



Sustainable
Development Commission

**Strategic Assessment:
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Sustainable Development Strategy 2005**

October 2006

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Executive Summary

Background

- i) The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future* (March 2005) set out a commitment for all government departments and their executive agencies to prepare a Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP), focused on the Strategy by December 2005. It tasked the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), the UK independent sustainable development watchdog, with assisting departments in the preparation of these plans and assessing their quality.
- ii) The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) published its first sustainable development strategy in March 2005, *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy*. This included an action plan for 2005/06 set in the context of corporate objectives for 2005-08. The Strategy followed hot on the heels of the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (UK SDS) and sought to articulate how the FCO would contribute to the international priorities identified in the UK Strategy.
- iii) The FCO requested that its 2005/06 plan for its sustainable development strategy be regarded as its SDAP. However, the plan had not been prepared with the benefit of the guidance published by the SDC in August 2005 and could not be assessed on the same basis as other government plans this year. The SDC therefore agreed to FCO's request to carry out a strategic audit of its Strategy and Plan in order to inform the content and priorities of the department's future SDAPs.
- iv) This summary sets out the key findings of the SDC's strategic audit which are detailed in the accompanying report. The audit seeks to highlight strategic pointers in relation to the priorities and activities where FCO has chosen to focus its efforts. It was not sufficiently detailed to challenge the FCO's own review of its progress against its Strategy (as of March 2006). It should also be noted that the SDC does not have an international remit and has sought to add value from its sustainable development expertise.

Overall assessment

The FCO has set a good standard with its first sustainable development strategy and implementation plan and can point to a wealth of related activity in delivering its objectives this year. The Strategy is clear and comprehensive, links well to core business systems, complements the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, and is underpinned by strong accountability structures.

The department demonstrates a good understanding of the impact of a sustainable development approach on foreign policy whether in terms of the potential for resource mismanagement to lead to conflict or as a key tool of public diplomacy. The department also acknowledges the need to lead by example in its own operations around the world.

The SDC is keen to see the department maintain and build upon this excellent start. To do so, the FCO will need to ensure that it sets much stronger targets with clearly specified outcomes that are focused on areas where the FCO feels that its particular role adds value. To ensure that the Strategy continues to provide the strategic direction intended, it will be important that it is owned and supported across the department utilising the department's highly skilled teams and networks. To date, staff and stakeholders have largely been made aware of the Strategy as a new document; they now need to fully understand how they are supposed to act on it and should see it constantly reflected and incentivised by the department's policies and activities both at home and abroad.

Headline Conclusions and Recommendations

Getting the Basics Right

The FCO and sustainable development

1. **The FCO's Strategy sets out a clear rationale for the need for sustainable development to underpin foreign policy.** It makes strong links between global peace and stability and the elements that may threaten this if they lead to conflict – i.e. poverty, mismanagement of natural resources or social and environmental injustice. It also recognises the importance of good governance in supporting sustainable development.
2. **The SDC commends the FCO for ensuring that its Strategy clearly signals and explains the links between its core operating context and sustainable development and what these mean for the department in practice.** The Strategy's links with the UK international priorities, Public Service Agreements (PSAs), and other core strategies are clearly articulated.
3. **The positioning of the FCO's sustainable development team in a policy group along with global and economic issues sends the right signal that sustainable development is a core business issue for FCO. It will be important that the FCO's sustainable development outcomes reinforce this signal rather than undermining it.**
4. **The SDC recommends that future SDAPs clearly articulate the requirements of relevant PSAs and demonstrate how the plan's targets and objectives will contribute to these. The plan should also clearly state how monitoring of progress against the action plan will contribute to the monitoring against PSA targets, in particular the FCO's Objective VI which is specific to sustainable development. Progress reports will need to demonstrate how far achievement of the targets has contributed to relevant PSAs.**

FCO and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (UK SDS)

The Government expects the UK SDS to be the key point of reference for all departmental sustainable development strategies and action plans. The UK SDS sets out four priorities for immediate action and five guiding principles which are intended to underpin all government policy.

5. **The FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy demonstrates a good fit with the UK SDS priorities and commitments.** However, it gives little sense of where FCO feels it can or could be most effective in contributing to the aims of the UK SDS and does not *actively* point to the links with the UK SDS beyond the introductory generalities. In order to make more effective links to the UK SDS in future Strategies and SDAPs the SDC recommends that the FCO:
 - a) **sets out how its priority themes fit with the UK SDS shared priorities and whether the department is concentrating on a particular priority in a particular year or spreading activity equally across its chosen themes.**
 - b) **describes how the FCO is working with the five principles of the UK SDS and ensuring that they underpin policy decisions.**
 - c) **makes it clear where targets relate back to specific UK SDS commitments or explain why a new approach/direction has been taken. This will ensure a transparent audit trail.**
 - d) **clarifies whether Executive Agencies are covered or are preparing their own action plans**

Setting SMARTer targets

6. The FCO Strategy clearly identifies a set of near term targets by which the department can monitor its progress and for which it expects to be held accountable. These targets are set in the context of

corresponding longer-term objectives that helpfully signal the department's overall intended direction of travel. However, the 2005-06 targets set out in the Strategy are not sufficiently **SMART** to facilitate effective review of progress. **The FCO should ensure that future targets are clearly linked to priority themes, have associated milestones, allocated ownership and specify the intended outcomes.** The 2005 review of the FCO's Public Diplomacy Strategy by the Public Diplomacy Board highlighted similar issues that reinforce these pointers.¹

Key areas for FCO "added value"

7. The Strategy refers to a wide range of sustainable development issues - natural resource protection, climate change, sustainable tourism, trade and environmental governance. This reflects the FCO's broad reach across government policy as a result of its co-ordination, negotiating and UK promotion role. However, the Strategy does not clearly state which particular areas the FCO is focusing on in order to "add value" to the implementation of the UK SDS – the Strategy's stated aim.²
8. The Strategy has a clear focus on climate change which the department recognises will "increasingly be a barrier to development and a factor in instability."³ This is a key area that fits with FCO's core priorities and contributes to a UK SDS priority area for immediate action. The department has started to explore future priorities with its attaché network. These include:
 - Climate Security
 - Business and Sustainable Development – international priorities beyond traditional trade/investment promotion
 - Sustainable tourism
 - Sustainable Development as a public diplomacy and communications opportunity
 - Natural resource management and links to conflict.
9. **The SDC supports the FCO's focus on climate security. This encourages dialogue about the range of practical and political responses that are required to meet the global challenge of climate change. This approach also ensures that the climate change debate is rooted in the overarching context of sustainable development. i.e. if climate change is the problem then sustainable development is the solution. The SDC would expect future SDAPs to make this relationship clear and ensure that it is reinforced and reflected institutionally, particularly in the fit between Country Action Plans for sustainable development and those for climate change and energy.**
10. **The FCO now needs to build upon its sustainable tourism work in line with its Strategy objective to raise the profile and engagement of the UK Government in sustainable tourism. To this end it is important that it integrates sustainable tourism into its own business and ensures that this key area is consistently reflected across Country Action Plans. The SDC recognises that progress is dependent on a range of other government departments, in particular DfID and DTI, who are not currently**

¹ *Public Diplomacy Review*, Report by Lord Carter of Coles to the Foreign Secretary and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 13 December 2005

² *Securing the Future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy*, March 2005, Cm 6467. p.162

³ *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK's International Priorities*, March 2006, Cm6762, March 2006, p.15

participating in the cross-government sustainable tourism group. The SDC supports the department's efforts to highlight the opportunities of integrating sustainable tourism into their business in order to further their own departmental objectives.

11. **The SDC recommends that the FCO continues to explore the opportunities for joint working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to natural resource protection and conflict and reflects these in future SDAPs.**
12. **Sustainable development presents a good, strong value that is internationally recognised as a positive force. The SDC recommends that the FCO should actively promote UK support for sustainable development overseas as a UK value and ensure that it can be observed in action in British Embassies and High Commissions.**

Delivery through overseas posts

Both the UK SDS and the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy recognise the key role that the FCO can play in advancing the UK's sustainable development aims through its network of over 200 diplomatic posts overseas which promote and support UK interests.

Country Action Plans

13. **The SDC strongly supports the FCO requirement for priority countries to prepare country action plans (CAPs) for sustainable development. This is a key mechanism for ensuring that sustainable development is promoted consistently as a cross-cutting government policy both at home and abroad.**
14. **The SDC supports the current selection of priority countries for sustainable development. However, to ensure that the selection process is as transparent as possible the SDC recommends that:**

- **Future plans and related reports should make it clear why priority countries have been chosen and what is expected of them.**
- **As well as economic and environmental factors, future plans should make clear how far social factors have played a part in the selection, perhaps in relation to human rights and governance.**

15. The department currently allows posts the flexibility to manage their climate change and sustainable development plans as they see fit - some have combined plans and others do not. The SDC has not assessed any country climate change plans. However, there is clearly much potential for overlap with the sustainable development plans as well as conflict if they are not managed and revised within an effective, strategic framework. Ideally, the sustainable development plan would be the overarching plan within the boundaries of which the climate change plan was developed.

The SDC recommends that the FCO reviews the current effectiveness of separate Country Action Plans for climate change and sustainable development and considers whether it needs to enforce a more integrated approach in order to achieve the objectives of its Sustainable Development Strategy.

Quality of plans

16. The SDC has reviewed the country plans for Argentina, Brazil, Cameroon, India, Japan, Malaysia, Spain and UK Mission in Nairobi the selection of plans provided by the FCO. **Overall, the SDC found that the plans demonstrate a good understanding of sustainable development and the relevant links to post priorities, resources and risks. However, most do not make effective links back to the UK SDS or FCO sustainable development strategy or cross-reference to energy and climate change plans.**
17. **Now that the FCO and its posts have had some experience of preparing CAPs, it is**

important that the department ensures that it sets out some basic guidance for posts on its expectations with respect to the preparation, presentation and reporting of their action plans and how they should link with Climate Change and Energy plans.

18. **No plans are available on the relevant post website and neither are they referred to. The FCO should give a clear direction to posts as to the appropriate level of accessibility.** The FCO's own Sustainable Development Action Plan is required to be a public document and at the very least the post should be highlighting this and articulating its own role in contributing to the action plan.
19. **As part of its ongoing work on sustainable development communications, the SDC recommends that the FCO should review the sustainable development content of Internet sites across priority sustainable development posts and advise on key elements that should be present in order to support the department's sustainable development strategy.**

Sustainable Development Dialogues

20. The FCO's Strategy commits to establishing demand-led country specific dialogues, enabling the UK Government to work bilaterally with certain priority countries to promote sustainable development in a more structured and co-ordinated way.⁴ **The SDC welcomes the FCO's role in facilitating these important diplomatic opportunities to engage with these key nations. The FCO is now working to set out key deliverables to be achieved from such dialogues in order to derive the greatest benefits from these key exchanges. It is important that these deliverables are reflected in future SDAPs and Country Action Plans with associated resources.**

⁴ *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy, March 2006, p.10*

Global Opportunities Fund

21. Sustainable development is one of six programmes under the FCO's Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) which also include economic governance and climate change and energy. **The key themes and objectives that have been chosen for the GOF fit with the focus of the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy. However, it is important that that the GOF is more overtly linked to reinforcing the targets and objectives of the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy. E.g. through assessment criteria for bids.**
22. The Programme is a key means of demonstrating the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy objectives in action in a very practical way. It is vital that the achievements of these projects are monitored and the "stories" generated are used to inform FCO's ongoing approach to sustainable development

Leading by example

23. The UK SDS commits the government and the public sector to lead by example in sustainable development – both in terms of policy and operations. The Government has also committed to ensuring that staff have an understanding of how to apply sustainable development principles as a key part of policy skills for the future and that all policies are properly appraised against the new principles of sustainable development. The FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy supports both of these commitments.

Policy making and delivery

24. The FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy recognises the need to ensure that all FCO staff understand the importance of sustainable development and how it links to their wider work. Currently the FCO's capacity building work in this area seems to centre largely on sustainable development training (including induction) and raising awareness

through various magazines, events and Internet resources. It is evident that the FCO is working hard to make staff aware of its Strategy but it is not clear how far current training addresses its use and application in terms of adapting approaches to policy making. However, the FCO Sustainable Development Strategy does also include a welcome commitment to ensuring that priority posts include an objective on mainstreaming sustainable development into their corporate activities.

25. **The SDC would expect to see future sustainable development action plans including targets relating to policy making skills and sustainable development and some kind of measure of the FCO's "mainstreaming" success. The department should indicate how it is going about sustainable development "proofing" of its work. Much of the department's work centres around support, co-ordination and negotiation and staff need to be clear how sustainable development should influence their operating context in these roles.**

Operational Activity

26. Although the FCO is a relatively small department in terms of estate size in London, it owns or rents properties in over 150 countries. Most of these properties are Embassies or High Commissions and with their key role in promoting UK values overseas, it is important that they reflect the objectives of the FCO sustainable development strategy in both policy and operations.
27. The FCO Strategy particularly highlights purchasing, travel, building design, waste, water and energy management as areas where the department will integrate sustainable development into operational decisions. Although the Strategy does not indicate why these have been chosen, they correspond with the areas that the department has identified as having the most significant impact and correspond to identified weaknesses in performance to date against Government targets. The Strategy commits the department to including these targets in the internal audit questionnaire for overseas posts. This is an important commitment and will ensure that posts are working to common standards as far as possible.
28. **Overall, the SDC is impressed with the initiatives that FCO is undertaking in relation to developing a more systematic approach to environmental management across the FCO estate as well as incentivising, supporting and encouraging more sustainable practices. In developing future action plans it will be important to:**
- **set out the key operational priorities for sustainable development on the Government Estate and indicate how far these reflect the significant impacts.**
 - **Ensure that these priorities are aligned with specific initiatives and funding in particular in relation to:**
 - **adequate support and guidance for posts that are now working towards cross-government sustainable development targets in relation to their operations**
 - **the challenging requirements of the new, cross-cutting targets for sustainable development on the Government Estate. E.g. carbon neutrality by 2012 and the mandating of BREEAM excellent for all major new builds or refurbishment.**
 - **broaden the FCO's traditional environmental protection/financial savings approach to sustainable operations and consider how the department's operations policy might reinforce its foreign policy objectives. For example, by contributing to local economies and communities through its procurement and employment policies at overseas posts.**

29. **The SDC commends the FCO for displaying leadership in off-setting its carbon emissions from air travel, along with DfiD and Defra. It is a sensible strategy target to establish firm data for this scheme. The department can build effectively on this progress by:**
- **developing appropriate progress measures and milestones to report against and include in future action plans**
 - **ensuring that off-setting projects reinforce the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy objectives and communicating this effectively to staff and stakeholders**
 - **demonstrating how FCO is taking a strategic approach to travel and how far it is actively encouraging alternatives such as tele and video conferencing where appropriate.**

Ensuring it happens

Monitoring and reporting

30. **The FCO's Strategy sets out a comprehensive system for regular monitoring, review and reporting.**
31. **The SDC welcomes the FCO's six month reviews of its progress which have been published on the department's website.** This sends a positive signal to staff and stakeholders that the FCO's Strategy is a living and working document which is informing FCO work programmes. However the reports summarise key achievements and successes only and are not clearly linked back to the FCO Sustainable Development commitments. This makes it difficult to discern a clear audit trail and there is no indication as to whether the progress identified is satisfactory.
32. **The SDC welcomes the FCO's commitment to seeking an independent audit of progress against its strategy each year. However, this does not devolve the FCO's responsibility to**

continue to develop its own assessment of progress. The independent assessment will complement this and help to assure stakeholders that the FCO can provide reliable evidence on its progress to the satisfaction of an objective party. Having arranged for this external scrutiny and objective feedback, the FCO should make it clear how it is acting on this information, as well as its own assessments, in its SDAPs and related progress reports.

Engagement

Development of the Strategy

33. **It is apparent that the FCO took an inclusive approach to developing its Strategy and sought to involve key divisions, its overseas posts, other government departments and external stakeholders. The SDC commends this approach and urges the department to build upon it in line with its aims to mainstream sustainable development across the department.**

Developing clear and engaging messages

34. The current communications approach of the department in relation to sustainable development and mainstreaming is very much orientated around raising awareness of the Strategy and Plan as a document rather than in relation to its content and potential impact on the ground.
The FCO's future action plans will need to make it clear what kind of outcomes the department expects from the Communications activity outlined, and the kind of messages that the department is seeking to convey and to whom.
35. The FCO has already identified the need to ensure that staff and stakeholders understand the links between key areas of FCO activity and sustainable development and how a sustainable development approach impacts on this activity. It is

clear that the FCO is starting to develop strong messages in relation to:

- Climate change and energy (focus in induction and sustainable development training)
- sustainable development and conflict prevention/security (e.g. exhibition in February 2006)
- the work of posts - Country Action Plans and “greening” of embassies
- the Global Opportunities Fund (highlighted clearly on post websites)

36. The SDC would encourage the FCO to continue its efforts in these fertile areas. The Commission would also suggest that the department also looks to develop strong messages in the following areas:

- **links between carbon offsetting and the overseas projects it supports**
- **sustainable development as a key operating environment for business and trade**
- **sustainable development as a key UK value when showcasing the nation.**

Empowering existing networks

37. The SDC welcomes the department’s current initiatives to review how it is using and supporting its existing networks of stakeholders and staff to support the department’s sustainable development strategy.

38. The FCO has demonstrated that it is keen to build strong networks as a means of facilitating the exchange of information and expertise to support its sustainable development strategy. It is important that the role of these networks is fully reflected in the department’s sustainable development communications plan as key engagement mechanisms.

Introduction

1. The FCO published its first sustainable development strategy in March 2005, *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy*. This included an action plan for 2005/06 set in the context of corporate objectives for 2005-08. The Strategy followed hot on the heels of the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (UK SDS), *Securing the Future*, and sought to articulate how the FCO would contribute to the international priorities identified in the UK Government Strategy.
2. The UK SDS set out a commitment for all government departments and their Executive Agencies to prepare a Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP), focused on the Strategy, by December 2005. It tasked the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), the UK independent sustainable development watchdog, with assisting departments in the preparation of these plans and assessing their quality.
3. The FCO requested that its 2005/06 plan for its sustainable development strategy be regarded as its SDAP. However, the plan had not been prepared with the benefit of the guidance published by the SDC in August 2005 and could not be assessed on the same basis as other government plans this year. The SDC therefore agreed to FCO's request to carry out a strategic 'audit' of its Strategy and Plan in order to inform the content and priorities of the department's 2006 SDAP. This plan will be in line with SDC's guidance and the UK SDS commitment.
4. The findings of the SDC's strategic 'audit' are set out in this report. The Commission has identified a number of key areas of strength which it would like to see the FCO build upon in future plans and strategies as well as a number of learning points which the department should seek to address in its future SDAPs and future reviews of its

Strategy. The FCO provided the SDC with its own assessment of its progress (as of March 2006) against its Strategy, which the SDC has drawn upon. However, this audit is not sufficiently detailed to challenge this assessment and seeks only to highlight strategic pointers in relation to the priorities and activities where FCO has chosen to focus its efforts. It should be noted that the SDC does not have an international remit itself and has sought to add value from its sustainable development expertise.

The SDC's approach

5. The SDC conducted a desk-based audit, which was supported by additional documentation and information drawn together by the FCO's Sustainable Development team. A more in-depth review supported by interviews was not possible at this time as the SDC's developing "watchdog" resources had to be prioritised to the full cross-government assessment of SDAPs and this year's review of Government performance on its operational targets. However, the SDC would be happy to further advise on any follow-up activity that the FCO undertakes.
6. For consistency, the SDC has sought to assess FCO's Strategy and Plan as far as possible in line with its assessment framework for departmental SDAPs. This framework is based on the SDC's 2005 SDAP guidance.⁵ Although the FCO has undergone a separate assessment process, a summary assessment for the FCO has been included in the SDC's cross-government critique of departmental SDAPs for indicative purposes to assist cross-government comparisons. The relevant checklist for this assessment is attached at **Annex A**.

⁵ See www.sd-commission.org.uk

Getting the basics right

Does the Strategy seem like it belongs?

7. A strategy or plan should direct and drive change and therefore it must clearly link and be seen to link to corporate activities and business planning. It is important that any sustainable development strategy/plan looks and feels like any other action plan or strategy that the organisation would prepare unless there has been an active decision to define it from others and the reasons for this are clearly stated. The latter however, is more likely to signal a “bolt on approach” to sustainable development rather than the integrative one that would be expected for a cross-cutting government policy.

The FCO and sustainable development

8. The FCO leads in developing and delivering the Government’s international agenda in areas such as human rights, counter-proliferation and EU enlargement. However, where other Government Departments have lead responsibility, such as for climate change and sustainable development, the FCO advises on international handling and negotiating and promotes and implements UK policies overseas.
9. **The FCO’s Strategy sets out a clear rationale for the need for sustainable development to underpin foreign policy.** It makes the links between global peace and stability and the elements that may threaten this if they lead to conflict i.e. poverty, mismanagement of natural resources or social and environmental injustice. It also recognises the importance of good governance in supporting sustainable development.
10. The Strategy seeks to describe the FCO’s sustainable development approach across its wide range of activity and roles:
 - promoting international co-operation (particularly through overseas posts)

- working through international organisations
- supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships and other government departments
- assisting overseas territories.

Links to core business systems

11. If the FCO is to mainstream sustainable development as it intends, it is important that its sustainable development strategy is clearly linked to what most would consider to be FCO core business. The FCO’s Strategy does this well. It sets out how key elements of core business relate to the Strategy such as: the UK international priorities, Public Service Agreements (PSAs), and other core strategies. It also clearly states the purpose of the Strategy upfront and explains how the department intends the Strategy to be used to underpin its work.
12. It states that the Strategy will provide:
 - the basis for integrating sustainable development into all FCO activity supporting the UK’s international priorities
 - a policy framework for the Sustainable Development Programme Fund from 1 April 2005 and delivering the FCO’s target on sustainable development.⁶
13. It also makes it clear that it should be read alongside:
 - the FCO’s Strategy on Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance
 - The International Energy Strategy (joint FCO/Defra/DTI/SPEN Strategy).
14. The UK’s international priorities provide the framework for the FCO’s work. The FCO uses them as the central tool for organising and prioritising its work. They set the framework for allocating resources and are

⁶ *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK’s International Priorities*, FCO, March 2006, CM 6762, p.4

the basis of the department's objectives and PSA targets.⁷ The priorities are those of the Government as a whole and all Departments have a role in pursuing them. However, the FCO has overall responsibility for developing and pursuing the UK's foreign policy.

15. The Strategy refers to the eight priorities that were current at the time including the specific sustainable development priority – *sustainable development, underpinned by democracy, good governance and human rights*. These priorities were revised in March 2006 and this priority has now been re-framed as *“sustainable development and poverty reduction underpinned by human rights, democracy, good governance and protection of the environment”*. These 2003 priorities are intended to guide activity for the next 5-10 years, although they are reviewed regularly.

16. The fit of the international priorities with sustainable development and the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy is comprehensively explained in the document as are its links to other FCO strategies. The sustainable development strategy makes it clear that, as well as being a specific priority, sustainable development underpins and will help to achieve the other priorities. The Strategy sets out exactly why this is the case for each priority demonstrating the sustainable development context for core areas of FCO's work. This is an important public statement setting out the sustainable development context for foreign policy. These links are also reinforced in the FCO's document *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World :The UK's International Priorities*.

17. The Strategy also refers to the FCO's sustainable development PSA that again provides a strong link to core business. However, the Strategy does not elaborate on what this PSA requires and the Strategy does not indicate which target actions

might contribute to the department's monitoring against its PSA. The relevant PSA is FCO Objective VI set out below:

Objective VI: Sustainable development, underpinned by democracy, good governance and human rights.

- *To increase understanding of, and engagement with, Islamic countries and communities and to work with them to promote peaceful political, economic and social reform.*
- *To promote sustainable development, underpinned by democracy, good governance and human rights, particularly through effective delivery of programmes in these and related fields.*

18. It is interesting to note that the House of Commons Scrutiny Unit recently highlighted that it was unable to determine the progress of seven of the FCO's PSA targets as little specific data was given and there was no indication of target deadlines.⁸ In response, the FCO has stated that the nature and content of many of its PSA targets means that the department relies on forming often subjective and qualitative assessments of progress. (The quality of FCO's sustainable development targets is discussed in paras 25-28)

Where does responsibility for the Strategy lie?

19. The Director General - Globalisation is responsible for the delivery of the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy.

20. At the time the Strategy was prepared, sustainable development was dealt with in the FCO's Sustainable Development and

⁷ Ibid, p.42

⁸ *The Scrutiny Unit's Review of Departmental Annual Reports 2005*, Memoranda to House of Commons Liaison Committee, 12 May 2006.

Commonwealth Group. On 1 April 2006, the FCO's work on sustainable development and global business, along with economics and global issues were brought together in one department, the Sustainable Development and Business Group (SDBG).

21. This change involved some slimming of resources and the SDBG is now seeking to provide a greater focus on areas where the FCO can add most value. The FCO's own review of its progress against its sustainable development strategy confirmed that the department needed to focus on a tighter set of priorities. The Group aims to set all future activities more firmly in the context of the challenges and opportunities presented by globalisation and will be working to "mainstream" sustainable development across the FCO and in Europe.

Does it look like it belongs?

22. The FCO has sought to ensure that its Sustainable Development Strategy and Plan are consistent with the language and presentation of other FCO plans. The FCO's strategy was produced in the same format and style as the FCO's 2003 White Paper and its International Energy Strategy with the specific aim of showing that all the documents were linked. This approach sends a clear signal that the Sustainable Development strategy and plan is an integral part of FCO activity and not a special add on. This signal is reinforced by cross-referencing in these plans to show how the policies complement the FCO's overall objectives.
23. The FCO's Strategy is available on its Sustainable Development pages on its Internet site. These pages are presented as part of the suite of information on the FCO's strategic priorities reinforcing these links.

- **Overall, the SDC commends the FCO for ensuring that its sustainable development strategy clearly signals**

and explains the links between its core operating context and sustainable development and what these mean for the department in practice.

- **The positioning of the sustainable development team in a policy group along with global and economic issues sends the right signal that sustainable development is a core business issue for FCO. It will be important that the FCO's sustainable development outcomes reinforce this signal rather than undermining it.**
- **The SDC recommends that future SDAPs clearly articulate the requirements of relevant PSAs and demonstrate how the plan's targets and objectives will contribute to these. The plan should also clearly state how monitoring of progress against the action plan will contribute to the monitoring against PSA targets, in particular the FCO's Objective VI which is specific to sustainable development. Progress reports will need to demonstrate how far achievement of the targets has contributed to relevant PSAs.**

Is it clear which organisations are covered by the Strategy?

24. The Strategy does not make it clear how far it covers the FCO's Agencies. For example, Wilton Park⁹ and FCO Services¹⁰ are described on FCO's website as Executive Agencies (although the latter was only given executive agency status in 2006). The requirement to prepare a

⁹ The Agency runs conferences on key international policy challenges at its centre on the south coast of England.

¹⁰ The Agency supplies the FCO with a broad range of products and services covering IT, communications, technical and protective security, estate and project management, logistics and purchasing, language translation, interpreting and training, VIP visits and organisation of major conferences both in the UK and overseas. FCO Services employs approximately 1200 permanent staff, many of who are specialists, including about 100 staff serving at FCO Missions overseas.

Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) applies to Executive Agencies as well as central government departments. **FCO's 2007 SDAP therefore should clarify the status of these Agencies and indicate whether they are covered by the plan or are preparing their own action plans.**

Learning points

28. Overall, the targets in the Strategy are not SMART. There are a number of areas where the FCO needs to make improvements in the future. These are set out in the table overleaf with associated suggested actions for the next plan:

Quality of targets and timescales

25. It is important that the FCO is able to effectively monitor its progress against its Strategy. The Strategy sets 39 targets for 2005/06 with 30 corresponding corporate objectives for 2005-08. These are set out in each chapter and compiled in a summary.
26. It is basic good practice for targets to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely). This is an effective discipline to ensure that it is clear what is to be achieved and by when, and how progress might be assessed by the organisation or by external stakeholders.
27. The SDC has made the following assessment of the quality (not content) of the targets set out in the FCO's sustainable development strategy:

Strengths

- **Setting out targets for 06/07 within the context of longer-term objectives. This sets near term action in the context of longer-term objectives signalling the intended direction of travel. The link between the objectives and overall strategic priorities could be made more specific however.**
- **Targets incorporated in the narrative are clearly identified at the end of each chapter and incorporated in the summary. In this way FCO has clearly stated the targets/commitments for which it expects to be held accountable.**

	Learning Point	Suggested action for next plan
1	All the Strategy targets were set for the general timeframe "05/06"	Ensure that targets have associated interim milestones , indication of phasing or key dependencies for timings.
2	Ownership of the targets/objectives is not specified and therefore lines of accountability are not clear.	Clearly allocate responsibility for targets to appropriate divisions/directorates or make an overall statement about the approach to the ownership of the targets throughout the organisation.
3	Neither the summary plan nor the chapter narratives identifies priority areas for 06/07 or 05/08 action. It is therefore not clear if the actions identified for each chapter (set out in Annex A) represent the FCO's chosen priority actions for the year under each target or are the entirety of activity.	Clearly state how targets have been chosen and prioritised to enable the department and/or stakeholders to better monitor and assess progress.
4	It is not clear how far the 2005 -06 targets match the key sustainable development priority themes set out at the start of the Strategy and therefore it will be difficult for the FCO to demonstrate how it has contributed to them when reporting against its Strategy	Greater alignment of priority themes and targets will facilitate this process.
5	The 2005-06 targets rarely indicate the required outcome. Most refer to "supporting", "encouraging" and "engaging". However, it is not clear how FCO would judge their achievement. This limits the ability of both the FCO and its external stakeholders to track or assess progress effectively.	The SDC recognises that much of the FCO's work does not lend itself to quantitative targets. However, future targets should describe a desired outcome or indicators of success even if these cannot be numerically measured.

29. The 2005 review of the FCO's Public Diplomacy Strategy by the Public Diplomacy Board highlighted similar issues which reinforce these pointers. The Board recommended that the FCO's new Public Diplomacy Strategy should "include more focused priorities for activity, clear and measurable objectives, details of target audiences and geographical priorities and detailed proposals for core themes and action plans should underpin it..."¹¹

In summary, the SDC recommends that the FCO should ensure that future targets are clearly linked to priority themes, have associated milestones, are allocated ownership and specify the intended outcomes.

FCO and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (UK SDS)

30. All government departments are now required to prepare Sustainable Development Action Plans (SDAPs) focused on the UK SDS. This section considers how well the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy fits with and reflects the principles, priorities and commitments of the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy (UK SDS), *Securing the Future*, which was published in March 2005.

¹¹ *Public Diplomacy Review*, Report by Lord Carter of Coles to the Foreign Secretary and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 13 December 2005

31. The FCO's Strategy was published shortly after the UK SDS but the final draft had not been finalised when the FCO signed off its own Strategy. The department sought to align it as far as possible within these constraints. The FCO's Strategy was also published before the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) published its SDAP guidance in August 2005 so the department was unable to draw on the key pointers provided by the Commission.

Guiding Principles

32. The UK SDS sets out five guiding principles agreed across the UK. These are intended to form the basis for policy in the UK. For a policy to be sustainable, it must respect all five of these principles. The Strategy also commits the Government to ensure that "an understanding of how to apply sustainable development principles is a key part of policy skills for the future and that all policies are properly appraised against the new principles of sustainable development."¹²

33. The FCO's Strategy was published before these principles were finalised and therefore they are not referred to.
Future FCO SDAPs should set out how the FCO is working with the five principles of the UK SDS and ensuring that they underpin policy decisions.

Shared priorities for UK action

34. The UK SDS sets out four priority areas for immediate action, which are shared across the UK: sustainable consumption and production, climate change and energy, natural resource protection and environmental enhancement and sustainable communities. The Strategy makes clear that "these priorities for action within the UK will also help shape the way the UK works internationally in ensuring

that our objectives are aligned with international goals".

35. The Strategy also sets out priorities for action on international sustainable development this Millennium. These priorities have principally been framed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Doha Development Agenda of the World Trade Organisation, the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, and the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

36. The FCO SD Strategy sets out the FCO's contribution to the UK SDS according to some of the priority themes covered by these international priorities rather than the priority areas for immediate action. The Strategy describes FCO as "engaged across the spectrum on international sustainable development issues."¹³ **Table 1** overleaf matches UK SDS international priorities and shared priorities with these priority themes.

37. The FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy demonstrates a good fit with the UK SDS priorities and sets out a range of activity across the key areas identified for action in the UK SDS. However, the Strategy gives little sense of where FCO feels it can or could be most effective in contributing to sustainable development and the aims of the UK SDS.

38. **The FCO's Strategy sets out the FCO's contribution across the full range of UK SDS shared priorities and international priorities for sustainable development. However, in future Sustainable Development Action Plans, the FCO will need to make it clear how its priority themes fit with the UK SDS shared priorities and whether the department is concentrating on a particular priority in a particular year or spreading activity equally across its chosen themes.**

¹² *Securing the Future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy*, HM Government, March 2005, Cm 6467

¹³ *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy*, FCO, March 2005, p.4

Table 1: Fit of FCO Sustainable Development Strategy themes with UK SDS international and shared priorities for immediate action

Key international sustainable development issues outlined in the FCO SD Strategy	Match with International priorities for Action identified in UK SDS	Relevant UK shared priorities for immediate action set out in UK SDS
Delivering the commitments made at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) – focusing particularly on environment and human rights and achieving more effective action by international organisations in promoting sustainable development.	✓	ALL
Reducing poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	✓	Sustainable Communities
Promoting the mutual supportiveness of trade liberalisation, environmental protection and sustainable development	✓	Sustainable Consumption and Production
Increasing international development assistance and tackling international debt through the Monterrey Consensus	✓	Sustainable Communities
Increasing global economic growth and competitiveness in ways that promote sustainable production and consumption	✓	Sustainable Consumption and Production
Spreading democracy, good governance and enhanced protection of human rights	✓	Sustainable Communities
Promoting better protection, and equitable and sustainable use, of natural resources	✓	Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement
Enhancing international action to tackle climate change	✓	Climate change and Energy

Meeting UK Sustainable Development Strategy Commitments

39. The UK SDS contains a range of commitments specific to departments and a number of cross-cutting commitments for all departments.

Specific departmental commitments

40. **Table 2** (overleaf) sets out commitments in the UK SDS that are either FCO lead or heavily FCO influenced. These are matched to key related targets in the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy to determine how far the FCO's Strategy has incorporated its UK SDS commitments into its forward work programme.
41. The targets set out in the FCO's Strategy clearly align with the FCO's UK SDS commitments and general aspirations it outlines for foreign policy. However, the Strategy does not actively point to the links with the UK SDS beyond the introductory generalities. **To ensure a transparent audit trail, future FCO SDAPs should make it clear where targets relate back**

to specific UK SDS commitments or explain why a new approach/direction has been taken.

Cross cutting commitments

42. The Strategy sets out a number of cross-cutting commitments for Government as a whole mostly relating to a "Leading by Example" theme. These include sustainable procurement and developing appropriate sustainable skills and capacity within government.
43. The key cross-cutting commitments and related FCO Sustainable Development Strategy targets are set out below in **Table 3**. Again the FCO Strategy demonstrates a fair match. However, the Strategy does not acknowledge that these actions contribute to the Government's wider efforts to ensure that government departments lead by example on sustainable development.
44. The FCO's work on sustainable procurement and its initiatives to improve sustainable development skills and capacity are discussed in more detail in paras 97-117.

Table 3: Match between cross-cutting UK SDS commitments and FCO Sustainable Development Strategy Targets

Cross cutting UK SDS Commitment	Relevant FCO Sustainable Development Targets
Government will strengthen leadership capacity within departments and their agencies, for example by providing civil servants with better training in sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the FCO's sustainable development training module and include sustainable development as a topic in FCO induction courses, to help ensure that staff are able to integrate sustainable development into the way they develop and deliver policy. Promote sustainable development throughout the FCO through briefings, the staff magazine, the intranet, events and ensuring that priority posts include in their country action plans an objective on mainstreaming sustainable development into their corporate activities.
A commitment to ensure that an understanding of how to apply sustainable development principles is a key part of policy skills for the future and that all policies are properly appraised against the new principles of sustainable development;	
A new goal to be recognised as amongst the leaders in sustainable procurement across EU member states by 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all FCO procurement contracts include green clauses. Encourage the inclusion of BREEAM targets in the specifications for new buildings overseas.
Government to use Strategy as basis for integrating development commitments into the 2006 spending review and later spending rounds.	FCO Strategy links to sustainable development PSA but does not set out how the outcomes of the FCO Strategy will contribute to monitoring progress against PSAs.

Table 2: Match between FCO’s key commitments in the UK SDS and the targets set out in its own Sustainable Development Strategy

	Specific FCO (or FCO key player) UK SDS Commitment	Key related targets in FCO SD Strategy (2005/6)
1	<p>Deliver the Government’s international sustainable development objectives making the most of our diplomatic posts overseas. The FCO’s Sustainable Development Strategy, to be launched on 14 March, will set out how the FCO will do this. A complementary Strategy on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance will be published later in the year</p>	<p>Strategy published in March 2005 with range of targets across UK SDS themes. However, Strategy does not organise targets across these key themes therefore it is difficult to assess the overall contribution.</p>
2	<p>Promoting human rights, democracy and good, political, environmental and economic governance overseas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseas Territories Environment Programme, jointly funded by the FCO and DfID will continue to support implementation of the Environment Charters in the Territories (p.164) • (With Defra) Continue to use Environment for Europe Fund (EFE) to support small environmental projects in the candidate countries for the EU and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) countries (p.164) • UK Government to continue to promote the aims of the Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10) through the FCO network of environmental attachés overseas, and report on the progress made against the commitments at the annual Committee of the Whole meetings. • Continue bilateral and multilateral support for strengthening anti-corruption capacity in developing countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with Defra and DfID ensure that the 2005 Millennium Review Summit results in more effective delivery of the MDGs. • Establishment of sustainable development programme within the Global Opportunities Fund. • Governance targets in relation to Overseas Territories. • Strategy themes to be reinforced in Country Action Plans for priority countries • Support the launch of Partners for Environmental Co-operation in Europe (PECE) as a means of promoting SD in the EECCA countries. • Monitoring PP10 projects in Chile, Hungary, South Africa, Thailand and Uganda projects – that received funding for 2004-05 – and report on these, and the project in Latin America at the annual meeting. • Build support for the ratification of the UN Convention Against Corruption and the promotion of good governance.

3	<p>Delivering on the two WSSD commitments on which the FCO has overall lead: promoting environmental governance and human rights; and international sustainable development governance. In March 2005, we [FCO] will publish delivery plans, agreed across Whitehall, setting out priority actions for the FCO, DfID, Defra and our diplomatic posts overseas - to meet these commitments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority countries required to draw up Country Action Plan by May 2005. <p>[Strategy cross-refers to separate Environmental Governance delivery plan published in March 2005 and the International Sustainable Development Governance Delivery Plan which sets out priorities for achieving more effective action by international organisations in promoting sustainable development]</p>
4	<p>Contributing to tackling climate change. Helping to ensure that the international debate on climate change is re-energised through the UK's presidencies of the G8 and EU in 2005, and that both result in concrete actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (with Defra) Mainstream climate change risks and impacts within development assistance and national development plans. Support country-led research in China, India and South Africa to strengthen the capacity of key analysts and officials to develop research proposals of their own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU targets are concentrated on mainstreaming sustainable development at EU level and focus particularly building support for tackling climate change. • G8 targets set with focus on Africa and Climate Change • OECD targets focus on climate change • Develop ways of working increasingly closely with other government departments on dialogues and programme work in priority countries.
5	<p>Launch of a new Sustainable Development Programme under the FCO's Global Opportunities Fund in April 2005 .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target set to establish and implement fund only. No specific outcomes specified.
6	<p>In 2005, Defra, DfID and FCO, who account for the majority of total government air travel, will work together to pilot offset carbon dioxide emissions from official air travel. This joint approach will begin with self-assessment of air travel emissions and develop a co-ordinated approach to investing in suitable off-setting projects (p.90).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit FCO air travel with a view to introducing a carbon-offsetting scheme in April 2006.
7	<p>Government will work within UN structures to raise the profile of product standards and stimulate greater co-operation (p.49)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCO Strategy does not mention product standards directly but refers to International Sustainable Development Governance Delivery Plan.

Key areas for FCO “added value”

45. The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy aims to focus on those areas where the department “adds value” to the implementation of the UK SDS.¹⁴

Although the Strategy doesn’t state which particular areas the FCO thinks these are it is clear that climate change is a key theme which the department recognises will “increasingly be a barrier to development and a factor in instability.”¹⁵

46. A wide range of other key sustainable development areas are covered throughout the Strategy either by narrative or with specific targets and objectives attached: e.g. natural resource protection, sustainable tourism, trade, environmental governance. This reflects the FCO’s broad reach across government policy as a result of its co-ordination, negotiating and UK promotion role.

47. It is important that the FCO’s 2006-08 SDAP reflects the department’s decision to focus on a smaller number of sustainable development issues. Whilst it is important to demonstrate how sustainable development thinking can be applied to the whole spectrum of FCO’s work, the action plan needs a core group of priority areas. It will then be clear to staff and stakeholders where the FCO is particularly looking to bring its various roles to bear - in the EU, UN, OECD, with posts etc to promote sustainable development.

48. The department has clearly already given thought to what these areas might be. At the recent annual conference for Sustainable Development and Climate Change & Energy attachés in June, the department generated discussion and

sought feedback from posts in the following areas:

- Climate change energy security and markets, economics of Climate Change
- Business and Sustainable Development (attachés were encouraged to appreciate the breadth of the FCO’s relationship with the private sector on international priorities beyond traditional trade/investment promotion)
- Sustainable tourism and its relevance to posts
- Sustainable Development as a public diplomacy and communications opportunity
- Natural resource management links to conflict

49. **These are exactly the kind of areas that the SDC would encourage the FCO to explore in terms of developing focused work programmes. These should be in addition to its own corporate activities to lead by example and ensure that the FCO has the appropriate sustainable development skills and capacity.**

50. **Table 4** sets out how each theme might be approached from a sustainable development perspective within the FCO’s operating context.

¹⁴ *Securing the Future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy*, March 2005, Cm 6467. p.162

¹⁵ *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK’s International Priorities*, March 2006, Cm6762, March 2006, p.15

Table 4: Suggested orientation of FCO Sustainable Development Priorities

Priority area	Approach	Reflected consistently in Institutional Tools
Climate Change	Climate Security - energy security and markets - economics of Climate Change - natural resources and conflict - diplomacy	
Business and Sustainable Development	Beyond traditional trade promotion. - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) - sustainable tourism - trade reform - sustainable consumption and production - globalisation	Leading by example in policy making and operations Attaché network Sustainable Development Country Action Plans
Sustainable Tourism	Encompass in role as authoritative travel adviser and source of assistance. Make links to business and governance agenda as well as natural resources.	Climate Change and Energy Plans Sustainable Development Dialogues
Public Diplomacy and Communications Opportunity	Sustainable Development as a positive UK value and effective framework for communicating the full range of FCO activity and issues.	Communications and Engagement
Natural Resource Management - Links to Conflict	Mitigating and preventing conflict. Increasing potential for joint working with MoD. Powerful link to FCO core business which is likely to have resonance with staff.	

Climate Change

51. Climate Change and Energy is one of the four priority areas for immediate action (across the UK) which was identified in the UK SDS and it is an issue upon which the UK seeks to demonstrate political leadership at the international level. As the FCO's sustainable development strategy recognises, it is an issue which fits squarely with the FCO's own core priorities and is one which threatens global security and development as well as posing a formidable test of international diplomacy, negotiation and conflict prevention.
52. Climate change cuts across the full range of the UK's international priorities and is inextricably linked to energy security and sustainable development. Fossil fuel dependence and climate change are now widely recognised in the international community as bringing the very real threat of unstable political conditions and economic losses. The Foreign Secretary's Special Representative for Climate Change, John Ashton, recently commented that "human-induced climate change must be treated as an immediate threat to national security and prosperity" and warned that "to achieve climate security, governments will need to invest more resources in the emerging techniques of soft power."¹⁶ There is no backstop: the politics and diplomacy have to work."
53. It is clear from the high-level sustainable development dialogue being undertaken with China that FCO is actively promoting this "climate security" theme in its diplomacy. **The SDC supports the FCO's focus on climate security. This encourages dialogue about the range of practical and political responses that are required to meet the global challenge of climate change.**

¹⁶ World's most wanted: climate change, Viewpoint by John Ashton, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/5323512.stm>

This approach also ensures that the climate change debate is rooted in the overarching context of sustainable development, i.e. if climate change is the problem then sustainable development is the solution. The SDC would expect future SDAPs to make this relationship clear and ensure that it is reinforced and reflected institutionally particularly in the fit between country action plans for sustainable development and energy and climate change (see also paras 77-83).

Business

54. As the department has recognised, the FCO's new structure allows the department to particularly explore the synergies between sustainable development and its work with **business**. The CEO of the Business Council for Sustainable Development recently hailed the sustainable development agenda as "probably the biggest opportunity for the business community since the industrial revolution,"¹⁷ whilst the Government's 2003 innovation review identified the environment as a key driver for future innovation.¹⁸
55. The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy already acknowledges the FCO's role in promoting Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainable tourism and supporting trade reform which are important areas for business. However, there is little mention of the UK's current focus on the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) agenda and the international commitment made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to a ten-year framework of action in this area. The UK SDS includes commitments to ensure that SCP is at the heart of the EU Sustainable

¹⁷ Speech by David Middleton., Annual general meeting of BCSD-UK, July 2006

¹⁸ *Securing the Future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy*, March 2005, Cm 6467, p.44

Development Strategy and commits the Government to working with UNEP to establish a technical task force to promote co-operation and improvements in sustainable products.

Sustainable Tourism

56. **Sustainable tourism** also links well with the FCO's business and governance agenda as well as giving the department the opportunity to link with its role as an authoritative adviser for travellers and source of assistance to those in-country if necessary. The FCO is a member of the cross-government working group on Sustainable Tourism which has commissioned a range of research in this area. Through this group, FCO works with Defra, DCMS and DfT and the Devolved Administrations to share experience and co-ordinate activities. The FCO has also been actively encouraging all government departments to recognise their role in this agenda and identifying the key opportunities for their involvement. For example, DfID's potential role in harnessing the economic benefits of sustainable tourism to alleviate poverty in developing country destinations and in helping to deliver the aims of its recent White Paper; and DTI in considering whether there are opportunities for the travel and tourism industries to support its objectives on corporate social responsibility as well as sustainable tourism being an opportunity for the sector itself.
57. The FCO also set up the Travel Foundation, an independent charity to implement the Sustainable Tourism initiative, launched by the Prime Minister ahead of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002. The department continues to provide in-kind support for the Foundation with Defra and the Foundation has a range of corporate sponsors.
58. **The FCO now needs to build upon its sustainable tourism work in line with its Strategy objective to raise the profile**

and engagement of the UK Government in sustainable tourism. To this end it is important that it integrates sustainable tourism into its own business and ensures that this key area is consistently reflected across Country Action Plans. The SDC recognises that progress is dependent on a range of other government departments, in particular DfID and DTI, who are not currently participating in the cross-government sustainable tourism group. The SDC supports the department's efforts to highlight the opportunities of integrating sustainable tourism into their business in order to further their own departmental objectives.

Natural resource protection and conflict

59. The SDC is aware that the FCO has already been exploring the links between **natural resource protection and conflict** and hosted a related exhibition earlier this year. The contribution of a sustainable development approach to mitigating or preventing conflict fits well with the UK international priorities as the FCO Sustainable Development Strategy acknowledges and sits squarely in the core business of FCO. Examples of an unsustainable approach causing countries to fall back into conflict provide a powerful vision for staff and stakeholders and a key way of demonstrating the importance of sustainable development to the FCO's work. This issue is also of growing interest within the MoD, for example, in relation to climate security and the military impacts of mass migration caused by environmental factors (degradation of resources, extreme weather shifts etc).
60. **The SDC recommends that the FCO continues to explore the opportunities for joint working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to natural resource protection and conflict, and reflects these in future SDAPs.**

Public diplomacy and communications

61. Overall, it is apparent that sustainable development provides an effective way of framing the full range of FCO activity to communicate a variety of issues. The SDC would therefore agree that it is an area worthy of exploration as an opportunity for **public diplomacy and communications**. The FCO website states that the:

FCO recognises that it has an important role in efforts to improve perceptions of the UK overseas, which may affect the attitudes of foreign governments, trade and investment decisions and personal choices such as where to study and what to buy. The FCO aims to communicate the UK's values, present-day strengths and successes.

62. **Sustainable development presents a good, strong value which is internationally recognised as a positive force. The SDC recommends that the FCO should actively promote UK support for sustainable development overseas as a UK value and ensure that it is observed in action in British Embassies and High Commissions (see also paras 87-91).**

Delivery through overseas posts

63. Both the UK SDS and the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy recognise that the FCO has a key role to play in advancing the UK's sustainable development aims through its network of over 200 diplomatic posts overseas which promote and support UK interests.

64. The department has a particularly valuable resource in its network of over 90 environment attachés who deal with a range of sustainable development issues. These are complemented by a smaller network of science and innovation attachés in 26 countries and territories whose work includes gathering and exchanging scientific information about climate change

and promoting the use of environmental technology.

65. The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy focuses on targets and objectives in the following key areas:
- Requirement for Country Action Plans for posts in priority countries
 - SD Net – the Government's Sustainable Development Network website for government officials
 - Global Opportunities Fund Sustainable Development Programme
 - Sustainable Development dialogues.

These are discussed in more detail below except for SD Net which is discussed in relation to communications and engagement in paras 139 - 142.

Country Action Plans

Sustainable Development priority countries

66. In 2005/6 the FCO identified 22 high priority posts that the department asked to develop sustainable development country action plans (CAPs) by May 2005. Posts were asked to detail the actions they would take to deliver the aims of the UK SDS.

67. The 22 priority countries were agreed with other government departments as important for sustainable development. It was agreed to focus on those that displayed at least one of the following characteristics:
- eligible for FCO Sustainable Development Fund
 - relevant to particular SD issues
 - major emerging economic powers
 - high concentration of natural resources and biodiversity
 - and developed countries of strategic importance in multi-lateral fora.

68. The UK identifies different priority countries for different issues. On climate change and energy for example, there is a different list of priority countries (although there is some overlap with the sustainable development list), and the Public Diplomacy Group has also identified its own priority countries. For climate change and energy the countries are: Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, USA, Angola, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France, Germany, and Japan.
69. In December 2005 the original 22 priority countries for sustainable development were narrowed down to a list of 13 - all of which are eligible for funding under the Global Opportunities Fund (GOF). The Embassies and High Commissions in these countries have been asked to set out their priorities and what action they will take this to deliver them. It is then hoped that the GOF project work will support and flow from specific, agreed objectives. However, not all countries eligible for funding under GOF are required to have a CAP eg Columbia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kazakhstan and Burma.
70. The revision of sustainable development priority countries was the result of the FCO's review of progress against its Sustainable Development Strategy. The European countries were mainly dropped from the priority list as it was felt that the posts there were already working actively to the Government's sustainable development priorities in close liaison with a range of relevant departments, mainly Defra on sustainable development issues. They will continue to be tasked by Defra and FCO on sustainable development matters despite not being required to produce an action plan. FCO has the opportunity to brief a range of European attachés when they attend the Government's "Forward Look" Presidency events.
71. The list also reflects the posts where FCO feels that it faces particular challenges in its priority issue areas – natural resource management, environmental governance, sustainable tourism, sustainable development and business etc. The FCO's restructuring in spring 2006 was also a factor as it reduced the number of staff working specifically on sustainable development in London. FCO is therefore encouraging posts to work more directly with other government departments whilst London teams focus their attention on the issues and countries where they can make the most impact on sustainable development.
72. **Table 4** illustrates which of the original allocation met the commitment and which remain priority countries. This shows that Japan, USA, Canada and the UK Mission to UNEP in Nairobi are the key non-European posts to be dropped from the priority list. The UK Mission to UNEP already works a range of Government departments to promote UK SD policy. Washington is already required to have a climate change and energy action plan and report back to London and prioritises work on G8 priorities including climate change.
73. **The SDC strongly supports the FCO requirement for priority countries to prepare Country Action Plans (CAPs) for sustainable development. This is a key mechanism for ensuring that sustainable development is promoted consistently as a cross-cutting government policy both at home and abroad.** It is important that sustainable development selects priority countries to work with on sustainable development and reviews these on a regular basis. This is also in line with standard practice in the department in terms of managing issues with its posts. Both sets of selection criteria seem sensible and demonstrate very clearly what kind of economic and environmental criteria were considered in their selection.
74. **The SDC supports the current selection of priority countries for sustainable development. However, to ensure that**

the selection process is as transparent as possible the SDC recommends that:

- **Future plans and related reports should make it clear why priority countries have been chosen and what is expected of them.**
- **As well as economic and environmental factors, future plans should make clear how far social factors have played a part in the selection of priority countries for sustainable development, perhaps in relation to human rights and governance.**

a standard template, the one used for the Climate Change and Energy plans.

FCO requirements for Country Action Plans (CAPs)

75. The FCO did not provide a specific template for the CAPs but specified the kind of information that they should set out. The department made it clear that the posts should set out their agenda for the year rather than just stating existing activities and that plans should be signed off by the Ambassador/High Commissioner.
76. Some posts modelled their plans on the Climate Change and Energy plans (for which a format is specified) that a number are required to produce under the auspices of the UK International Energy Strategy (launched in October 2004). As part of this strategy the FCO committed to enhancing its posts' capacity on energy issues and making better use of its network of energy attachés, with a particular focus on the large new consumers of energy such as China and India, and producers such as Russia.¹⁹ For 2006/07 posts are now using

¹⁹ *Stronger partnerships to tackle a complex and global challenge,* Speech by Jack Straw at launch of the UK International Energy Strategy, FCO, London, 28 October 2004, www.fco.gov.uk

Table 4: Priority countries and Country Action Plans

	Priority Country covered by initial commitment in FCO SD Strategy 2005 (and reasoning given if any)	Were SD Country Action Plans produced by May 2005✓/to date (✓)?	Included in reviewed list of priority countries 2006/7? (all eligible for GOF funding)	FCO Priority country for Climate Change and Energy?
1	Argentina (Buenos Aires)	✓	✓	X
2	Brazil (Brazilia) <i>Major emerging economic power</i>	✓	✓	✓
3	Canada (Ottawa) <i>Influential in multi-national fora</i>	Draft received but not finalised.	X No longer required to produce CAP.	X
4	Cameroon (Yaound·)	✓	✓	X
5	Caribbean Region	(✓)	✓	X
6	China (Beijing) <i>Major emerging economic power</i>	(✓) Draft received but not finalised.	✓	✓
7	France (Paris) <i>Influential in multi-national fora</i>	(✓)	X No longer required to produce CAP.	✓
8	India (New Dehli) <i>Major emerging economic power</i>	✓	✓	✓
9	Italy (Rome) <i>Influential in multi-national fora</i>	Draft received but not finalised.	X No longer required to produce CAP.	X
10	Germany (Berlin)	(✓)	X No longer required to produce CAP.	✓
11	Japan (Tokyo) <i>Influential in multi-national fora</i>	✓	X No longer required to produce CAP.	✓
12	Malaysia (Kuala Lumpar)	✓	✓	X
13	Mexico (Mexico City) <i>Major emerging economic power</i>	(✓)	✓	✓
14	Nigeria	(✓)	✓	✓

15	Russia (Moscow) <i>Major emerging economic power</i>	CAP not produced – due to staff change over and pressure on resources	✓	✓
16	South Africa (Pretoria) <i>Major emerging economic power</i>	X	✓	✓
17	Spain (Madrid) <i>Influential in multi-national fora</i>	✓	X No longer required to produce CAP	X
18	Thailand	(✓)	✓	X
19	UK Rep Brussels	None produced (agreed not needed as already had clear objectives for the UK Presidency)	X No longer required to produce CAP	X
20	UK Mis Nairobi (UK Mission to UNEP)	✓	X No longer required to produce CAP.	✓
21	USA (Washington) <i>Influential in multi-national fora</i>	None produced. Resources devoted to G8 and climate change work	X	✓
21	USA (UK Mis New York – the UK’s Mission to the UN)	(✓)	X No longer required to produce CAP	X (✓USA plan prepared by Washington post)
22	Vietnam (Hanoi)	X	✓ NOT required to produce CAP. No resource at post to do so. Has been included in priority countries as FCO has ongoing GOF projects.	X

77. The SDC has not assessed any country climate change plans. However, there is clearly much potential for overlap as well as conflict between the climate change plans and the sustainable development plans if they are not managed and revised within an effective strategic framework. Ideally, the sustainable development plan would be the overarching plan within the boundaries of which the climate change plan was developed.
78. In practice, it is left to posts to determine how they wish to manage this situation – ie to manage both plans or to bring them together. Most actually cross-refer rather than deal with both issues. Often attachés have both sustainable development and energy in their portfolio. The FCO has sought feedback from its attaches on how they find the situation of managing both plans. This year’s attachés and energy conferences were organised over consecutive days with this in mind to maximise this feedback and emphasise the synergies.
79. **The SDC recommends that the FCO reviews the current effectiveness of separate Country Action Plans for climate change and sustainable development plans and considers whether it needs to enforce a more integrated approach in order to achieve the objectives of its Sustainable Development Strategy.**

Quality of plans

80. The SDC has reviewed the country plans for Argentina, Brazil, Cameroon, India, Japan, Malaysia, Spain and the UK Mission in Nairobi – the selection of plans provided by the FCO.
81. Most posts have provided some relevant introductory context and annexed a work programme. A summary of the key

strengths and learning points identified is provided below:

Strengths

- **The plans demonstrate a good understanding of sustainable development and the relevant links to post priorities.**
- **Risks and resource requirements/constraints are clearly outlined.**

Learning points

- **Most of the plans do not clearly acknowledge their purpose – either linked back to the FCO SD Strategy or with appropriate links to the UK SDS.**
- **No plans are available on the relevant post website and neither are they referred to.** The SDC understands that many have been written as internal working documents. However, simplified versions or statements could be provided on post websites. The FCO’s website lists the countries required to produce CAPs but does not signal their availability or the lack of it. **The FCO should give a clear direction to posts as to the appropriate level of accessibility. The FCO’s own SD Action Plan is required to be a public document and at the very least the post should be highlighting this and articulating its role in contributing to the action plan.**
- **Like the FCO’s own SD Strategy, most actions give no sense of outcomes or milestones or priorities.**
- **It is not always apparent how a plan links with the post’s climate change plan.**
- **The variety of presentation formats coupled with the lack of reference to a common link e.g. the FCO SD Strategy makes the plans very hard to compare and contrast or consider how collectively they are progressing the FCO’s sustainable**

development objectives. Japan ordered its plan by the key issues identified in FCO SD Strategy. **The FCO should consider providing key priority areas around which to organise targets.**

Overall, the SDC has found that the Country Action Plans for Sustainable Development demonstrate a good understanding of sustainable development and the relevant links to post priorities, resources and risks. However, most do not make effective links back to the UK SDS or FCO Sustainable Development Strategy or cross-reference to Climate Change and Energy plans.

Scrutiny and monitoring of Country Action Plans

82. The FCO has been monitoring CAP progress either as part of visits to posts throughout the year or videoconferences. The department has not required posts to make their SDAPs public. However, as CAPs are finalised they are being added to SDNet, the government's international Internet site for officials working on sustainable development. This ensures that they are accessible for other posts and across governments. As these plans are working documents, in some cases the information can be sensitive and therefore difficult to make public (although FCO explained that this is more often the case with the climate change and energy plans).
83. The FCO intends to provide more specific guidance for the next round of plans with a common template. The department has sought feedback from attachés about the areas where having a CAP has added value and will be able to combine this with the audit information which the department collects regarding the time spent by posts on strategic priorities. It is also investigating how to tie in the CAP objectives with attaché performance appraisal.
84. **Now that the FCO and its posts have had some experience of preparing CAPs, it is important that the department ensures that it sets out some basic guidance for posts on its expectations with respect to the preparation, presentation and reporting of their action plans and how they should link with Climate Change and Energy plans.**
- ### **Promoting UK Sustainable Development**
85. The FCO recognises that it has an important role in "efforts to improve perceptions of the UK overseas, which may affect the attitudes of foreign governments, trade and investment decisions and personal choices such as where to study and what to buy."²⁰ The department aims to communicate the UK's values, present-day strengths and successes.
86. The FCO recognises the Internet as key means of communicating its messages. Each FCO post has a website which forms a key introduction to the culture and approach of the embassy/High Commission. The SDC has scanned a number of post websites, concentrating on those that have been/are a priority country for sustainable development to determine how sustainable development is presented. The findings are presented in **Table 5** overleaf.
87. This shows that many posts which are required to have CAPs do not clearly set out their sustainable development priorities or operating context on their websites. Only three posts (Canada, France and Malaysia) out of 22 made reference to the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy or the UK SDS. In contrast, climate change and the Global Opportunities Fund were often prominent on the website.

²⁰ www.fco.gov.uk

88. Discussion of sustainable development is largely confined to environment or science pages reflecting the attaché structure. It is not evident that sustainable development is a general operating context for these posts from their websites. In particular, trade and investment information is clearly focused on trade promotion without the context of the UK's work on trade reform or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
89. None of the websites promote the FCO's sustainable development approach to its operational activities in any way. Most sites have a standard "about us" page. This might tell you where the embassy or post is situated and about its staff but it tells you little about the FCO's operating principles. Post websites should also set out the FCO's intention to lead by example on its estate at home and abroad in line with its own sustainable development strategy and the national sustainable development strategy. Many posts are at an early "greening" stage in relation to their operations but many have small initiatives that they can feature which clearly signal their efforts. For example, India is seeking to reduce its energy use by 5% over the current financial year, and in Cameroon the post has teamed up with the National Herbarium to plant Cameroonian endangered plant species in the High Commission compound.

Learning point

- **As part of its ongoing work on sustainable development communications, the SDC recommends that the FCO should review the sustainable development content of Internet sites across priority sustainable development posts and advise on key elements that should be present in order to support the department's sustainable development strategy.**

Table 5: Presentation of Sustainable Development (SD) by key FCO posts: Main embassy Internet sites.

Overseas post	Comments on presentation of Sustainable Development	UK SDS/FCO SD Strategy referenced or linked?
Argentina <i>Buenos Aires</i>	SD well signposted and highlighted on website. GOF information on sustainable development programme.	X
Brazil <i>Brazilia</i>	SD highlighted in integrated way including social aspects. Has both climate change and energy and SD programme information (incl GOF).	X
Cameroon <i>Yaoundé</i>	Draws on UK SDS to describe UK policy but does not refer to it/acknowledge	X
Caribbean Region	Information only via search on press releases.	X
Canada <i>Ottawa</i>	Has environment and sustainable development section – SD is explained in detail in environment and biodiversity section. States the 1999 UK Strategy principles not the 2005 ones. Extensive information on climate change and energy.	✓ Links to FCO Strategy and SD pages detailing UK SDS and SDC.
China <i>Beijing</i>	Has an environment section listing key speeches and articles. No context to explain Embassy’s approach.	X
France <i>Paris</i>	Outlines public sector research on sustainable development and environment. Provides sustainable development pages with links to information on the UK SDS, waste, Africa Commission and London Olympics and to organisations such as the SDC.	✓ Links to Defra information on UK SDS.
India <i>New Delhi</i>	Climate change programme and sustainable development programme funding described. Describes SD as one of UK’s highest priorities for foreign policy over the next 5-10 years.	X
Italy <i>Rome</i>	Provides information on the UK’s international priorities which include sustainable development. Lists sustainable development as an area of work for the Environment and Agriculture section.	X
Germany <i>Berlin</i>	Features energy in context of climate change and sustainable development. Sustainable development tends to be discussed in the context of environmental issues.	X
Japan <i>Tokyo</i>	Energy and environment pages are put in context of SD. Focus on climate change and biodiversity (illegal logging and whaling)	X

Malaysia <i>Kuala Lumpur</i>	Introduction to energy and environment work makes SD context clear and provides link to FCO homepage for follow up.	✓ Links to FCO SD pages for more SD information but does not mention the FCO SD Strategy. Does not mention UK SDS but does provide link to Government's SD website.
Mexico <i>Mexico City</i>	Sustainable development, justice and climate change highlighted in Ambassador Giles Paxman's message on arrival in December 2005. No specific SD/environment content found.	X
Nigeria <i>Abuja</i>	No environment/energy/SD content found.	X
Russia <i>Moscow</i>	Science, Environment and Nuclear Safety pages refer to GOF and Booklet on UK-Russia environmental co-operation is available on the site. This sets out the UK's environmental work with Russia in a sustainable development context with practical case studies.	X
South Africa <i>Pretoria</i>	Links to FCO PSAs seem to be only reference to SD/environment or energy work	X
Spain <i>Madrid</i>	Main embassy entry page links to sustainable development. Pages are only available in Spanish (unlike the rest of the site) and refer to the 1999 UK Strategy's objectives and principles and not the 2005 UK SDS.	X
Thailand <i>Bangkok</i>	News features on visits of UK "biodiversity" Ministers but no SD policy context provided on site.	X
UKMis Nairobi (UK's mission to the UN Environment Programme)	Limited policy content generally. Refers to UK/UNEP links. No further information of UK's own SD policy.	X
USA <i>Washington</i>	States FCO priorities including SD. Puts climate change info in context of UK sustainable development strategy (generic with no link or details). Dedicated sustainable development section does not refer to strategy either but does have mix of press releases – not all Defra.	X
Vietnam <i>Hanoi</i>	No specific policy context provided but highlights SD in list of Vietnam/UK priorities adapted from FCO priorities. <i>"To promote Vietnam's sustainable development, underpinned by greater democracy, good governance and respect for human rights."</i>	X

Sustainable Development Dialogues

90. The FCO's Strategy commits to establishing demand-led country specific dialogues, enabling the UK government to work bilaterally with certain priority countries to promote sustainable development in a more structured and co-ordinated way.²¹
91. High level dialogues have now been initiated with China (November 2005), India (October 2005), and Brazil (March 2006). Dialogues with South Africa and Mexico are in preparation and the FCO hopes to be able to launch them this year. These are aimed at mutual learning on how to incorporate sustainable development values into government policy and they seek to promote closer co-operation on issues including climate change, environmental protection, clean energy, reducing poverty and sustainable consumption and production. The dialogues are a cross-government initiative led by Defra with support from FCO and DfID and a range of other government and external partners.
92. **The SDC welcomes the FCO's role in facilitating these important diplomatic opportunities to engage with this key nations. The department is now working to set out key deliverables to be achieved from such dialogues in order to derive the greatest benefits from these key exchanges. It is important that these deliverables are reflected in future SDAPs and Country Action Plans with associated resources.**

Global Opportunities Fund (GOF)

93. In line with a commitment in its sustainable development strategy, the FCO launched a new sustainable development fund, worth £5 million per year, as part of its Global Opportunities Fund (incorporating

the former Human Rights Programme) in April 2005. Sustainable development is one of six programmes under GOF which include economic governance and climate change and energy.

94. This programme funds projects at the local, national, regional and international levels under three key themes relating to good governance (including environmental governance), human rights and natural resource management. As of December 2005, the GOF Sustainable Development programme was funding 300 projects around the world. These are supporting a diverse range of work from improved economic appraisal for vulture conservation in India, sustainable tourism in China and developing a community based approach to police modernisation in Mexico.
95. **The key themes and objectives that have been chosen, fit with the focus of the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy. However, it is important that the GOF Sustainable Development Fund is more overtly linked to reinforcing the targets and objectives of the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy.** This could be through supporting information in application packs and the guidance notes already provided to FCO staff assessing project bids or a re-orientation of the objectives themselves when reviewed. FCO staff are already required to state how a project will contribute to FCO priorities and PSAs. This check back to core business could be further tailored to ensure that key contributions to the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy or perhaps the key priorities of the FCO's SDAP are highlighted.

96. The GOF and sustainable development programme are well publicised on post websites. Posts running the programme are priority countries required to have Country Action Plans which provides a strong infrastructure to ensure consistent messages and effective monitoring and review. The Programme is a key means of

²¹ *UK International Priorities: The FCO Sustainable Development Strategy, March 2006, p.10*

demonstrating the FCO's Sustainable Strategy objectives in action in a very practical way. It will be important that the achievements of these projects are monitored and the "stories" generated used to inform FCO's ongoing approach to sustainable development

Leading by example

Promoting sustainable development through the FCO's corporate activities.

97. A cross-cutting theme of the UK SDS is the need for government and the public sector to lead by example in sustainable development – both in terms of policy and operations. The FCO's SD Strategy dedicates a chapter to setting out how it intends to promote sustainable development through the FCO's corporate activities. It makes a commitment to integrate SD into all FCO activity both through policy making and delivery and through operational decisions.

Policy making and delivery

98. The UK SDS commits the Government to ensuring that staff have an understanding of how to apply sustainable development principles as a key part of policy skills for the future and that all policies are properly appraised against the new principles of sustainable development. The FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy recognises the need to ensure that all FCO staff understand the importance of sustainable development and how it links to their wider work.
99. Currently the FCO's capacity building work in this area seem to centre largely around sustainable development training (including induction) and raising awareness through various magazines, events and internet resources. It is evident that the FCO is working hard to make staff aware of its strategy but it is not clear how far

current training addresses its use and application in terms of adapting approaches to policy making. However, the FCO Sustainable Development Strategy does also include a welcome commitment to ensuring that priority posts include an objective on mainstreaming sustainable development into their corporate activities.

100. **The SDC would expect to see future sustainable development action plans including targets relating to policy making skills and sustainable development and some kind of measure of the FCO's "mainstreaming" success. The department should indicate how it is going about sustainable development "proofing" of its work. Much of the department's work centres around support, co-ordination and negotiation and staff need to be clear how sustainable development should influence their operating context in these roles.**

Operational Activity

101. Although the FCO is a relatively small department in terms of estate size in London, it owns or rents properties in over 150 countries. Most of these properties are Embassies or High Commissions and with their key role in promoting UK values overseas (as discussed in paras 61 & 62 and in relation to Country Action Plans), it is important that they reflect the objectives of the FCO sustainable development strategy in both policy and operations.
102. The FCO's UK based estate already works to the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate (SDiG) – the operational targets set for Government by Ministers. The Strategy commits the department to including these targets in the internal audit questionnaire for overseas posts. To date, posts have been asked to reflect the FCO's environmental policy statement as far as local conditions permit. This is therefore an important commitment and will ensure

that posts are working to common standards as far as possible. **The FCO is currently developing the necessary guidance for posts on how to measure and achieve these targets and it is important that the department provides adequate central support to establish the appropriate monitoring systems.**

103. As the Government's sustainable development watchdog, the SDC monitors the government's performance against the SDiG targets. In its most recent assessment (December 2005),²² the SDC awarded the FCO one star for its performance against target deadlines that were due but recognised that the department had met a good number of targets ahead of time. (Overseas properties were not included in this assessment).

104. The SDC found that the department had many of the appropriate action plans in place to deliver the Framework targets and was making good progress in relation to some aspects of energy management and in relation to carbon emission requirements in new estate management contracts. However, the department estimated that its waste arisings had risen by 4%, against the Government target to reduce waste arisings by 1% per annum. It also reported a 5% increase in absolute carbon emissions since 1999-2000 against the Government target to achieve a 12.5% reduction in absolute carbon emissions by 2010-11.

105. The FCO Strategy particularly highlights purchasing, travel, building design, waste, water and energy management as areas where the department will integrate sustainable development into operational decisions. However, it does not make it clear why these areas have been chosen although procurement practices and travel are highlighted as areas where the FCO

feels it needs to make more progress and there are related targets.

106. All of these areas are listed on the FCO website as areas of significant impact (in order of significance) as well as corresponding to key areas of the Framework and some of the department's particular performance weaknesses. **Future plans should indicate priority areas and indicate why they have been chosen e.g. whether they are areas where FCO has chosen to concentrate resources to improve performance against cross-government targets or they are areas where the department feels its estate makes most impact.**

Procurement

107. The UK SDS makes a cross-cutting commitment that the UK Government will be the EU lead on sustainable procurement by 2008. The FCO Strategy highlights procurement as an area where FCO needs to make more progress in relation to sustainable development. In this respect the FCO has set targets to:

- ensure the inclusion of BREEAM targets in the specifications for new FCO buildings overseas
- ensure that "all FCO procurement contracts include green clauses"
- ensure that new FCO buildings overseas achieve a very good or excellent BREEAM rating. (Objective for 2005-08)

108. **The FCO's procurement targets provide a strong basis for action and are very specific.** The department is preparing a sustainable procurement strategy and procurement is being incorporated into the department's environmental management system.

109. The FCO's 2006/8 action plan will also need to account for the recommendations

²² *Leading by Example....not exactly*, SDC commentary on the Sustainable Development in Government Report 2005, SDC, December 2005.

of the Sustainable Procurement Task Force and the new operational targets on the government estate. In particular, the Government has mandated that all buildings and refurbishments will be BREEAM excellent. **As FCO posts are showcases for the UK overseas, the SDC recommends that the FCO considers how to match this commitment in setting out the targets for its next SDAP.**

110. It is important that the FCO's procurement strategy is seen to reinforce its foreign policy priorities in particular in relation to trade and human rights. In overseas posts in developing countries the encouragement of local sourcing of food and labour where possible would signal support for local communities and economies. The Government's Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative provides a framework for taking action in this area.

Travel

111. FCO's Strategy is upfront about the department's essential need to travel and commits to reducing the environmental impacts of that travel.
112. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy committed Government to off-setting carbon dioxide emissions arising from official and Ministerial air travel from April 2006. FCO, DfID and Defra were the first departments to commit to the off-setting programme.
113. The FCO's Strategy sets out a target to audit the FCO's UK originated travel with a view to introducing a carbon off-setting scheme for air travel. A scheme has now been established with the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP). This was achieved a year earlier than required by the UK SDS. The department is looking to invest in renewable energy or energy efficiency projects in developing countries, under the Clean Development Mechanism which

meet the Gold Standard. However, currently there is a low availability of such projects.

The SDC commends the FCO for displaying leadership in off-setting its carbon emissions from air travel, along with DfID and Defra. It is a sensible strategy target to establish firm data for this scheme. The department can build effectively on this progress by:

- **developing appropriate progress measures and milestones to report against and include in future action plans**
- **ensuring that off-setting projects reinforce the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy objectives and communicating this effectively to staff and stakeholders**
- **demonstrating how FCO is taking a strategic approach to travel and how far it is actively encouraging alternatives such as tele and video conferencing where appropriate.**

Incentivising environmental management across the Estate

114. The FCO has established a network of environmental volunteers made up of staff in the UK offices and overseas. The network is convened by the FCO's Environmental Manager and it meets and uses email discussions to improve environmental management across the FCO, shares good practice and disseminates effective ways of working. The FCO ran an energy and recycling campaign in February 2006 which used the volunteers' network to encourage good practice, highlight "top tips" to their colleagues, publicise campaign posters etc.
115. In 2005, the FCO made a maximum of £15,000 available to the nine posts in the FCO's pilot project to implement good environmental management practices in a

structured way (not necessarily as a formal Environmental Management System). This was designed to act as “seedcorn” funding to kickstart initiatives relating to energy, water, travel, procurement and waste. Posts are allowed to plough back any financial savings that they make into further environmental measures. The amount was intended to be sufficient incentive to encourage action and to make a difference, but not one of such magnitude as to require a large scale capital project to which many posts may not feel they could divert the staff resource. In this way, the FCO hoped that posts would have a manageable taster of taking the initiative on environmental management.

116. The FCO’s Environmental Manager provided the SDC with further information on the kind of initiatives that posts have undertaken or plan to. These include: installation of a drip irrigation system, the use of clothes lines instead of tumble dryers in the summer, introduction of a green rental policy for accommodation, replacement of traditional computer screens with flat ones, undertaking of energy/carbon audits, replacing a car with an “environmentally friendly” one, implementation of training courses to raise staff and their families’ awareness of good environmental practices, and the installation of energy efficient lighting.

117. **Overall, the SDC is impressed with the initiatives that FCO is undertaking in relation to developing a more systematic approach to environmental management across the FCO estate, as well as the incentives, support and encouragement towards more sustainable practices.**

In developing future action plans it will be important to:

- **set out the key operational priorities for sustainable development on the**

FCO Estate and indicate how far these reflect the significant impacts.

- **Ensure that these priorities are aligned with specific initiatives and funding in particular in relation to:**
 - **adequate support and guidance for posts who are now working towards cross-government sustainable development targets in relation to their operations**
 - **the challenging requirements of the new, cross-cutting targets for sustainable development on the Government Estate. E.g. carbon neutrality by 2012 and the mandating of BREAM excellent for all major new builds or refurbishment.**
 - **broaden the FCO’s traditional environmental protection/financial savings approach to sustainable operations and consider how the department might contribute to local economies and communities, for example, through its procurement and employment policies at overseas posts.**

Ensuring it happens

Monitoring and reporting

118. **The FCO’s Strategy sets out a comprehensive system for regular monitoring, review and reporting.** This is mostly linked to existing accountability mechanisms for FCO’s strategic objective VI: sustainable development, underpinned by democracy, good governance and human rights. Specific monitoring and accountability mechanisms have also been established in relation to the Country Action Plans (see paras 82-84). The department’s commitment to extended coverage of environment management systems will further assist the FCO in identifying

priorities and monitoring and reviewing progress in terms of its own operations as well as ensuring that appropriate data is available to draw up future plans and strategies.

119. In its Strategy, the FCO commits to reviewing the Strategy targets towards the end of the financial year 2005/6 when it will also assess progress against the longer-term objectives and set new targets for 2006/7. The department intends that its 2006 SDAP will cover the period 2006-8. This is in keeping with the FCO SD Strategy which set objectives for 2005-8.

120. **The FCO reviewed its progress six months after the Strategy's publication (September 2005) and again in March 2006. The SDC welcomes these public, progress reviews. These send a positive signal to staff and stakeholders that the FCO's Strategy is a living and working document which is informing FCO work programmes. That said, although the department has presented a relatively comprehensive account of progress, it summarises key achievements and successes only and is not clearly linked back to the FCO Sustainable Development commitments. This makes it difficult to discern a clear audit trail and there is no indication as to whether the progress identified is satisfactory.**

121. **The SDC welcomes the FCO's commitment to seeking an independent audit of progress against its strategy each year. However, this does not absolve the FCO of its responsibility to continue to develop its own assessment of progress. The independent assessment will complement this and help to assure stakeholders that the FCO can provide reliable evidence on its progress to the satisfaction of an objective party. Having arranged for this external scrutiny and objective feedback, the FCO should make it clear how it is acting on this information, as**

well as its own assessments, in its SDAPs and related progress reports.

122. Departments are required to regularly report against their SDAPs and therefore the FCO will need to continue its open reporting against its Strategy/Action Plans. The FCO intends to report its progress against the strategy in its annual departmental report. As space is often limited in such reports, it is important that the annual report provides adequate cross-references to the review information on the web and vice-versa.

Learning points

- **Future public review documents setting out progress against the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy should indicate how far Strategy targets and objectives have been achieved.**
- **Future SDAPs should be seen to be informed by the FCO's own assessment of progress and any third party assessment which has been commissioned.**
- **Progress updates provided in the annual report against the Sustainable Development Strategy and/or departmental SDAP should be effectively cross-referenced with any appropriate review information which has been published.**

Engagement

"The FCO supports the UK's strategic priorities through communication, advocacy and engagement with targeted audiences, which include key individuals, civil society, community groups and the media. Our website plays an increasingly important role in this work."

Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK's International Priorities, FCO, March 2006.

123. If the FCO's Strategy is to be used as the department intends, then its messages need to be effectively communicated to staff and stakeholders. The department also needs to ensure that they understand how the Strategy impacts on their work and how they can play their part in shaping its on-going development. This requires talking to people at the right point about the right issues.
124. Without ownership, a new strategy may be resisted internally and be difficult to implement. It is also crucial to be open and honest about the nature of the process when engaging and communicating with stakeholders. When the engagement is simply to help inform staff and stakeholders then this needs to be made clear so that people do not build any false expectations. The following paragraphs examine where the FCO's approach to engagement appears to be working well and where it might be improved.
127. The FCO sent an initial draft to priority posts and the whole network were then consulted on a subsequent version. The FCO also sought input from other relevant departments such as the: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Department for International Development (DFID), Prime Minister's office (No.10), Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Cabinet Office (CO). The FCO also sought independent feedback from the Sustainable Development Commission and its Green Globe Network (GGN). The SDC commented on a number of drafts and the Chairman of the SDC, Jonathon Porritt met with Bill Rammell (Sustainable Development Minister at the time) on two occasions as well as with FCO officials. The FCO arranged a working lunch with a selection of GGN members to discuss the main draft. The final draft was signed off by the FCO Board as presented by the then Head of Sustainable Development and Commonwealth Group and corresponding Director.

Development of the Strategy

125. It is not often well-recognised that a cross-cutting corporate strategy that has been shaped by a range of staff and stakeholders will always stand more chance of being effectively implemented than one that has been developed in relative isolation by one team. If "ownership" of the Strategy has been shared and its aims and objectives widely agreed then there is a strong foundation for action.
126. FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy was largely developed by the FCO's Sustainable Development and Commonwealth Group (now the Sustainable Development and Business Group). The team convened a steering group with representatives from the key groups across the FCO with an interest. This group produced and commented on initial drafts and organised specific meetings on particular sections as necessary.
128. The FCO held a launch event for the Strategy in March 2005 which was open to all staff with a keynote address from the Foreign Secretary. All who attended were provided with a copy of the Strategy and priority posts were provided with copies to send to key contacts. The event was held to co-incide with a meeting of environmental attachés to maximise their ability to attend. The Director General of Global Issues sent a letter to all other FCO Director Generals and Directors to cascade to staff in London and overseas alerting them to the Strategy and its key messages. The main intention was to make clear that the strategy was a strategy for the FCO itself and relevant across the range of FCO work, in particular priority countries and directorates dealing with issues such as climate change and economics.
129. The Sustainable Development team also provided a display on the Strategy in the staff canteen in London and made copies

available to passing staff. FCO's sustainable development training courses, which also feature in induction training, also highlight the Strategy.

130. **It is apparent that the FCO took an inclusive approach to developing its Strategy and sought to involve key divisions, its overseas posts, other government departments and external stakeholders. The SDC commends this approach and urges the department to build upon it in line with its aims to mainstream sustainable development across the department.**

Reinforcing the messages

131. FCO provided a working draft of the department's sustainable development communications plan for the strategy. This was designed with internal mainstreaming in mind rather than external communications. FCO would like to establish and learn from its internal approach and then consider the appropriate messages to other government departments and external stakeholders.
132. The current communications plan is very much orientated around raising awareness of the Strategy and Plan as a document rather than in relation to its content and potential impact on the ground. In terms of both internal and public communications, marketing the document as the "story" is likely to have limited impact. Even for an internal audience, it is important to set out how a set of key messages are going to be delivered. At present, the plan is more of a "to do" list of tasks than an outcome-focused delivery plan.
133. Targets are more likely to drive change if they are outcome-based in terms of the difference the implementation of the Strategy makes to the department's work, rather than an assessment of the number of people who are aware of the Strategy. In many cases this will mean that the
- Communications teams' objectives will be the same as those of the policy lead. More "traditional" communications indicators such as number and rate of internet downloads, consultations, press coverage etc may be helpful context, but are not necessarily a relevant indicator of whether the communications approach is achieving the desired outcomes, except as a measure of distribution of documents.
134. **The FCO's future action plans will need to make it clear what kind of outcomes the department expects from the Communications activity outlined and the kind of messages that the department is seeking to convey and to whom.**
135. The SDC is aware that a new Network Management and Communications team in the Global and Economic Issues directorate will draw up a communications plan bringing together all of the Directorate's responsibilities (sustainable development, business, climate change and energy, science and technology and economic policy). It is important that this plan:
- Sets out the key messages that the FCO is seeking to convey
 - reinforces the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy and has linked targets and specified measurements of success. For example in relation to the level of internet/intranet activity, levels of engagement through stakeholder networks etc
 - is developed and revised in parallel with the planning process for future action plans rather than being established at a final stage when the process is more settled
 - includes actions relating to further work on communications and engagement to support the plan. This may be an action indicating the

kind of plan the department wants to develop with key outcomes specified, or an action relating to how the department may review support needs.

Developing clear and engaging messages

136. The message of a cross-cutting theme such as sustainable development is often more powerful when linked to “where people are” rather than when it is identified as a separate entity. Hence the FCO needs to describe how a sustainable development approach is informing and enhancing its work. Sustainable development must be described in the context of what FCO staff and stakeholders would consider core to the FCO’s work.

137. The FCO has already identified the need to ensure that staff and stakeholders understand the links between key areas of FCO activity and sustainable development and how a sustainable development approach impacts on this activity. It is clear that the FCO is starting to develop strong messages in relation to:

- Climate change and energy (a focus of induction and sustainable development training)
- sustainable development and conflict prevention/security (e.g exhibition in February 2006)
- the work of posts - Country Action Plans and “greening” of embassies
- the Global Opportunities Fund (highlighted clearly on post websites)

138. **The SDC would encourage the FCO to continue its efforts in these fertile areas. The Commission would also suggest that the department looks to develop strong messages in the following areas:**

- **links between carbon off-setting and the overseas projects it supports**

- **sustainable development as a key operating environment for business and trade**
- **sustainable development as a key UK value when showcasing the nation.**

Empowering existing networks

139. The FCO has already recognised that its environmental attaché network is a key asset in implementing and publicising the Strategy. Currently, environment attachés are supported by SDNet, an Internet based network for officials working on sustainable development issues. The FCO launched a newsletter - SD News - in June 2006.²³ The department has commissioned Futerra (a sustainable development communications company) to review the effectiveness of SDNet and is considering how best to facilitate feedback from attachés, particularly at their annual summer conference. The network is a crucial resource which FCO can use to help develop effective SD messages and “stories” as well as convey them. Staff in posts are constantly testing these messages on the ground to a range of audiences and will have crucial feedback that needs to be tapped to inform the development of the FCO’s sustainable development approach.

140. The department has also been considering how best to utilise the expertise of the Government’s Green Globe Network. This network was originally established in 1997 by the Foreign Secretary to provide independent advice to government on international sustainable development issues and is funded by FCO, DfiD and Defra. The network consists of senior figures from academia, NGOs and industry with a strong track record in international environmental issues, who act their personal capacity, and hold discussions on a Chatham House rule basis. The Network

²³ This service was previously “Epnnet” and was revised and re-launched in March 2005.

offers advice and information to government, often tackling cross-cutting themes such as climate change and environmental mainstreaming, and develops proposals for new policy initiatives.

- 141. The SDC welcomes the department's current initiatives to review how it is using and supporting its existing networks of stakeholders and staff to support the department's sustainable development strategy**

- 142. The FCO has demonstrated that it is keen to build strong networks as a means of facilitating the exchange of information and expertise to support its sustainable development strategy. It is important that the role of these networks is fully reflected in the department's sustainable development communications plan as key engagement mechanisms.**

Annex A

“SDAP” Assessment Checklist

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (applied to Sustainable Development Strategy)

Sustainable Development Minister: Ian McCartney MP

SDC Rating:

Off the Starting Block...Cruising... **Gearing Up**.... Leading the Pack

1	Does the plan specify the period of time it will cover?	✓	Sets out targets for 2005/06 and objectives for next three years.
2	Does the plan specify which organisations it covers?	✗	No. Needs to be clear about status and relationship of various Executive Agencies.
3	Has the organisation articulated what SD means for them?	✓	Makes clear that SD underpins many aspects of foreign policy.
4	Does the plan describe the benefits of having an SD approach to the organisation?	✗	Highlights links to foreign policy but doesn't describe how an SD approach might be beneficial.
5	Does the plan acknowledge the Government's sustainable development goal?	✓	Yes, and describes it in terms of application internationally. Does not specifically refer to international part of the goal.
6	Does the plan acknowledge the priorities of the UK SD strategy? Does the plan mention one or more of the priorities of the UK SD strategy?	✗ ✓	Acknowledges international priorities only but does refer to key UK priority areas.
7	Does the plan identify links to the priorities of the UK SD strategy?	✓	
8	Does the plan acknowledge the principles of the UK SD strategy? Does the plan mention one or more of the principles of the UK SD strategy?	✗ ✗	FCO published before Strategy text was finalised.
9	Does the plan identify links to the principles of the UK SD strategy?	✗	FCO published before Strategy text was finalised.
10	Have the organisation's relevant executive agencies produced their own plan?	✗	FCO needs to clarify coverage of Strategy and plan.

11	Does the action plan contain a work programme?	✓	Yes, Annex A provides a summary of targets and objectives.
12	Does the plan include actions relating to commitments from the SD strategy?	✓	Yes. International commitments and procurement.
13	Does the action plan cover government policy?	✓	
14	Does the action plan cover operations?	✓	Yes, UK and overseas
15	Was the plan publicly available by 13th January 2006?	✓	Published Strategy/work plan at same time as UK SDS but not in SDAP format.
16	Does the plan outline any arrangements for strengthening SD capacity in the organisation?	✓	UK and overseas
17	Does the plan describe the infrastructure which is in place to deliver the plan?	✓	Signed off by Secretary of State.
18	Is it made clear in the plan who signed it off?	✓	
19	Does the plan designate who is accountable for the delivery of the overall plan?	✓	Yes clearly.
20	Does the plan explain how the organisation will monitor progress against the plan?	✓	
21	Does the plan describe how the organisation will report against the plan?	✓	Annual FCO Departmental report
22	Does the plan describe how it links in to other reporting mechanisms within the organisation? E.g. the annual report	✓	
23	Does the plan commit to reporting against the plan on a defined regular basis?	✓	Yes, annually.

Senior Accountable Officer: Director General - Globalisation

Status of Plan: Final Strategy/Implementation Plan

N.B. Please note that the SDC rating is based on a competency framework and not the addition of the scores in the table above. Please see main SDC 'critique' of all departmental SDAPs for a full explanation of the methodology [SDC main report yet to be published].

Annex B

Summary of Action Points from SDC Strategic Audit

Core elements to be reflected in FCO's SDAP 2006 and Future Sustainable Development Action Plans

Action	SDC Strategic Audit Reference (para)
<p>Links to Core Business Systems</p> <p>Ensure action plan clearly articulates the requirements of relevant PSAs and demonstrates how the plan's targets and objectives will contribute to these.</p> <p>The plan should also clearly state how monitoring of progress against the action plan will contribute to the monitoring against PSA targets, in particular FCO's Objective VI which is specific to sustainable development.</p> <p>Progress reports will need to demonstrate how far achievement of the targets has contributed to relevant PSAs.</p>	11 & 23
<p>Improving quality of targets and timescales</p> <p>In summary, the SDC recommends that the FCO should ensure that future targets are clearly linked to priority themes, have associated milestones, allocated ownership and specify the intended outcomes.</p> <p>Clearly state how targets have been chosen and prioritised to enable the department and/or stakeholders to better monitor and assess progress.</p> <p>Greater alignment of priority themes with targets.</p> <p>Future targets should describe a desired outcome or indicators of success even if these cannot be numerically measured.</p>	25 -29
<p>FCO and the UK Sustainable Development Strategy</p> <p>Set out how the FCO is working with the five principles of the UK SDS and ensuring that they underpin policy decisions</p>	32-33
<p>The FCO's Strategy sets out the FCO's contribution across the full range of UK SDS shared priorities and international priorities for sustainable development. However, in future SDAPs, the FCO will need to make it clear how its priority themes fit with the UK SDS shared priorities and whether the department is concentrating on a particular priority in a particular year or spreading activity equally across its chosen themes.</p>	34-38
<p>To ensure a transparent audit trail, future FCO SDAPs should make it clear where targets relate back to specific UK SDS commitments or explain why a new approach/direction has been taken.</p>	39-41

<p>The FCO Strategy fits well with the cross-cutting commitments in the UK SDS. However, the Strategy does not acknowledge that these actions contribute to the Government’s wider efforts to ensure that government departments lead by example on sustainable development. Future action plans need to acknowledge this cross-cutting theme of the UK SDS.</p>	42-44
<p>Delivery through Overseas Posts</p>	
<p>Country Action Plans</p> <p>The SDC strongly supports the FCO requirement for priority countries to prepare Country Action Plans (CAPs) for sustainable development. This is a key mechanism for ensuring that sustainable development is promoted consistently as a cross-cutting policy both at home and abroad.</p> <p>The SDC supports the current selection of priority countries for sustainable development. However, to ensure that the selection process is as transparent as possible the SDC recommends that:</p> <p>Future plans and related reports should make it clear why priority countries have been chosen and what is expected of them</p> <p>As well as economic and environmental factors, future plans should make clear how far social factors have played a part in the selection, perhaps in relation to human rights and governance.</p>	66-74
<p>Ensuring it Happens</p>	
<p>Monitoring and Reporting</p>	
<p>Future public, review documents setting out progress against the FCO’s Sustainable Development Strategy should indicate how far Strategy targets and objectives have been achieved.</p>	118-122
<p>Future SDAPs should be seen to be informed by the FCO’s own assessment of progress and any third party assessment which has been commissioned.</p>	118-122
<p>Progress updates provided in the annual report against the Sustainable Development</p>	
<p>Strategy and/or departmental SDAP should be effectively cross-referenced with any appropriate review information which has been published.</p>	118-122

<p>Engagement</p> <p>Reinforcing the messages</p> <p>The FCO’s future action plans will need to make it clear what kind of outcomes the department expects from the Communications activity outlined and the kind of messages that the department is seeking to convey and to whom.</p> <p>The FCO has demonstrated that it is keen to build strong networks as a means of facilitating the exchange of information and expertise to support its sustainable development strategy. It is important that the role of these networks is fully reflected in the department’s sustainable development communications plan as key engagement mechanisms.</p>	<p>131-134</p> <p>139-142</p>
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Longer term objectives to be set in train in SDAP 2006

Action	SDC Strategic Audit Reference (para)
<p>Key Areas for FCO “Added Value”</p>	
<p>Overall, the SDC agrees that the following are important areas for FCO to develop focused work programmes:</p> <p>Climate security Business and Sustainable Development Sustainable tourism Sustainable development as a public diplomacy and communications opportunity Natural resource management and links to conflict</p> <p>These should be in addition to the FCO’s own corporate activities to lead by example and ensure that the FCO has the appropriate sustainable development skills and capacity.</p>	<p>45-50</p>
<p>Climate Security</p> <p>The SDC supports the FCO’s focus on climate security. This encourages dialogue about the range of practical and political responses that are required to meet the global challenge of climate change. This approach also ensures that the climate change debate is rooted in the overarching context of sustainable development. i.e. if climate change is the problem then sustainable development is the solution. The SDC would expect future SDAPs to make this relationship clear and ensure that it is reinforced and reflected institutionally particularly in the fit between country action plans for sustainable development and energy and climate change.</p>	<p>51-53</p> <p>77-83</p>

<p>Sustainable Tourism</p> <p>The FCO now needs to build upon its sustainable tourism work in line with its Strategy objective to raise the profile and engagement of the UK Government in sustainable tourism. To this end, it is important that it integrates sustainable tourism into its own business and ensures that this key area is consistently reflected across Country Action Plans.</p> <p>The SDC recognises that progress is dependent on a range of other government departments in particular DfID and DTI who are not currently participating in the cross-government sustainable tourism group. The SDC supports the departments efforts to highlight the opportunities of integrating sustainable tourism into their business in order to further their own departmental objectives.</p>	56-58
<p>Natural Resource Protection and Conflict</p> <p>The SDC recommends that the FCO continues to explore the opportunities for joint working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to natural resource protection and conflict and reflects these in future SDAPs.</p>	59-60
<p>Public diplomacy and communications</p> <p>Sustainable development presents a good, strong value which is internationally recognised as a positive force. The SDC recommends that the FCO should actively promote UK support for sustainable development overseas as a UK value and ensure that it is observed in action in British Embassies and High Commissions.</p>	61-62 85-89
<p>Delivery through Overseas Posts</p>	
<p>Country Action Plans</p>	See separate table.
<p>Sustainable Development Dialogues</p> <p>The SDC welcomes the FCO's role in facilitating these important diplomatic opportunities to engage with these key nations. The department is now working to set out key deliverables to be achieved from such dialogues in order to derive the greatest benefits from these key exchanges. It is important that these deliverables are reflected in future SDAPs and Country Action Plans with associated resources.</p>	90-92
<p>Global Opportunities Fund</p> <p>The key themes and objectives that have been chosen for GOF fit with the focus of the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy. However, it is important that the GOF is more overtly linked to reinforcing the targets and objectives of the Strategy. Eg through assessment criteria for bids.</p>	93-96
<p>Leading by Example</p>	
<p>Policy making and delivery</p> <p>The SDC would expect to see future sustainable development action plans including targets relating to policy-making skills and sustainable development and some kind of measure of FCO's "mainstreaming" success. The department should indicate how it is going about sustainable development "proofing" of its work. Much of the department's work centres around support, co-ordination and negotiation and staff need to be clear how sustainable development should influence their operating context in these roles.</p>	98-100

<p>Operational Activity</p> <p>Overall, the SDC is impressed with the initiatives that FCO is undertaking in relation to developing a more systematic approach to environmental management across the FCO estate as well as incentivising, supporting and encouraging more sustainable practices. In developing future action plans it will be important to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out the key operational priorities for sustainable development on the Government Estate and indicate how far these reflect the significant impacts. • Ensure that these priorities are aligned with specific initiatives and funding in particular in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adequate support and guidance for posts who are now working towards cross-government sustainable development targets in relation to their operations • the challenging requirements of the new, cross-cutting targets for sustainable development on the Government Estate. Eg carbon neutrality by 2012 and the mandating of BREAM excellent for all major new builds or refurbishment. • broaden the FCO's traditional environmental protection/financial savings approach to sustainable operations and consider how the department's operations policy might reinforce its foreign policy objectives. For example, by contributing to local economies and communities through its procurement and employment policies at overseas posts. <p>Travel</p> <p>The SDC commends the FCO for displaying leadership in offsetting its carbon emissions from air travel, along with DfID and Defra. It is a sensible strategy target to establish firm data for this scheme. The department can build effectively on this progress by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing appropriate progress measures and milestones to report against and include in future action plans. • ensuring that off-setting projects reinforce the FCO's Sustainable Development Strategy objectives and communicating this effectively to staff and stakeholders. • demonstrating how FCO is taking a strategic approach to travel and how far it is actively encouraging alternatives such as tele and video conferencing where appropriate. 	<p>101-113</p>
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Ensuring it happens	
<p>Engagement</p> <p>It is apparent that the FCO took an inclusive approach to developing its Strategy and sought to involve key divisions, its overseas posts, other government departments and external stakeholders. The SDC commends this approach and urges the department to build upon it in line with its aims to mainstream sustainable development across the department.</p>	123-130
<p>Developing clear and engaging messages</p> <p>It is clear that the FCO is starting to develop strong messages in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climate change and energy (focus in induction and sustainable development training) • sustainable development and conflict prevention/security • the work of posts – Country Action Plans and “greening” of embassies • the Global Opportunities Fund <p>The SDC would encourage the FCO to continue its efforts in these fertile areas. The Commission would also suggest that the department also looked to develop strong messages in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • links between carbon offsetting and the overseas projects it supports • sustainable development as a key operating environment for business and trade • sustainable development as a key UK value when showcasing the nation. 	136-138

Country Action Plan Presentation and Management

(to be reflected in SDAPs as appropriate)

Action	SDC Strategic Audit Reference (para)
<p>Priority Countries</p> <p>The SDC strongly supports the FCO requirement for priority countries to prepare Country Action Plans (CAPs) for sustainable development. This is a key mechanism for ensuring that sustainable development is promoted consistently as a cross-cutting policy both at home and abroad.</p> <p>The SDC supports the current selection of priority countries for sustainable development. However, to ensure that the selection process is as transparent as possible the SDC recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future plans and related reports should make it clear why priority countries have been chosen and what is expected of them • As well as economic and environmental factors, future plans should make clear how far social factors have played a part in the selection, perhaps in relation to human rights and governance. 	66-74

<p>The SDC recommends that the FCO reviews the current effectiveness of separate country climate change and sustainable development plans and considers whether it needs to enforce a more integrated approach in order to achieve the objectives of its Sustainable Development Strategy.</p>	75-79
<p>CAP quality – learning points</p> <p>Overall, the SDC found the CAPs which it considered to demonstrate a good understanding of sustainable development and the relevant links to post priorities, resources and risks. However, most do not make effective links back to the UK SDS or FCO Sustainable Development Strategy or cross-reference to Climate Change and Energy Plans.</p>	80-81
<p>Now that the FCO and its posts have had some experience of preparing CAPs, it is important that the department ensures that it sets out some basic guidance for posts on its expectations with respect to the preparation, presentation and reporting of their action plans and how they should link with Climate Change and Energy Plans.</p>	82-84
<p>No plans are available on the relevant post website and neither are they referred to. The FCO should give a clear direction to posts as to the appropriate level of accessibility.</p>	82-84
<p>As part of its ongoing work on sustainable development communications, the SDC recommends that the FCO should review the sustainable development content of Internet sites across priority sustainable development posts and advise on key elements that should be present in order to support the department’s sustainable development strategy.</p>	85-89