

General information about the peer review of the Dutch NSDS

During the Fall 2006, The Netherlands started preparations for a peer review of the Sustainable Development Strategy. A peer review process can be described as the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a State by other States, with the ultimate goal of enabling the reviewed State to improve its policy making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles. This review is expected to provide recommendations to the government and other stakeholders with regard to the Dutch strategy for sustainable development. With a new European strategy for sustainable development in place, it will also serve as a means to reflect on the implications for the Dutch strategy.

The project was initiated by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is (partially) financed by the European Commission. The Ministries asked the RMNO, the Dutch advisory council for research on spatial planning, nature and the environment, to manage this process. The project and its proceedings are discussed on a regular basis with representatives of the Dutch Ministries, chaired by the Ambassador for Sustainable Development, Ton Boon von Ochsee. RMNO-bureau has appointed the following project management team: Louis Meuleman (secretary-general RMNO), Jelle Blaauwbroek (supervisor of the review project) and Fieke Krikhaar (project manager of the review). The project plan is available for those interested.

* **Steering committee:** The committee is chaired by RMNO chair In 't Veld and consists of experts from the RMNO and other participating councils (AER, VROM-raad, RLG, RAWOO, SER) as well as experts from MNP, EC, OECD and UN. One representative of the Ministry of Environment is also member of the Steering committee. The committee provides for external support, quality checks, suggestions for the plan of implementation and the methodology of the learning process.

* **Background document:** A background document has been prepared which serves as the main source of information for the peers as they start the process of review. The report describes the coming about and content of the current strategy, what has happened since the introduction, which parties have been involved and how and which issues are or have been under discussion. The report is available for those interested.

* **Peer reviewers:** The Peer review will be conducted by sustainable development (strategy) experts from three countries. Germany, Finland and South Africa have been selected. From each country four experts were invited, representing government, NGO's, business and science.

* **Scoping meeting:** During the scoping meeting on 1-2 February 2007, reviewers met for the first time. They also met with Dutch experts and the consultant, Barry Dalal-Clayton. They shared expectations, discussed the background report, set the agenda for the review and assigned tasks among themselves. Pancho Ndebele, one of the reviewers from South Africa was nominated to become the chair of the review team.

* **Interviews:** The chair of the peer review team and the consultant conducted several interviews with Dutch stakeholders on 19-20 February 2007. Reason for the interviews was to get a better grip on the Dutch sustainable development.

* Teleconferences: On 13-15 February 2007 five telephone conferences were organized about process, water, energy, rural area's and agriculture to give more insight in those themes.

* Literature: The RMNO disseminated various literature among the reviewers, by creating a digital library on the website.

* Review: The review has taken place from 1 to 5 April 2007. The peers discussed in different sessions with more than 80 experts from various fields. On the last day the peers have presented their recommendations.

*Executive Summary: An Executive Summary is written based on the recommendations of the peers. Pancho Ndebele, chair of the peers, has presented this Executive Summary to prime minister Balkenende and to minister Cramer (environment) and Koenders (foreign affairs) by a personal letter. The Executive Summary can be downloaded on:

[http://www.rmno.nl/files_content/exec%20summary%20_def_%20_2_%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.rmno.nl/files_content/exec%20summary%20_def_%20_2_%20(2).pdf)

* Final Report: The report of the peers, including 46 recommendations is presented on June 21. The report can be downloaded from:

http://www.rmno.nl/files_content/A%20New%20Sustainable%20Development%20Strategy%20An%20Opportunity%20Not%20To%20Be%20Missed.pdf