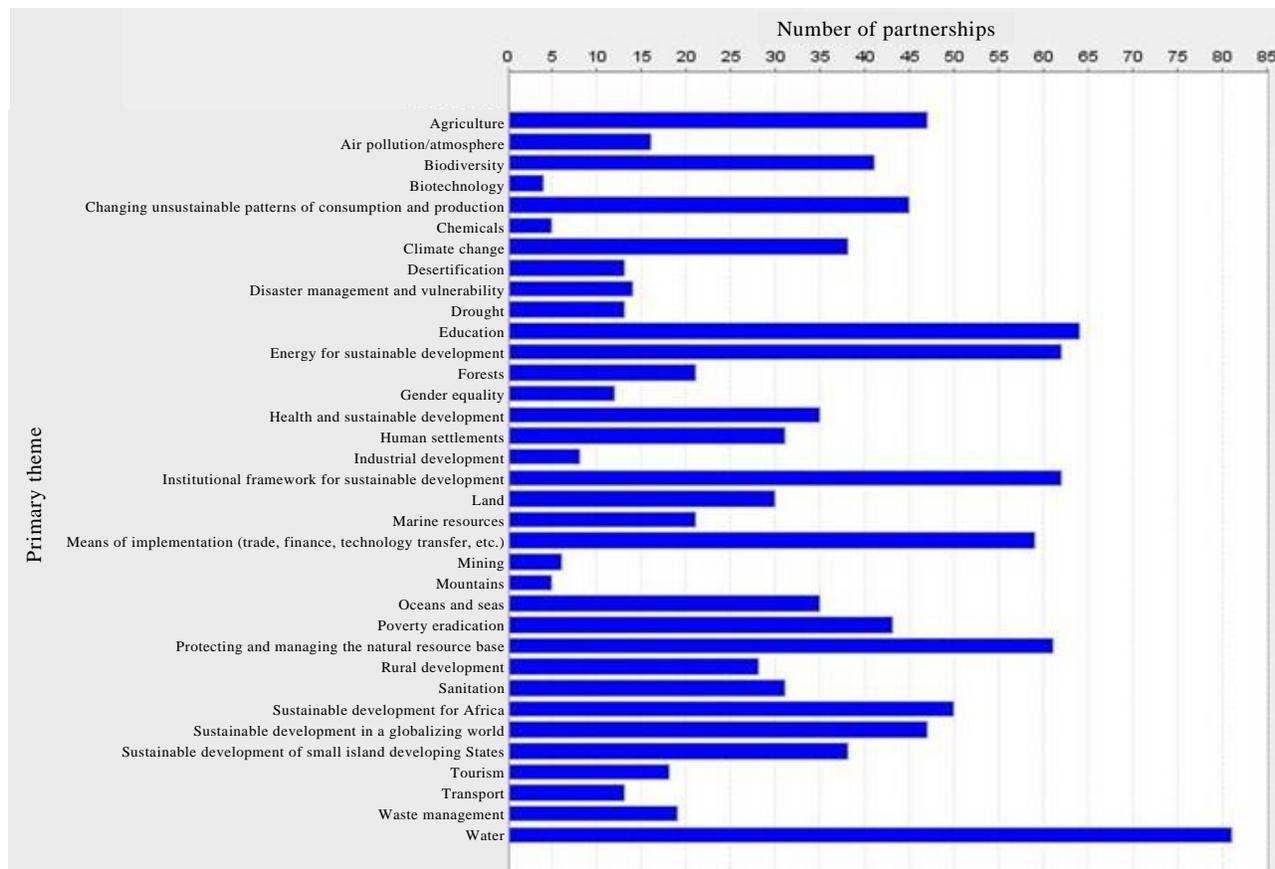
9. A total of 348 partnerships were registered with the secretariat as at 1 February 2010.

10. Nearly two thirds of those partnerships (209) registered around the time of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and 139 partnerships have registered since the Summit. Partnership registration increased by more than 60 per cent between 2002 and 2007, but only four new partnerships registered in 2009. Approximately 242 of these registered partnerships have participated in the activities of the annual partnership fairs of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the period from 2004 to 2009.

B. Sectoral coverage

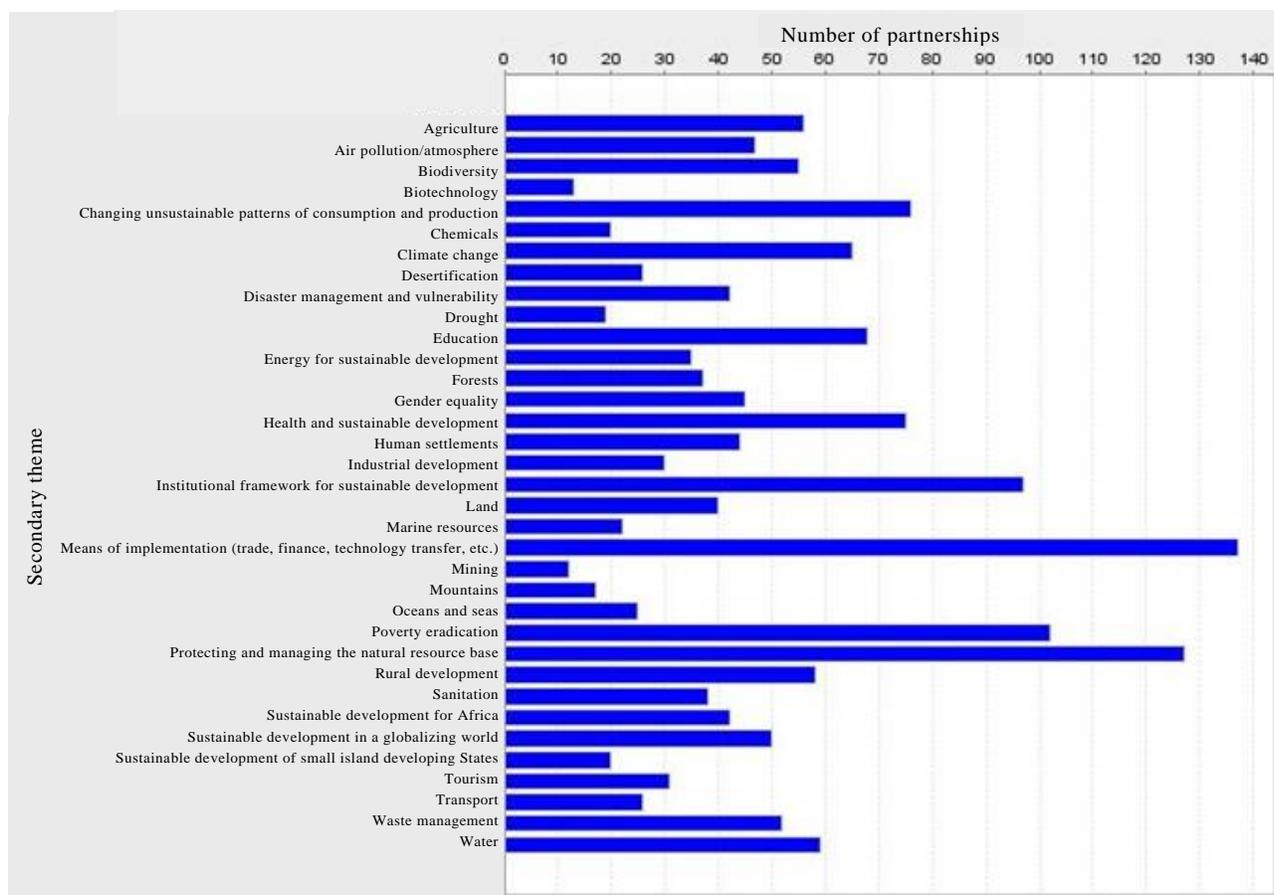
11. The majority of partnerships working towards sustainable development tend to have a multisectoral approach to implementation. Figure I illustrates the distribution of the different primary thematic focal areas of partnerships, while figure II illustrates the distribution of secondary themes.

Figure I
Primary themes of partnerships registered with the Commission on Sustainable Development^a



^a Given that most partnerships have multiple primary and secondary themes, aggregating the number of partnerships per theme would exceed the total number of registered partnerships.

Figure II
**Secondary themes of partnerships registered with the Commission
 on Sustainable Development^a**



^a Given that most partnerships have multiple primary and secondary themes, aggregating the number of partnerships per theme would exceed the total number of registered partnerships.

12. The primary and secondary thematic areas being addressed by registered partnerships cover a wide spectrum. The primary or secondary focus of more than half of all registered partnerships is on means of implementation (56 per cent) and/or protecting and managing the natural resource base (54 per cent). Slightly less than half of all registered partnerships (46 per cent) are working to implement institutional frameworks for sustainable development, followed by 42 per cent addressing poverty eradication, 40 per cent addressing water and 38 per cent addressing education. Rounding out the top 10 thematic focal areas are: changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production (35 per cent), health and sustainable development (32 per cent), agriculture (30 per cent) and climate change (30 per cent).

13. At the lower end of the spectrum, there are proportionately fewer registered partnerships in some thematic areas, including: drought (9 per cent), chemicals (7 per cent), mountains (6 per cent), mining (5 per cent), and biotechnology (5 per cent).

These gaps in coverage are related specifically to Commission-registered partnerships and are not necessarily reflective of other partnerships outside the sphere of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

C. Geographical coverage

14. More than half of the registered partnerships are global in scope (52 per cent). The majority of those remaining are either regional (20 per cent) or subregional (23 per cent), while a small number are national (5 per cent) and local (1 per cent) in scope (see figure III). However, most partnerships, including those with global and regional scope, engage in activities at the national and local levels and have helped to increase the participation of local communities. Many employ a bottom-up approach, using pilot projects with local community participation to test strategies, which may then be replicated at the national, subregional and regional levels. Local intermediaries and implementers are essential for the success and sustainability of most partnerships.

15. Among the partnerships with regional scope, 41 per cent are working in Africa, 39 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, 9 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 7 per cent in Europe and North America and 4 per cent in Western Asia (see figure IV).

Figure III
Geographical scope of partnerships

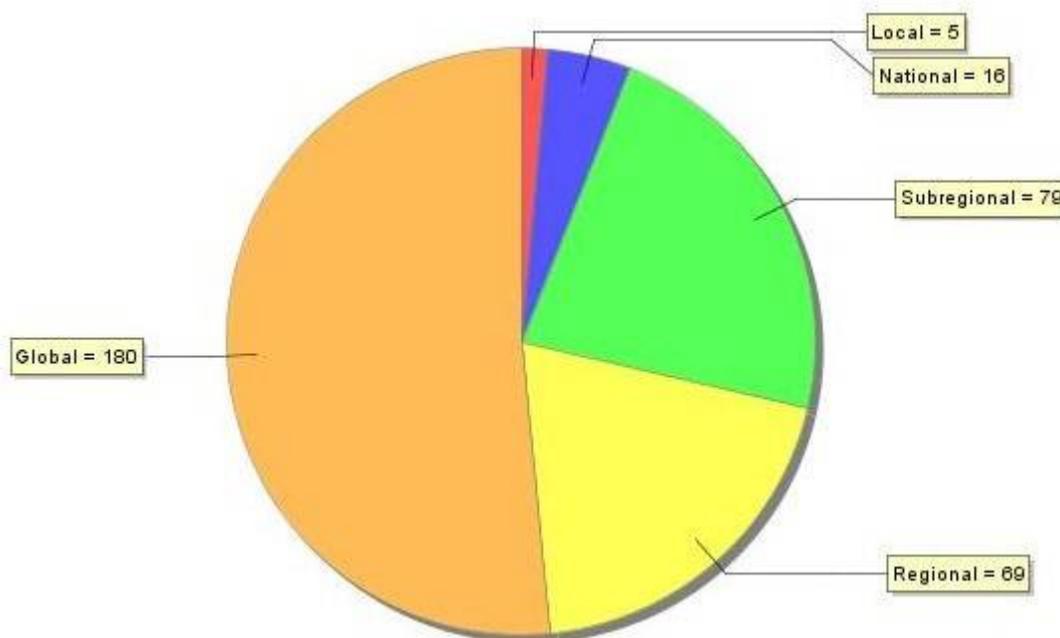
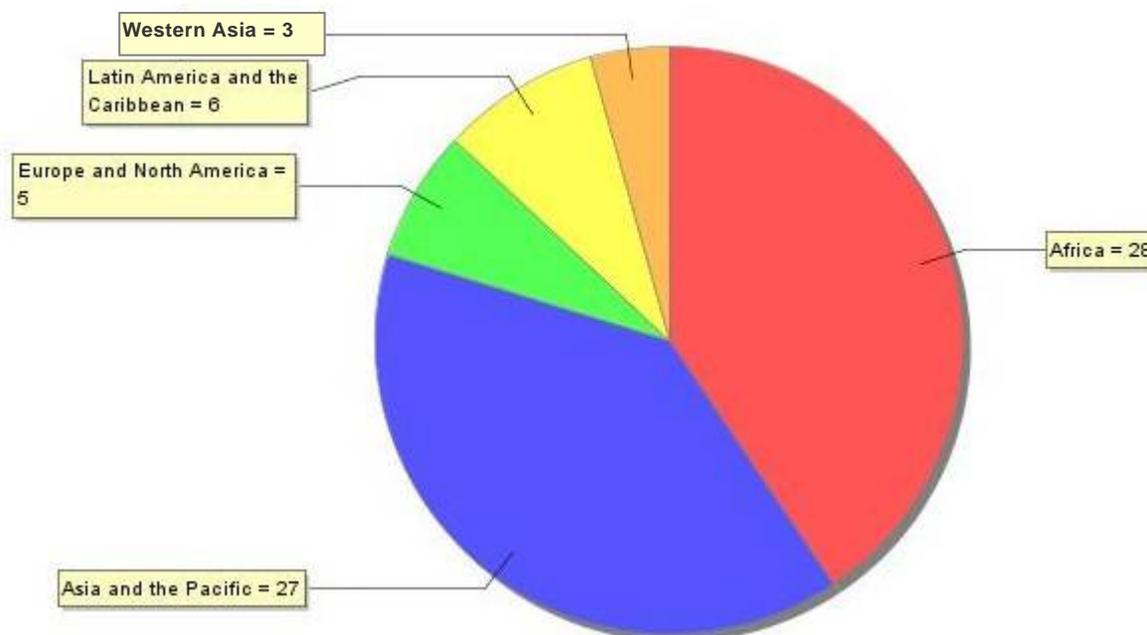


Figure IV
Regional coverage of partnerships



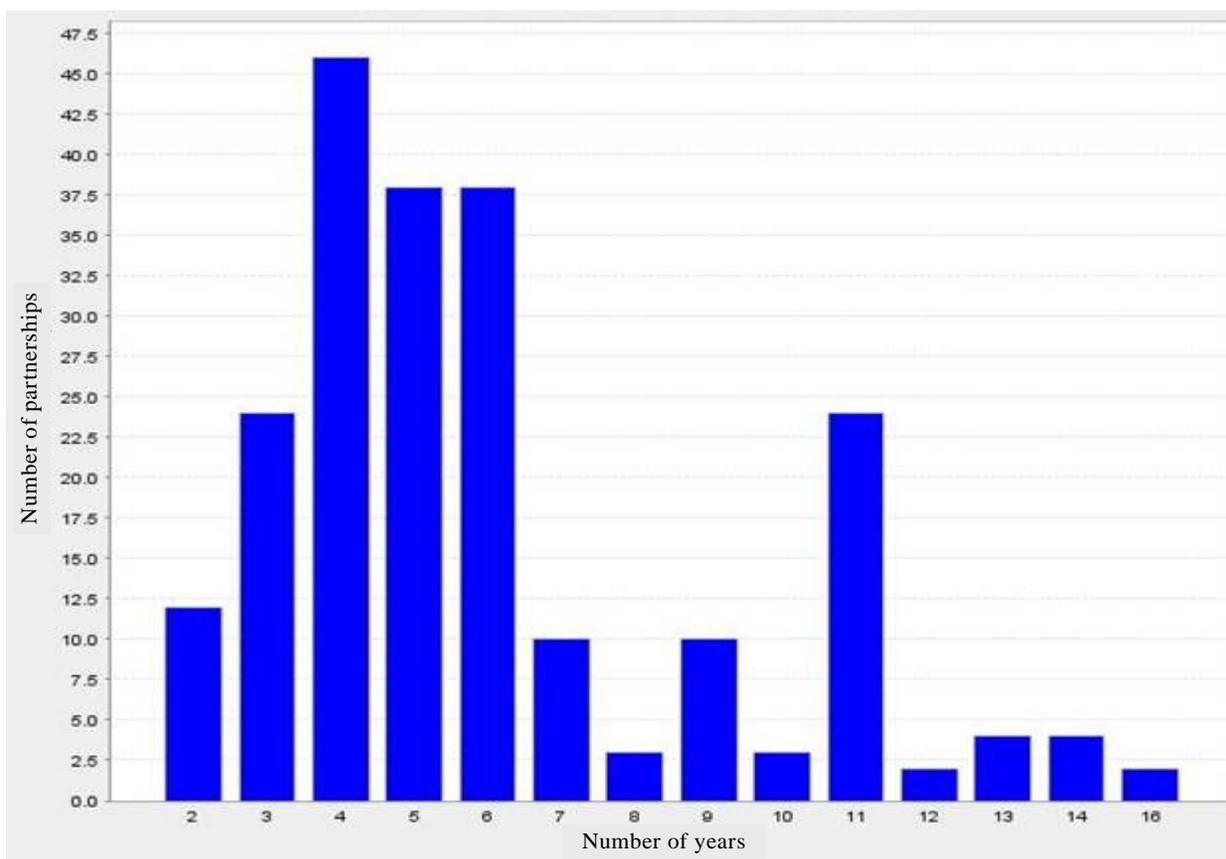
D. Time frame

16. More than half of the partnerships currently registered with the secretariat of the Commission were launched at or around the time of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The few registered partnerships in existence prior to 2002 had to demonstrate significant value added in the context of the World Summit in order to be recognized and registered by the secretariat. Such value added took the form of additional partners, the replication of an initiative, the initiation of new phases of work, expansion of geographical scope or an increase in financial resources.

17. Less than one third of the existing partnerships registered their activities in 2003 and, since 2004, the volume of newly registered partnerships has been consistently low, with an average of about 10 new partnerships registered each year between 2005 and 2008. Only four new partnerships were registered in 2009.

18. Depending on the nature of their goals, objectives and targets, the duration of partnerships can vary widely, ranging from two years to an undefined period (open-ended). Currently, 218 of the 348 registered partnerships list a specific time frame for completion of their work (63 per cent), while the remaining 130 (37 per cent) are open-ended and ongoing. In figure V, which shows the duration of partnerships that have indicated a specific time frame, more than half (56 per cent) have limited their work to a period of four to six years.

Figure V
Duration of partnerships



E. Partners involved

19. By definition, registered partnerships are voluntary multi-stakeholder initiatives undertaken by any combination of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups⁵ and other organizations. Government (83 per cent) and major groups (83 per cent) are involved in a significant majority of registered partnerships, while the United Nations system (62 per cent) and other intergovernmental organizations (61 per cent) account for nearly two thirds of such partnerships. In addition, 44 per cent of partnerships have other organizational partners, including academia and the media.

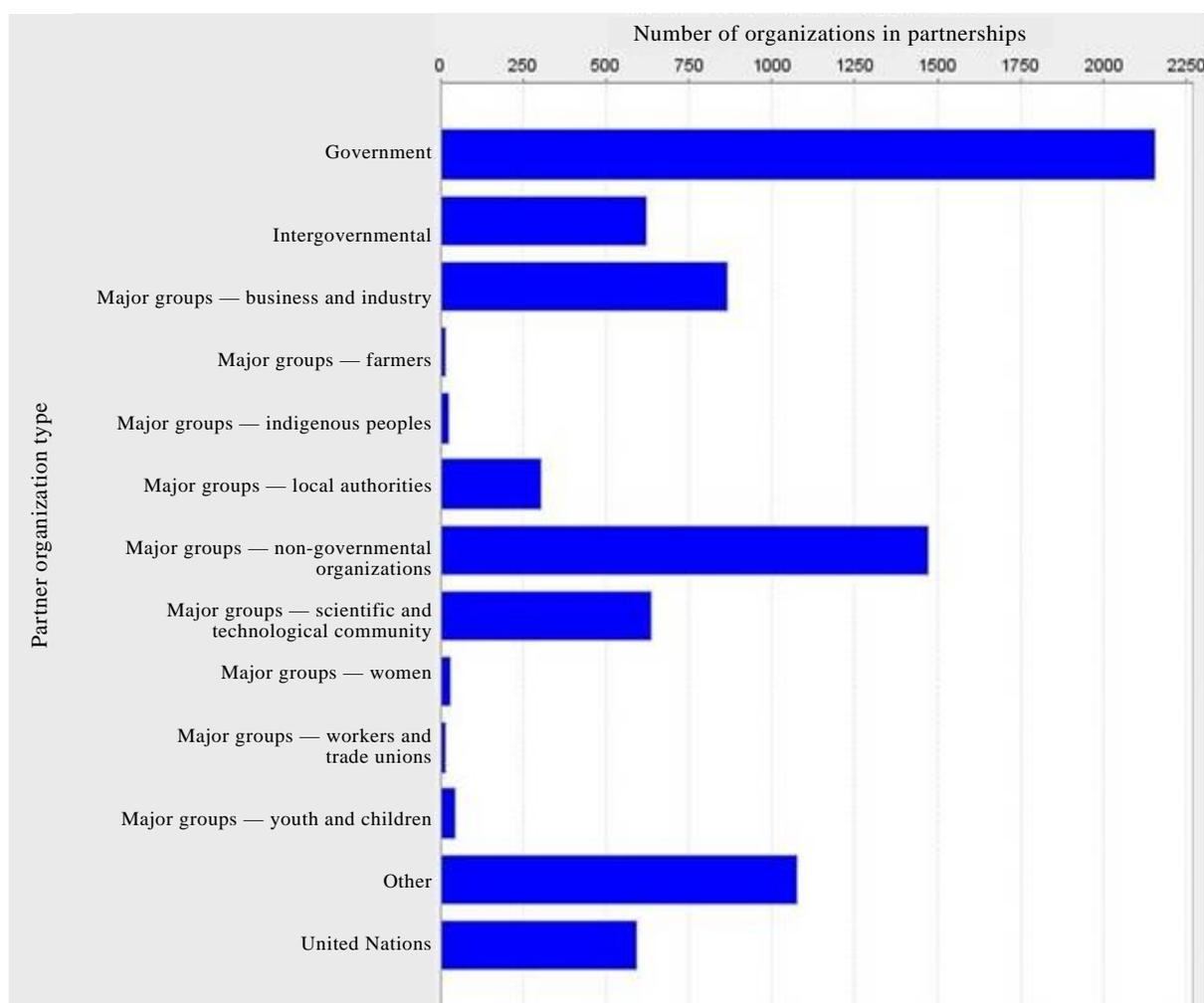
20. Data relating to the involvement of major groups in partnerships, when disaggregated by individual major group, show that 30 per cent of partnerships have non-governmental organization partners, 38 per cent have business and industry partners, 18 per cent have partners from the scientific and technological community

⁵ The nine major groups of civil society identified in Agenda 21 are: women, youth and children, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community and farmers.

and 9 per cent have partners from local authorities. A much smaller percentage of registered partnerships have partners from women's groups (1 per cent), youth groups (1 per cent), workers' and trade union groups (1 per cent), indigenous people's organizations (1 per cent) and farmers' groups (1 per cent).

21. There are 506 lead partner organizations listed for the 348 registered partnerships. Clearly, some partnerships have more than one lead partner organization. Of the lead partners, the majority (35 per cent) are major group organizations. Another 24 per cent of lead partners are Government partners, 20 per cent are United Nations system organizations and 14 per cent are other intergovernmental organizations. Academic institutions and foundations, as well as the media, account for 8 per cent of all lead partners.

Figure VI
Partners (organization type)



22. Within the 348 registered partnerships, there are a total of 7,877 individual listings of various types of partner organizations. Figure VI illustrates the breakdown of each organization type by sector and disaggregates the major groups into nine sectors. Of course, this statistic includes duplications for any entity that is involved in more than one partnership (for example, the Government of Canada is involved in 42 different partnerships and is therefore counted 42 times), but it provides perspective on the types of organizations that are active in partnerships. Major group organizations, with a total of 3,427 (44 per cent) listed, are more frequently registered in partnerships than Governments, which are listed a total of 2,158 times (27 per cent).

F. Resources

23. The resource base of a partnership, whether supported by financial resources or non-financial contributions, is one of the key determinants affecting its ability to carry out activities. A significant number of registered partnerships (87 per cent) have provided information on resources available to them. Based on the information reported, 46 per cent of registered partnerships (159) have secured financial resources, while 38 per cent (131) are supported by non-financial (in kind) contributions, mainly in the form of office space, staff and computers. A total of 305 (88 per cent) have provided information on their source of funding. Many partnerships with secured funding have multiple donors.

24. Nearly half of all registered partnerships (49 per cent) are currently seeking additional funding for their initiatives. Of these, 32 per cent have provided specific figures for the funding that they are currently seeking.

III. Partnership implementation

A. Implementation mechanisms

25. Partnerships for sustainable development address global economic, social and environmental challenges by strengthening cooperation in areas of institutional and human capacity-building, research, information-sharing and technology transfer.

26. Partnerships work to foster capacity at all levels: 80 per cent of registered partnerships are working on educational and awareness-raising initiatives related to sustainable development issues; 69 per cent are engaged in activities related to building human resource capacity by providing training; 49 per cent are engaged in some form of direct technology transfer; and 47 per cent carry out activities that focus on building and strengthening institutional capacity.

27. Partnerships actively engaging in advocacy, education and awareness-raising are committed to improving communication and knowledge exchange among their partners and stakeholders. These initiatives are utilizing web-based communication and information dissemination platforms to collaborate on data collection, select indicator methodologies, report on best practices and propose models and tools for managing technologies and natural resources. The use of online tools enables communities around the world to collaborate and maintain information on common

web spaces, take advantage of collective global expertise, identify cooperative research agendas and apply the relevant information to their local needs.

28. Most partnerships conduct national-level workshops and training sessions, which facilitate country-specific needs assessments. Based on those assessments, partners are able to identify the political, technical, structural, regulatory and financing barriers that need to be overcome in order to address specific sustainable development issues.

29. Technology transfer by registered partnerships mostly takes the form of targeted technical assistance; helping developing country partners procure technology; and facilitating transfer of technology and know-how from private-sector partners in developed countries to their counterparts in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

30. Many partnerships play a convening and facilitating role by bringing together and engaging key leaders and stakeholders in national legislation and international processes. Some partnerships are building institutional capacity by helping to foster new partnerships and providing information on project and funding opportunities to their partners.

B. Progress since initiation

31. In general, progress reported remains within the broad categories of partnership-building, capacity-building, information-sharing, publications and technical cooperation projects implementing partnership activities at the local level.

32. Reports on partnership progress included successful fund-raising; confirmation of additional partners; the development of organizational principles to define the terms of collaboration and cooperation among partners (including memorandums of understanding); and the development of an internal governance and coordination mechanism through the formation of steering committees and partnership secretariats. The identification of regional and national focal points as part of a partnership's coordination structure was also reported. In addition to coordination activities within partnerships, many partnerships have continued to develop formal collaborative arrangements with other partnerships active in similar complementary focal areas.

33. Capacity-building activities reported included the organization of conferences, workshops, symposiums and training sessions and the formation of expert networks.

34. The information-sharing activities most frequently mentioned included the establishment of partnership websites and newsletters, the publication of case studies, directories, educational and training materials and policy papers and the creation of toolkits. The creation of web portals and clearing-house mechanisms providing access to online tools, databases and software is another trend in partnership information-dissemination activities.

35. While most partnerships continue to work to create and maintain an effective organizational structure and focus on partnership and stakeholder relationship-building, these efforts appear to be taking place in parallel to on-the-ground implementation activities, pilot projects and research studies at the regional and country levels.

IV. Partnerships in the thematic cluster for the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development: transport, chemicals, mining, waste management and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns

36. In keeping with the focus of the current review session of the Commission on the thematic cluster of transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, the present section examines in greater detail those partnerships whose primary focus is this thematic cluster and features brief summaries of the most relevant partnership initiatives (see boxes 1 through 12).⁶

37. Of the 348 registered partnerships, 74 have a primary focus on one or more of the issues in the thematic cluster, with some listing more than one primary area. A total of 13 partnerships list transport as their primary focus, while 5 are focused mainly on chemicals, 19 on waste management, 6 on mining and 45 on changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

38. With regard to the sectoral coverage totals (both primary and secondary focus) for the partnerships in this thematic cluster, 170 partnership initiatives list either a primary or secondary focus in one or more of the thematic issue areas. Within this subset, 71 per cent (120) have a primary or secondary focus on changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, 42 per cent (71) on waste management, 23 per cent (39) on transport, 15 per cent (25) on chemicals and 11 per cent (18) on mining.

Box 1

Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development

The objective of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development is to enhance and promote the contribution of the mining, minerals and metals sector to sustainable development. The Forum plays a consultative and advisory role, based on the principles of voluntary partnership. The Forum provides Governments with a framework in which to discuss the opportunities in the mining, minerals and metals sectors and to respond to the challenges they pose. In preparation for the fourth implementation cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which begins in 2010, the Forum established a committee that has developed a strategy with the following objectives:

- (a) To articulate how mining investments can contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries;
- (b) To raise awareness of the challenges that developing countries face in exercising good governance in the management of their mineral resources;

⁶ Detailed information on the partnerships featured in the boxes can be accessed through the partnerships database at: <http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/partnerships/public/welcome.do>.

(c) To raise awareness of the need for greater capacity-building efforts by development agencies to optimize the ability of the mining sector to contribute to sustainable development in developing countries;

(d) To enhance the participation, credibility and influence of national ministries of mines in global policy development and debates with respect to the mining and metals sector;

(e) To have national ministries of mines inform the multilateral community and the world at large on the latest developments in best practices in addressing the full range of issues and challenges in the sector.

A. Trends

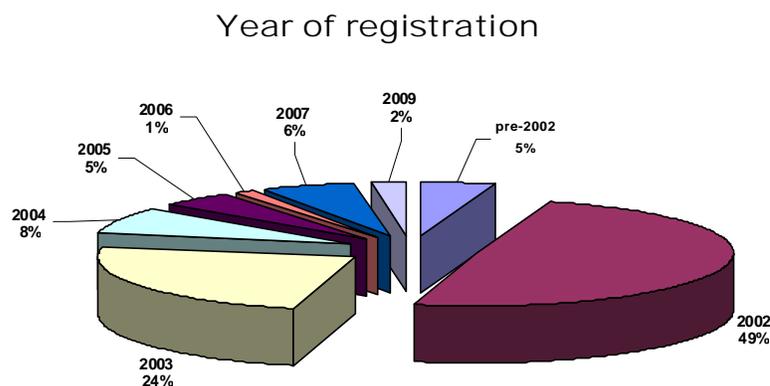
39. Given the degree of overlap among partnerships within this subset, the following general statistics are presented on an aggregated basis for the 74 registered partnerships that identify a primary focus on one or more of the issues within the thematic cluster.

40. In terms of geographical coverage, 41 partnerships of the 74 within the thematic cluster are global in scope, while 14 are regional, 14 are subregional, 3 are national, and 2 are subnational or local.

41. In terms of time frame, figure VII shows that 5 per cent of the partnerships within the thematic cluster were initiated prior to 2002, while 49 per cent were initiated in 2002, 24 per cent in 2003, 8 per cent in 2004, 5 per cent in 2005, 1 per cent in 2006, 6 per cent in 2007 and 2 per cent in 2009.

Figure VII

Time frame for partnerships within the thematic cluster



42. In terms of duration, 38 per cent of the partnerships are open-ended, while 31 per cent have a time frame of 1 to 5 years, 24 per cent have a time frame of 5 to 10 years, and 7 per cent have a time frame of between 10 and 16 years.

43. The number of partners per partnership within the thematic cluster ranges from 2 to 80, with the majority of partnerships (43 per cent) having no more than 10 partners, 24 per cent having between 11 and 20 partners, 17 per cent having between 21 and 30 partners and the remaining 16 per cent ranging from 31 to 80 partners.

Box 2

Global partnership for capacity-building to implement the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

The goal of the World Summit on Sustainable Development global partnership is to mobilize support and catalyse partnerships for coordinated activities at the global, regional and national levels to strengthen capacities in developing countries and countries in transition towards effective implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. In the medium and long-term, work under the partnership is expected to lead to a decrease in the effects of hazardous chemical use on the environment and human health. Thus, the partnership contributes directly to the achievement of important sustainable development objectives, including protection of marginalized groups, water supplies and drinking water, and poverty eradication. Specific objectives of the partnership include mobilization of resources for awareness-raising, capacity assessment and implementation of the Globally Harmonized System at the regional and national levels, and development of related guidance, training and resource materials.

Box 3

Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals

Although the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals has not been registered with the Commission on Sustainable Development, six (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) of its seven participating organizations, which are involved in activities related to chemical safety, are also active in the broader Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals partnership highlighted in box 2 above and have supported its implementation. The objective of the Inter-Organization Programme is to strengthen international cooperation in the field of chemicals and to increase the effectiveness of the international chemicals programmes of its

participating organizations. It promotes coordination of policies and activities, pursued jointly or separately, to ensure the sound management of chemicals in relation to human health and the environment.

44. In terms of resources, 66 per cent of partnerships within the thematic cluster have already secured funding, while 25 per cent report no current funding support and 9 per cent do not provide any information on current funding. The breakdown of reported funding sources is as follows: 31 per cent of partnerships report receiving funding from Governments, 19 per cent from intergovernmental organizations, 18 per cent from private sector sources, 10 per cent from foundations or charities, 16 per cent from non-governmental organizations and 7 per cent from other sources.

45. Non-financial resources also provide many of these partnerships with necessary support. Among the 74 partnerships active in the thematic cluster, 62 per cent report having some type of non-financial resources, with a fairly even distribution among staff (37 per cent), computers (30 per cent), and office space (29 per cent), and a small number (3 per cent) reporting other types of non-financial resources.

Box 4

Marrakech Process Task Force on Cooperation with Africa

The goals and objectives of this partnership include: strengthening existing organizational structures and establishing new ones when necessary to promote sustainable consumption and production in all African countries (for example, supporting the development of national action plans on sustainable consumption and production); developing and supporting projects for implementing sustainable consumption and production methods, including initiating the development of an eco-labelling mechanism for African products; supporting the development of networks and knowledge-based information tools in selected fields of action, such as waste management and recycling, biofuels and drinking water; supporting the integration and mainstreaming of environmental education in African schools and universities; and promoting sustainable procurement by governmental organizations through training courses and awareness-raising in cooperation with the Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement.

Box 5

Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme

The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme is a partnership aiming to make progress towards the establishment of transport patterns that are sustainable for health and the environment by focusing work at the pan-European level on those priorities where further work of the international community is most needed and could make the

biggest impact: integration of environmental and health aspects into transport policies and decisions; shift of the demand for transport towards more sustainable mobility; and urban transport issues. In addition, special attention will be given to the needs of the newly independent States and the countries of South-Eastern Europe and to environmentally sensitive areas. The Pan-European Programme streamlines and consolidates the activities of WHO and the Economic Commission for Europe in the areas of transport, environment and health as part of efforts to use resources more effectively and better coordinate at the international and national levels.

Box 6

Pacific Islands Waste Management Initiative

The overall goal of the Pacific Islands Waste Management Initiative is to minimize environmental and health impacts from solid and hazardous waste generation and disposal in the Pacific region. This will be addressed through the following objectives:

(a) To raise awareness in Pacific island countries about the need for positive actions in solid and hazardous waste management;

(b) To achieve significant reductions in the quantities of wastes currently sent to landfills through effective waste minimization programmes, including elimination of wastes at source, enhancement of current recycling activities and the development of recycling/disposal options for other wastes;

(c) To upgrade current waste collection and disposal systems through incremental improvements to existing systems and adoption of best regional practices in all new disposal operations;

(d) To implement regional clean-up and disposal programmes for wastes that cannot be dealt with effectively at the national level;

(e) To assess current financial, regulatory, institutional and social barriers to effective waste management in Pacific island countries and assist Governments in developing strategies and systems for overcoming these barriers;

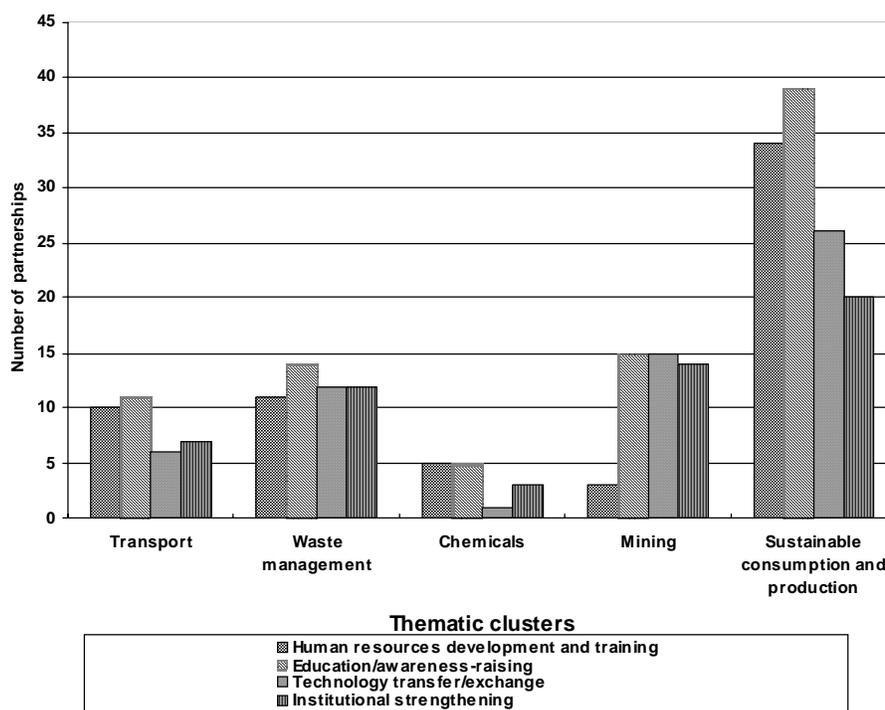
(f) To develop and improve current institutional capacities for effective waste management in Pacific island countries through targeted national and regional training programmes, the development of ongoing programmes within the relevant tertiary institutions and the development and maintenance of appropriate information networks.

B. Implementation focus and mechanisms

46. The partnerships working in the areas of transport, chemicals, waste management, mining or making efforts to change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are similar to the larger group of registered partnerships in that almost all of them include capacity-building activities in their implementation mechanisms. Of the 74 partnerships identified as having a primary focus within the thematic cluster, 87 per cent include in their workplans an educational component aimed at raising awareness, 74 per cent provide training services for human resources capacity-building, 57 per cent are engaged in some form of technology transfer and 53 per cent are working to strengthen institutional capacity. Figure VIII shows the breakdown of such capacity-building activities among the partnerships within the five thematic areas.

Figure VIII

Implementation mechanisms of partnerships: thematic cluster focus



47. Partnerships active in the thematic cluster are also working to create global policy networks that promote dialogue and knowledge-sharing through the establishment of collaborative activities with organizations at the local, national, regional and global levels. Through these initiatives, efforts are being made to build capacity and share information on a diverse array of sustainable development topics, from coral reef conservation to sustainable cement production.

Box 7

Partnership for the launching of the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council

Sustainable tourism protects the environment and the rights and livelihoods of local communities. Tourism businesses, including hotels, lodges and tour operators, can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by meeting the standards for social and environmental practices established under leading national and international certification programmes. A coalition of tourism industry associations, non-profit civil society organizations, private foundations and United Nations and Government agencies has been working to create a global Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council, conceived as an umbrella organization that would set universal minimum standards for certification programmes and accredit those businesses that meet them. This effort is currently being led by a board of directors, comprising representatives of 17 organizations, including international non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and a technical and scientific council that includes the participation of UNEP, the World Tourism Organization and the Rainforest Alliance, the international conservation organization that has provided technical and administrative leadership for the effort since 2001. In September 2009, the Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council announced they would merge to form the Tourism Sustainability Council.

Box 8

Methane to Markets Partnership

The Methane to Markets Partnership is an international initiative that advances cost-effective, near-term methane recovery and use as a clean energy source. The goal of the Partnership is to reduce global methane emissions in order to enhance economic growth, strengthen energy security, improve air quality, improve industrial safety and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The Partnership currently focuses on four sources of methane emissions: agriculture (animal waste management), coal mines, landfills and oil and gas systems.

C. Progress since initiation

48. The progress reported in partnerships within the thematic cluster follows a similar pattern to that seen in registered partnerships as a whole. Activities reported consist largely of partnership coordination, capacity-building activities and information-sharing.

49. In recent years, some partnerships in the thematic cluster have focused on implementing various partnership coordination activities, including the development

of indicators to monitor work in progress and operational forecasting systems. In addition, new partner organizations have joined partnerships and some partnerships have benefited from new sources of funding from both public and private sources.

Box 9

Children's environmental health indicators

The goal of this multi-year initiative is to develop and use children's environmental health indicators to improve children's environmental health at global, regional, national and local levels. These indicators are similar to economic indicators and their development and reporting will help to fill gaps between information on the environment and on health and bring into focus the special vulnerabilities of children. Ultimately, these indicators will help to guide environment, health and development policies. Global children's environmental health indicators are effective tools to: (a) improve the quality of information available in order to facilitate the ability of policymakers to improve environmental conditions for all children; (b) assess children's environmental health and monitor the success or failure of interventions to address children's environmental health problems; and (c) measure progress and contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Box 10

Awareness-raising and training on sustainable consumption and production

This initiative seeks to improve the skills of decision makers to implement sustainable consumption and production policies by creating practical training materials, organizing regional and national training courses, monitoring results and providing individual advice to participants. The training is directed at decision makers in Governments (particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition) and civil society. It builds upon the results of ongoing programmes of UNEP and Consumers International in the area of sustainable consumption and production. It also builds upon the regional networks set up by both organizations to implement national and regional training programmes in capacity-building for sustainable consumption and production.

50. Many partnerships have pursued capacity-building through the organization of events such as workshops, meetings and conferences, which have generated debate and discussion on topical sustainable development issues and provided a forum for the demonstration of new technologies. Training courses on selected sustainable development issues have also been developed.

51. Partnerships in the thematic cluster have increasingly sought to share information by various methods, including website development, case studies and newsletters. Surveys have been compiled as an evaluation and information tool and the resulting feedback has been published in periodic reports.

Box 11

Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport

The overarching goal of the Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport, a new partnership launched in 2009, is to mobilize global support to reduce the growth of greenhouse gas emissions generated by land transport in developing countries by promoting more sustainable, low-carbon transport. It focuses on land transport in developing countries within Africa, Asia and Latin America and includes freight and passenger transport, both motorized and non-motorized. The partnership builds upon previous work on sustainable transport by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs within its mandate as defined in Agenda 21 and by the Commission on Sustainable Development, and upon a comprehensive series of events on sustainable transport and climate change by the members of this partnership in both Asia and Latin America. Specific objectives include: integrating sustainable, low-carbon transport into climate negotiations, as well as national and local climate policies and programmes; integrating climate considerations into regional, national and local transport policies; bringing sustainable, low-carbon transport into the mainstream of strategies and operations of international development organizations; and contributing to sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially by providing access to goods and services for and by lower income groups.

Box 12

Sustainable Development Knowledge Partnership

The mission of this new initiative, launched in 2009, is to organize knowledge on sustainable development in order to make it more useful for practitioners and policymakers. To that end, the goal of the Sustainable Development Knowledge Partnership is to establish a broad-based partnership that will bring together individuals, institutions and networks engaged in the production and dissemination of knowledge on sustainable development, with the following objectives:

- (a) To organize the web-based information on sustainable development and make it available to the policymaking and other communities in a coherent and user-friendly format;
- (b) To build relations with existing networks working on sustainable development issues and make their activities more visible to policymakers;

(c) To document success stories, best practices and evaluations of policies and programmes in sustainable development and make them available in a web-based, user-friendly format;

(d) To organize a stocktaking of sustainable development over the past two decades;

(e) To publish and disseminate its research using a variety of media, possibly including a sustainable development book series;

(f) To build capacity by training policymakers and their advisers and for Government representatives working on sustainable development issues.

V. Support for partnership activities by the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development

52. The Commission secretariat gathers, promotes and disseminates information on registered partnerships that are implementing sustainable development around the world, facilitates discussions and offers opportunities for contributions to be showcased at the regular sessions of the Commission. It bases its activities on the mandate of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the decision on partnerships taken at the eleventh session of the Commission, as well as on further guidance from the Commission.

53. The secretariat has been requested to make partnerships information, including voluntary reports, available to the widest audience possible through electronic and print media and activities such as the Commission's partnership fairs. The secretariat is also expected to produce summary reports based on partnership submissions for consideration by the Commission, in accordance with its programme and organization of work.

54. Partnerships are encouraged, under the criteria and guidelines established by the Commission at its eleventh session, to exchange information with Governments and other stakeholders. As the guidelines promote transparency and accountability, each registered partnership is encouraged to report biennially on its progress and activities, and this information should be publicly announced. Reporting should be comprehensive, provide new information on all aspects of the partnership and focus on how partnerships have contributed to the implementation of the internationally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments.

A. Online resources: partnerships website and database

55. The Commission's Partnerships for Sustainable Development website and database remain valuable resources for sharing and gathering information on partnership-related activities, and continue to provide access to an array of tools and applications designed to promote knowledge-sharing and networking.

56. Since its creation, the partnerships website has been further enhanced and redesigned to add more relevant content, increase user-friendliness, improve

navigation and enable easier access to partnership-related information resources. This online resource is aimed at assisting and facilitating the identification of partnership activities and contributions to implementation by making available a wide selection of practical information, including details on how to register new partnerships with the secretariat, information on forthcoming partnership-related meetings and recent publications on registered partnerships and detailed guidelines and the programme of activities of Commission partnership fairs.⁷ An online discussion forum has been created where members of registered partnerships can exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices. All publications on registered partnerships produced by the secretariat are freely available to download at the partnerships website.

57. Information in the partnerships database is based solely on the voluntary self-reports submitted by the designated focal points of registered partnerships. Requests for updates are sent out annually; however, obtaining current information remains a challenge. Lead partners are urged to keep their information up to date in order for the database to remain relevant.

B. Networking opportunities: partnership fairs

58. In addition to using online resources, registered partnerships can present information on their activities at the annual partnership fairs and other partnership-related events organized by the Commission secretariat. These information-sharing activities help to raise awareness and could lead to expansion in the form of new partners or the replication of successful initiatives.

59. The partnership fairs provide an opportunity for registered partnerships to showcase progress, network with existing and potential partners, create synergies between partnerships, share lessons learned and best practices and exchange experiences with a view to finding solutions to challenges such as mobilizing resources or partner retention. They provide a unique opportunity for partnerships to advertise and promote their efforts and activities to an intergovernmental forum.

60. Partnership fairs also provide Commission participants an opportunity to gather information and discuss directly with partnership practitioners the important contribution of the initiatives in providing support for the implementation of sustainable development. These sessions have greatly benefited from the participation of different stakeholders, including representatives from Governments, major group organizations and financial institutions.

61. The partnerships fair at the eighteenth session of the Commission will feature working sessions to foster candid and dynamic dialogue and exchanges of views among practitioners and experts on issues related to partnerships; and interactive training sessions that will provide valuable tools, resources and knowledge that can be used to establish, develop and maintain effective partnerships.

⁷ These documents and several other online summary publications are available from the partnerships website at <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships/partnerships.htm>.

C. Other activities

62. Much more attention will be given to the publication of reports providing comprehensive and current information on trends in implementing sustainable development through partnerships. The secretariat partnership team will also continue to issue *Partnerships Wire*, a newsletter highlighting discussions during the partnership fair sessions, and background papers on partnerships, which are distributed freely through the partnerships website.

63. Additional activities, such as workshops, seminars, expert group meetings and brokering initiatives, are being considered to offer further avenues for networking and enhanced stakeholder participation and to further promote the use of the partnership model.

64. The dissemination and sharing of information on lessons learned, best practices and new ideas presents a unique opportunity for the Commission, partnerships and partnership practitioners to identify and address problems, gaps and constraints related to the implementation of sustainable development. This process also supports efforts to take stock and track the progress of ongoing partnerships, which is a key step in demonstrating the value and viability of the partnership model of implementation.

65. The Commission secretariat will continue to promote the valuable lessons learned from advancing sustainable development through partnerships. The sharing and dissemination of information on partnerships enables the Commission and the various stakeholders to ascertain what works and what does not; identify gaps, underserved areas and niches; and determine how to increase collaboration and where new initiatives are needed. It will also continue to promote a greater understanding of the value of partnerships as an implementation tool towards realizing internationally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments, as well as encouraging opportunities for scaling up and replicability.

VI. The way forward

66. The use of partnerships as an instrument for development cooperation in support of sustainable development has gained significant traction since it was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Nearly eight years after the fact, partnerships remain an indelible part of the landscape of development in action, and the most popular medium for increasing the involvement of non-traditional actors in the range of development initiatives supported by the United Nations system. By collaborating across all levels, pooling skills and resources, developing innovative policies and forging new technical and financing solutions to overcome barriers to sustainable development, Commission partnerships continue to have an impact on, and make concrete contributions to, the implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments.

67. Partnerships for sustainable development have given impetus to Government partners to create innovative approaches to increasing effectiveness in development cooperation frameworks, enhancing national sustainable development strategies and policies, and harnessing relevant resources for implementation. Governments have also been encouraged to continue playing a lead role in supporting the progress of

these partnerships, while allowing major groups, intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders to offer their expertise and contribute to delivering more effective development solutions.

68. Partnerships for sustainable development have also served as a useful tool for the promotion and facilitation of corporate social responsibility efforts by business and industry partners. Increased visibility and credibility, knowledge exchange, environmental responsibility and further global impact have all been identified as positive incentives of partnerships with significant private sector involvement.

69. The Commission has undoubtedly been a pioneer in the promotion of the multi-stakeholder partnership on the scale it exists today, using its well-established institutional framework of major groups to generate unprecedented interest in moving multi-stakeholder engagement in policy dialogue towards more active and meaningful participation in the development agenda, thereby enriching the work of the Commission while improving the quality of implementation. The time has now come to take stock; and assess the effectiveness of partnerships in promoting a more participatory approach to sustainable development; facilitating increased ownership among stakeholders, particularly the beneficiary partners; promoting and supporting greater local participation; and ensuring greater solidarity and accountability in the design, implementation and evaluation of development initiatives pursued through sustainable development partnerships.

70. Within the framework of the initial preparations for the 20-year review of Agenda 21 in 2012, such an assessment would be most appropriate, considering that partnerships have become integral to the work of the international community as a mechanism for advancing dialogue on sustainable development. The partnerships framework promoted by the Commission should be examined in greater detail; as should the frameworks for evaluating the merit of bringing partnerships into the mainstream as an acknowledged and accepted development mechanism; for assessing the advantages and continuing challenges of partnerships; and for considering ways to strengthen and enhance the Commission's partnership programme.
