

Memorandum to the new federal government

Adopted by the general meeting of May 20, 2003

1. Sustainable development as a policy framework for the entire government

- [1] In 2002, ten years after Rio, the United Nations reiterated in Johannesburg their commitment to sustainable development. From the Johannesburg Political Declaration and Actionplan, it appears that the **challenges** remain daunting and that a special effort is called for to bridge the **implementation chasm**, which also exists in Belgium. Pursuant to the Top of Johannesburg, the council has issued three recommendations wherein these concerns are being addressed in greater depth and policy proposals are formulated.
- [2] In Johannesburg, the international community reiterated the importance of the **integration of the three dimensions** of sustainable development: to wit, the economic, the ecological, and the social dimensions. The council members are of the opinion that this integration needs to be strengthened in Belgium.
- [3] The FCSD (Federal Council for Sustainable Development) notes with satisfaction that in the international forums, Belgium is a dedicated advocate of an integrated approach. At the same time, the FCSD notes that, on the national plane, too few ministers and public administrations take sustainable development as a frame of reference. The council submits that all federal ministers consider sustainable development as their **effective responsibility** and that for all policy domains, sustainable development function as a reference frame for policy.
- [4] In general, the policy makers should make better use of the **instruments in support of policy** and of the **structures for policy integration** as established by the decree of May 5, 1997 relating to the coordination of the federal policy on sustainable development and by the Copernicus reformation. The first **federal plan**, which is still valid until 2004, deserves greater attention.
- [5] **Consultation and participation** are important keys to ensuring a successful policy on sustainable development. For that reason, the FCSD pleads for the further expansion of organised discussions with the representatives of the involved social organisations and with the council, albeit with clear retention of the final political responsibility.
- [6] With consideration for the increasing importance of the European decision-making processes, the council submits that the federal government proceed to a timely and correct translation of the **European guidelines**.
- [7] To activate the policy on sustainable development, the Council in this memorandum firstly draws attention to a number of **thematic policy proposals**. Next, the Council formulates a number of recommendations for **improved management** in sustainable development. Most of these proposals are based on advice issued in the course of the past four years (1999-2002) by the council at the request of the federal government or of its own accord. Finally, the council asks that thought be given to **means of implementation** for the policy of sustainable development. Amongst other points, the council emphasizes in this the significance of economic instruments.