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# **Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) of National Strategies for Sustainable Development**

## **Second 2018-2019 exercise**

### **National report of Tunisia**

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## PREAMBLE

Tunisia has been firmly committed to sustainable development since the day after the first Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

The peer review of national strategies for sustainable development, convened by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), is an opportunity for Tunisia to share its successes and discuss the challenges that continue to hinder the path it has chosen.

Tunisia has expressed an interest in participating in the second SIMPEER for 2018-2019 since the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development. This interest was confirmed by a letter dated 05 April 2018 to the MAP. Tunisia has taken the necessary steps to do so through the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment, which has set up a national team composed of: Mr. Lotfi Ben Said, Director General of Sustainable Development, Mr. Mosbah Abaza, Director of Studies and Environmental Planning, Ms. Nahla Ouni, Deputy Director of Processes and Mr. Abderraja Salhi, Head of Department.

This team is the national correspondent of the SIMPEER team of experts, established by Plan Bleu to conduct the second SIMPEER exercise for 2018-2019.

Over the months of July and August 2019, the national team made available to the SIMPEER team of experts all of the background documents on sustainable development in the country. It contributed, during the course of three working meetings and through several electronic exchanges, to the finalization of the analysis of these documents by way of a questionnaire. The results of this analysis identified outstanding issues to be discussed with stakeholders during the consultation phase.

During the month of September, the national team organized and participated in the mission carried out by the SIMPEER team of experts from 18 to 25 September 2019. This mission in the country is a key opportunity within the SIMPEER process to consult national and regional stakeholders on the development and implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) and to gather their assessments, feedback, needs and expectations regarding the five dimensions selected for the NSSD analysis and their relations with the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The information gathered from the national team and stakeholders enriches and complements the analysis of the background documents and provides all the necessary elements for the preparation of this first draft of Tunisia's national report which will be submitted to the other peer countries participating in the SIMPEER 2018-2019 exercise. A draft version of this document was presented at the peer review meeting held on 19 and 20 November 2019 in Marseille (France). This version of the National Report incorporates the recommendations and assessments made by the Peers at this meeting with regard to the issues raised therein.

The national team led by Mr. Lotfi Ben Said and moderated by Mr. Mosbah Abaza has committed itself to being accessible and to providing its support and expertise of Tunisia's sustainable development process to facilitate and carry out the three phases of the peer review: the preparation phase and the stakeholder consultation phase. At the Marseille peer review meeting, the national team was represented by Mr. Lotfi Ben Said and Mr. Mosbah Abaza.

We would like to thank the team for this.

Similarly, Plan Bleu would like to express its sincere thanks to all the decision-makers and stakeholders who agreed to host the SIMPEER project team and to participate in the meetings organized throughout the course of its mission in Tunisia.

## FOREWORD

The Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) was convened by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean at their 19th Ordinary Meeting (Barcelona Convention, COP 19, Athens, Greece, February 2016).

The peer review is based on a voluntary basis principle and aims to engage two or more Mediterranean countries in a dialogue in a process of mutual improvement and learning with regard to National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSDs) based on experiences and different national approaches.

The SIMPEER's objective is not to create a control framework between examining countries and examined countries, but rather to establish, on the basis of an agreed methodology, the exchange of experiences, policies and good practices regarding the implementation of sustainable development at national level. This peer review mechanism will also contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD 2016-2025).

The SIMPEER is an important tool to enable the NSSDs to be reviewed, by using the MSSD 2016-2025 which is used as a frame of reference and contributes to the global orientations of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Based on the provisions of Decision IG.22/17 of COP 19 and the analysis of existing peer review mechanisms, the SIMPEER is being carried out in three main phases:

1. **A preparatory phase** with an analysis and synthesis of the relevant documents provided by the voluntary Contracting Parties. The main outcomes of this phase are an analysis table of the country's sustainable development background documents and a series of points to discuss with stakeholders in order to identify both the good practices worthy of being shared with the Peers and the challenges to be discussed with them.
2. **A consultation phase** during which the project team carries out a mission in the volunteer country in order to meet with national decision-makers and actors (public sector, private sector, civil society, local authorities, academia, media) involved in the implementation of the NSSD. Based on interviews and plenary meetings, this phase leads to the preparation of the draft national report to be submitted to the peer countries for review during their meeting.
3. **The review phase** is the key point of the process: the national reports prepared in the previous phase are disseminated among the participating countries. These reports form the base documents of the peer review meeting which took place in Marseille, face-to-face, on 18 and 19 November 2019.

These three phases are completed by a phase of dissemination of the results, both at national and regional level, to enable all Contracting Parties and national stakeholders, as well as other partners, to benefit from the results and lessons learned.

The SIMPEER was tested during a pilot exercise involving three volunteer countries: France, Morocco and Montenegro. The pilot exercise took place during the 2016-2017 biennium and the results were reported to the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development and to the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of Parties of the Barcelona Convention (Tirana, Albania, December 2017). The country Parties reaffirmed their interest in this mutual learning exercise and recommended that the process be maintained while:

- Strengthening stakeholder participation in the countries participating in the review;
- Improving the links between the SIMPEER and the Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum;
- Involving the countries that participated in the first pilot exercise to strengthen exchanges between Mediterranean countries and ensure the continuity of the SIMPEER.

Plan Bleu has been tasked with facilitating the SIMPEER exercise.

Albania, Egypt and Tunisia have voluntarily agreed to participate in this second SIMPEER cycle.

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# I. General overview of Tunisia

Tunisia is a country in North Africa, bordered at the north and east by the Mediterranean Sea (1298 km of coastline), at the west by Algeria (965 km) and at the south-east by Libya (549 km). Between longitudes 7° and 12° East and latitudes 32° and 38° North, Tunisia covers an area of 163,610 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the smallest country in North Africa. It is characterized by a predominantly semi-arid Mediterranean climate due to its proximity to the Sahara.

The country is divided into 24 governorates and six planning regions. The recent municipalization of the entire national territory has increased the number of municipalities from 264 to 350. In May 2018, the municipalities held their first free and transparent local council elections.

The total population of Tunisia is approximately 11.5 million inhabitants<sup>1</sup>, of whom almost 70% are concentrated on the coast<sup>2</sup>.

Natural resources in Tunisia are diversified but very vulnerable. Combined with the natural limits linked to climate variability, the pressures generated by the different types of exploitation and development have led to overexploitation, which is a source of depletion and degradation of natural resources. Groundwater exploitation has reached 120%, water stress has led to water availability of 460 m<sup>3</sup>/inhab./year<sup>3</sup> and 2.6 million ha of lands are threatened by erosion with an annual arable land loss of 23,000 ha/year<sup>4</sup>.

Tunisia has experienced several exceptional events related to natural risks: floods, droughts, forest fires, earthquakes, etc. The country is located on the African plate, which is intersected by numerous seismically active faults and is affected by climate change, particularly along the coastline.

Tunisia's economy is diversified but remains dominated by agriculture, which plays a strategic role in the country's development and accounts for 10% of GDP and 14.5% of the national workforce.

Productive arable, pastoral and forest land resources cover 9 million ha. Agricultural land use accounts for 5 million hectares. Irrigated areas cover an expanse of 370,000 ha, representing nearly 7% of the cultivated areas. Forests play an important role in stabilizing the land and water resources in watersheds. They also establish local microclimates; they provide habitats and livelihoods for a large population. Although an area of 300,000 ha has been planted in thirty years, forest cover has only increased from 588,600 ha to 736,900 ha, due to losses from fires.

The main urban, industrial and tourist centres have developed in coastal areas, particularly in the east: 65% of urban agglomerations and 94% of the hotel capacity are concentrated over 250 km. The most important heavy industries and power plants are also concentrated along the coast or at lakes connected to the sea, with direct pollution inputs (Gabes, Sfax, Menzel-Bourguiba, Bizerte, La Goulette - Radès, Sousse).

Industry's share of GDP is 30% including non-manufacturing industry (mining, energy and water). The manufacturing industry alone accounts for 16% of GDP, which gives it a significant weight in the national economy, comprising 5,800 companies, 510,000 direct jobs and 80% of the country's total exports.

Tourism plays a major role in the Tunisian economy. Tunisia is one of the major tourist destinations in the southern Mediterranean and has seen this sector grow, particularly on the coast. Today, it is one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy. As a source of foreign exchange for the country, tourism has a knock-on effect on other economic sectors (air transport, crafts, trade and construction). Tourism is both an agent of pressure on natural resources and a victim of environmental degradation.

In terms of human development, Tunisia is one of the few African countries to have achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and to have eradicated extreme poverty (income below US\$1/day). The poverty rate fell from 40% of the total population in 1970 to 3.8% in 2005. Nevertheless, these data hide significant regional and social disparities. The country's population and economy are mainly concentrated in the North-East (Tunis

<sup>1</sup> 2017, INS

<sup>2</sup> Environmental profile of Tunisia,

[http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/tunisia/documents/projets/profil\\_environnemental\\_tunisie\\_oct2012\\_fr.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/tunisia/documents/projets/profil_environnemental_tunisie_oct2012_fr.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Water Sector Report 2016 "BPEH (Office of Planning and Hydraulic Balance), MARHP (Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries)"

<sup>4</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> National Strategy for the Development and Conservation of Agricultural Land "DGACTA, MARHP"

Governorate) and in the Centre-East (Sfax Governorate) and 75% of non-agricultural employment is found in the coastal region.

The employment crisis linked to the global financial crisis already present before 2011 has emerged as a major social and political problem. Inland regions, driven by unemployment and regional disparities, were at the heart of the social unrest that triggered the January 2011 revolution. Tunisia is facing difficulties in restoring its pre-2010 growth level and is trying to respond with programmes and policies to reduce unemployment and poverty, promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and reduce socio-economic and regional disparities<sup>5</sup>.

After years of sluggish growth, 2018 showed signs of recovery, with growth rising to 2.5% from 2% in 2017 thanks to agriculture, services (particularly tourist services, which experienced a significant rebound) and electrical and mechanical industries.

#### General data and indicators

Human Development Index	0.735 – Rank 95 <sup>6</sup>
GDP per capita	39,952 \$US (2017) <sup>7</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>▪ Industry, including construction</li> <li>▪ Services</li> <li>▪ Export of goods and services</li> <li>▪ Import of goods and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 10%</li> <li>▪ 23%</li> <li>▪ 67%</li> <li>▪ 44%</li> <li>▪ 47%</li> </ul>
GDP growth rate	2% (2017) – 2.6 (2018) <sup>2</sup>
General competitiveness index	3.93 - Rank 95 <sup>8</sup>
Environmental Performance Index	62.35 - Rank 58 <sup>9</sup>
Total environmental footprint	2.17 per capita <sup>10</sup>
Sustainable Development Index (2018)	78 (of 156) <sup>11</sup>

#### Environment<sup>12</sup>

Forest area	10,500 km <sup>2</sup>
Protected areas	5.2%
Freshwater abstraction	76.7% of internal resources
Urban population growth	1.6% (2017)
Energy consumption (kg oil equivalent per capita)	944 (2017)
Renewable energy consumption	Not Available
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions (tonnes per capita)	2.59 (2017)
Electricity consumption (kwh per capita)	1,444 (2017)

#### Population<sup>13</sup>

Population	11,532,127 inhab. (2017)
Human Capital Index	0.735 (scale from 0 to 1)
Population density	74.2 inhab./km <sup>2</sup>
Poverty Index	15.2% (2017)

<sup>5</sup> Voluntary National Report on the Implementation of Sustainable Development Objectives at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum;- July 2019

<sup>6</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TUN>

<sup>7</sup> [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=v&dd=v&inf=n&zm=n&country=TUN](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=v&dd=v&inf=n&zm=n&country=TUN)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2017-2018/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2017-2018.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://epi.envirocenter.yale.edu/epi-topline?country=Tunisia>

<sup>10</sup> <https://data.footprintnetwork.org/#/sustainableDevelopment?cn=all&vr=2014&type=BCpc.FFCpc>

<sup>11</sup> <http://sdgindex.org/assets/files/2018/02%20SDGS%20Country%20profiles%20edition%20WEB%20V3%20180718.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=v&dd=v&inf=n&zm=n&country=TUN](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=v&dd=v&inf=n&zm=n&country=TUN)

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

## II. Summary analysis in the context of sustainable development in Tunisia

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the general context of sustainable development in Tunisia

	Strengths	Weaknesses
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1996: elaboration of national Agenda 21 and local Agenda 21 initiatives</li> <li>▪ 1993: Establishment of the National Sustainable Development (SD) Commission, replaced in 2010 by the National SD Council</li> <li>▪ 1998: Institutional framework for environmental protection and the implementation of SD</li> <li>▪ Publication of annual reports on the state of the environment</li> <li>▪ 2012: Summarised diagnostic of the environmental situation in each governorate</li> <li>▪ 27 January 2014: New constitution for sustainable development</li> <li>▪ Adoption of the law establishing the Independent Constitutional Body on SD and the Rights of Future Generations</li> <li>▪ Decentralisation and transfer of skills and methods for natural resource management</li> <li>▪ Integration of sustainable development and the green economy into the Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP 2016-2020)</li> <li>▪ Peaceful democratic transition</li> <li>▪ Advances in democracy and the ability of citizens to participate in political life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Since 2011, acceleration of environmental degradation and identification of post-January 2011 policy gaps</li> <li>▪ Suspension of CNDD meetings since 2011</li> <li>▪ Lack of status of the National Observatory for the Environment and SD (OTEDD) and absence of a budget for regular data collection (Operation on projects and external financing)</li> <li>▪ Biocapacity very low: 1.2 global ha per capita (world average 1.8)</li> <li>▪ Rapid increase in the environmental footprint</li> <li>▪ Social dimension of development</li> <li>▪ Limited capacity and resources of local communities and lack of experience in natural resource management</li> <li>▪ Roles of regional and local councils still unclear despite the adoption of the Local Authorities Code</li> <li>▪ Difficult economic and social contexts</li> <li>▪ Coordination and mobilisation of stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Roles of the various ministries and constitutional bodies to be further clarified</li> </ul>
	Opportunities	Threats
EXTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mobilisation of the international community for the country's transition process and support for the FYDP 2016-2020, International Investment Conference "Tunisia 2020"</li> <li>▪ Presentation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2019</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of priority given to sustainable development to support development partners in the process of economic and social transition</li> <li>▪ Crises and conflicts in neighbouring countries and in the region</li> <li>▪ Regional security situation</li> <li>▪ Climate change</li> </ul>



### III. Introduction

It was against a political backdrop marked by an ongoing democratic transition that Tunisia began to develop its National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSSD) in 2014.

The new Constitution of the second republic, adopted on 27 January 2014, places sustainable development and the rights of future generations among the fundamental rights of Tunisian citizens (Preamble and Art. 12). The new socio-political context is characterized by the constitutionalization of decentralization and the democratization of local life and public affairs. This promotes and reinforces the emergence of collective local governance of development in general and natural resources in particular. Indeed, the Constitution of the second republic prescribes, inter alia, the constitutionalization of the right to water and the joint responsibility of the State and society in the preservation of water resources (Art. 44), climate security (Art. 45) and the healthy environment (Preamble and Art. 45). It also provides for the establishment of five independent constitutional bodies including one for sustainable development and the rights of future generations.

The NSSD is long-term with regard to principles and general orientations but has a shorter time frame in terms of objectives to be achieved and actions. Indeed, in view of the political and social context, the emergencies identified in the diagnosis phase and the profound institutional reforms entailed by the new constitution, the deadline for the NSSD has been set at the year 2020.

The NSSD adopts the vision developed by Tunisia as part of "the Tunisia we want" exercise carried out during international consultations to identify the post-2015 objectives, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the international community in June 2015. It identifies 9 priority challenges (see Figure 1). Each challenge is broken down into issues, which are themselves articulated by areas of strategic focus for which levers for action are identified (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Challenges identified in the 2016-2020 NSSD



Figure 2: Structure of the 2016-2020 NSSD



The year 2019 marks the beginning of the final phase of the implementation of the 2016-2020 NSSD. Tunisia's participation in the SIMPEER 2018-2019 exercise forms part of the preparation for the launch of the NSSD revision process. Thus, Tunisia has extended SIMPEER stakeholder consultation to regional and local levels to ensure the mobilization of these two levels of governance during the revision of the current NSSD and the development of the new one.

The review of Tunisia's 2016-2020 NSSD, within the framework of SIMPEER, was carried out for each of the five dimensions contained in the SIMPEER methodological report: Leadership and appropriation, Integration and links between the three pillars of sustainable development, Governance and inclusiveness, Resources and means of implementation and Monitoring and evaluation. The main results are reported under this framework in the sections that follow.

## IV. Leadership and appropriation

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Sustainable development is incorporated in the country's basic standards. The new 2014 Constitution and the elaboration of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2016-2020 NSSD) are part of a political process marked by the Organic Law that established the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD) in 1988<sup>14</sup> and the related decrees<sup>15</sup> which gives the Department of the Environment and Sustainable Development the mission to "translate sustainable development imperatives into general and sectoral policies and to ensure their implementation".

In particular, the MESD is responsible for:

- Working towards the recognition and generalisation of the concept of sustainable development and its introduction into general and sectoral economic and social policies and into methods of planning and managing natural resources (Para.1, Indent 1)
- Developing a national sustainable development strategy that sets out measures to adapt the planning and management methods of State structures and establishments to the requirements of sustainable development (Para.1, Indent 3)
- Monitoring sustainable development processes at the international and regional levels and working towards the development of these processes (Para.1, Indent 12).

The Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment (Min. Aff.Loc & Env.) led the process of elaborating the 2016-2020 NSSD in a participatory and inclusive manner. The process consisted of three main steps: diagnosis, consultation/concertation and validation of the strategy document. An intersectoral and multi-stakeholder Steering Committee (CoPil) has been established and has guided the entire NSSD development process. However, and after its last meeting for the validation of the strategy document, CoPil discontinued its activities and no further meetings were held.

The validation of the NSSD by the Steering Committee was not followed by formal adoption by the government or other sectoral departments. As a result, its ownership has remained limited to representatives of stakeholders and other actors who contributed to its development and implementation, which was limited to communication actions and actions that fall within the remit of the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment.

In the absence of an action plan defining the responsibilities and obligations of other stakeholders, in particular the public sector and civil society, the 2016-2020 NSSD is not perceived as the strategic development orientation framework it was intended to be, but as the document of the Ministry of the Environment, which must then ensure its implementation. In particular, at regional and local levels and despite the work, concertation and consultation workshops organised during its elaboration, the NSSD remains relatively unknown and does not serve as a point of reference in development planning exercises.

The integration of sustainable development requirements into the country's Five-Year Development Plan drawn up in 2015 (FYDP 2016-2020) has led to the identification of the "**green economy as a driving force for sustainable development**" and the acknowledgement of certain challenges identified in the 2016-2020 NSSD as priority areas for intervention and reform (Table 2 in Annex 2<sup>16</sup>).

The 2016-2020 FYDP aims for a new development model that combines efficiency, equity and sustainability with the following five priorities to be reformed:

- Priority 1: Good governance, administrative reform and the fight against corruption.
- Priority 2: From a weak economy to an economic hub.
- Priority 3: Human development and social inclusion.
- Priority 4: Realisation of the regions' ambitions.
- Priority 5: The green economy, pillar of sustainable development.

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<sup>14</sup> Law No. 88-91 of 2 August 1988, amended by Law No. 92-115 of 30 November 1992

<sup>15</sup> Decree No. 93-303 of 1<sup>st</sup> February 1993 amended by Decree No. 2005-2933 of 1st November 2005, establishing the powers of the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development and Decree No. 2006-898 of 27 March 2006 defining its organisation

<sup>16</sup> Table summarising the complementarities and integration of the different strategic frameworks: NSSD, FYDP, MSSD and SDGs

Regional and local actors do not always recognize the development issues that the programmes and projects prioritized in the 2016-2010 FYDP entail in terms of planning. Arbitration between proposals from the sectors and priorities expressed at regional and local levels is necessary in view of the State's budgetary constraints and the need for positive discrimination towards the most disadvantaged regions. Therefore, 70% of the public investments of the 2016-2020 FYDP targeted 50% of the population. The need for such mediations is not always recognized by regional and local stakeholders.

The 2016-2020 NSSD was developed in conjunction with the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2015-2025 MSSD) and with international negotiations for the definition and adoption of the 2030 Agenda initiative and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2016-2020 NSSD does not specifically refer to these regional and international frameworks. However, the 9 challenges identified in it cover, to a large extent, the strategic orientations and objectives of the MSSD and the main "environmental" SDGs (Table 2 in Annex 2 above).

The management of the SDGs is shared between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which provides diplomatic leadership, and the Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation (MDIIC), which is responsible, among other things, for national planning to ensure technical management and inter-ministerial coordination. The technical steering model of the 2030 Agenda and the coordination between the various actors are based on good practices and experiences acquired during the elaboration, monitoring and implementation of the development plans.

The MDIIC has organized workshops, the main objective of which was to engage and involve the relevant technical ministries to separate responsibilities based on targets and indicators and according to their respective areas of competence. Since October 2018, focal points have been allocated to each ministry in order to (i) coordinate the implementation of the SDGs, with the MDIIC as the technical coordination body, (ii) ensure that other ministries are brought together to guarantee the inter-ministerial synergies necessary for the implementation of the SDGs for which they are responsible, (iii) involve UN agencies in the group work related to the SDGs in question<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, the implementation of the SDGs in Tunisia is not translated into a national strategic framework that would allow them to be contextualized and for national priorities to be set. In addition, the municipalization of the national territory and the new responsibilities vested in elected local and regional councils, as set out in the new Local Authorities Code, are resulting in major changes in the institutional landscape. These changes in local governance must be taken into account in order to ensure consistency between the institutional framework for implementing the SDGs and that of sustainable development, as described in the legislative corpus.

The development of a 2030 vision for the NSSD shall be launched soon, with the current NSSD expiring in 2020. This vision must explicitly incorporate the SDGs, whilst prioritizing and contextualizing their application at national level.

#### Box 1. Legislative framework for sustainable development in Tunisia

The political, legislative and institutional framework for sustainable development in Tunisia has undergone a significant evolution. Initially limited to repairing damage, from the 1980s onwards environmental policies were reoriented towards the integration of ecological concerns into development. The legislative and institutional framework has been adapted several times to respond to these new policy orientations. The National Agency for Environmental Protection (NAEP, 1988) and the Ministry of the Environment (MoE, 1991) have been created, in addition to several departments and organisations under the supervision of the MoE with each specializing in a specific issue (ONAS in 1974, OTEDD in 1995, APAL in 1995, CITET in 1996, ANGeD in 2005, BNG<sup>18</sup> in 2007).

The ministry responsible for the environment has undergone several restructurings since its creation. From the Ministry of the environment and land use planning (MEAT, 1991) it became a State Secretariat attached to the Ministry of agriculture and hydraulic resources in 2002 (MARH, 2002), before evolving into the Ministry of the environment and sustainable development (MESD, 2004). It underwent another transitional phase with a Secretary of State for the environment as part of the Ministry of agriculture and the environment (MAE, 2011), to become a fully-fledged ministry again at the end of 2011 (MoE, 2011). Since then, environmental protection

<sup>17</sup> Voluntary National Review at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum; - July 2019

<sup>18</sup> ONAS: National Sanitation Board - OTEDD: Tunisian Observatory for the Environment and Sustainable Development - APAL: Coastal Protection and Planning Agency - CITET: Tunis International Centre for Environmental Technologies - ANGeD: National Agency for Waste Management – BNG: National Bank of Genes

has again been separated from the development and sustainable management of natural resources, which remains under the supervision of the Ministry of agriculture. Instead, it has been integrated into local affairs and sustainable development, with environmental issues in their strictest sense being allocated exclusively to a general directorate.

To meet the requirement of coordinating national environmental actions, and in line with the development of the concept at international level, the National Commission for Sustainable Development (CNDD) was created in 1993 as a forum for consultation and discussions. It has achieved significant results including the national validation of important projects such as the national Agenda 21 initiative, environment and sustainable development indicators and studies to define sustainability in certain priority economic sectors. However, its activities were suspended after 2010 for institutional and governance reasons.

The MoE has six regional directorates that constitute regional offices; they are authorized to make implementations but do not have decision-making powers. Multiple commissions and councils for the environment and natural resource management at regional and local level have been set up and a General Commission and Regional Development Offices are in place.

Multiple action plans and programmes, including Local Agenda 21 plans and Regional Environmental Programmes, have been developed in recent years. A project to strengthen their impact through more effective implementation is being prepared by the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment.

The Regional Sustainable Development Councils have existed since 2009. The new Local Authorities Code gives municipalities many responsibilities for integrating sustainability into development planning (waste collection, cleaning, green spaces, lighting, natural resource management).

Civil society has grown since early 2011 with the emergence of a large number of new associations and, in the field of the environment and sustainable development in particular, it has begun to play an increasingly active role in lobbying at both local and central levels. Eco-citizen initiatives including the appeal for an eco-constitution but also increasing numbers of eco-protests are the most visible signs of change.

The political commitment to engage civil society is demonstrated by the establishment of a Coordination and Exchange Unit within the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment (despite the fact that dialogue remains very limited due to the lack of appropriate mechanisms in this regard). The need for capacity building and especially for multi-stakeholder and multi-dimensional communication, exchange and dialogue is important and efforts still need to be made to achieve democratic governance of the environment and sustainable development.

(Source: Environmental profile of Tunisia, 2012)

Table 2. Institutional framework for sustainable development in Tunisia

Level	Institution						
	Presidency of the Republic	Ministry of Local Affairs & the Environment	Ministry of the Interior	Ministry of Agriculture And other Ministries	Academy	Civil society	Private sector
National	CNDD <sup>19</sup>	DGEQV <sup>20</sup> Green Economy Support Bureau NAEP CITET APAL ANGED ONAS OTEDD <sup>21</sup> ANME <sup>22</sup>		Several Directorate Generals responsible for the management and use of natural resources	Sustainable Campus/University of Manouba Master's degree in Environment and SD	NGOs (advocacy, training, information)  UTAP UTICA CONNECT SYNAGRI <sup>23</sup>	Small and medium-sized companies (construction, clay brick, renewable energy sectors, etc.) Banks
	Independent: Body for SD and the rights of future generations						
	Body for good governance and the fight against corruption  Body for the respect of human rights						
Regional		Regional Directorate for the Environment	Governorates				
Local		Local authorities				Local NGOs	

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- SDGs can be a means of reconciling the long time frame of sustainable development with the short time frame of political agendas. Although they are not legally binding, they do represent an obligation for the countries that have pledged to achieve them with the international community. The NSSD can be used as a tool for integrating the SDGs into the national FYDP. This can be achieved by translating the 2030 Agenda into a 2030 National Vision, prioritising its 17 SDGs and integrating regional instruments such as the MSSD and international instruments, for example, multilateral environmental agreements. It thus defines the country's goals in the 2030 Agenda.
- It is at the local level that the links between the different dimensions of sustainable development and the different SDGs are most evident. The role of local and regional authorities is no longer just one of implementing policies and development plans drawn up at central level. They have a role in development planning through which the principles of sustainability are more easily integrated due to territorial cohesion and the anchoring of territorial wealth. The systemic approach is more easily implemented in small territories and using a bottom-up approach. The sharing of responsibilities between the different levels of governance is thus based on a principle of subsidiarity. The role of the central government is, however, essential to support local authorities in taking on these new responsibilities through capacity building, the provision of general policy guidelines, planning, participation, consultation and monitoring tools adapted to their needs.

<sup>19</sup> National Commission for Sustainable Development

<sup>20</sup> General Directorate for the Environment and Quality of Life

<sup>21</sup> See Note 18 page 12 -

<sup>22</sup> National Agency for Energy Management

<sup>23</sup> UTAP: Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries – UTICA: Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts – CONNECT: Confederation of Tunisian Citizen Enterprises – SYNAGRI: Tunisian Farmers' Union

## V. Integration and links between the three pillars of sustainable development

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The NSSD was designed to reorientate the different sectors towards sustainability. Five economic sectors are emphasized, namely, those with the potential to transition to a green economy (Agriculture & Water, Energy, Industry, Tourism, Buildings & Housing/Cities/Transport). The NSSD predates the adoption of the SDGs, however, the issues and orientations recommended can be directly related to SDG 6, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13 and SDG 15 and, to a lesser extent, SDG14. With a medium-term vision to be achieved by 2020, the 2016-2020 NSSD is based on the principles contained in the country's new Constitution, which guarantees the right to access a healthy environment, water, natural resources in general and the protection of these rights for future generations.

Several sectoral policies have been adopted in recent years which integrate the principles of sustainability into its three or even four pillars, taking into account the cultural dimension of development. In particular, these include the strategies of the agricultural sector: those of DGAFTA<sup>24</sup>, DGGREE<sup>25</sup>, the 2050 Water Strategy, Organic Agriculture, etc. as well as other more horizontal strategies: green economy, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate environmental responsibility (CER), etc.

Most of these strategies refer to the SDGs in their field of interest and rarely to the NSSD, which is therefore not used as a national referential. These sectoral strategies are often developed as part of projects funded by development partners or as part of the implementation of international commitments. They are not always adopted beyond the specific framework of the sector in question, or even beyond a single one of its departments. The concept of sustainable development thus remains strongly linked to the challenges of protecting and preserving the environment and is reflected in "ad-hoc" projects financed by development partners. Sustainable development is therefore becoming a sector among sectors, with its own objectives, main lines of action and funding mechanisms. As a result, due to the current national context of democratic transition in which social emergencies often outweigh other dimensions, sustainable development, perceived through the narrow perspective of the environmental pillar, does not have the priority it should have and the links between the three dimensions of sustainable development remain limited.

However, it is at the regional and municipal levels that the links between economic and social challenges and environmental ones are most evident. Indeed, the new Local Authorities Code orders the integration of sustainability requirements into the local development planning process. The challenge is to bring the priorities and needs of local communities up to the national level as part of the elaboration of the five-year development plan. However, it is expected that the decentralization process that has just begun will take a long time to be put in place. Officials of the Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation estimate that it will take the municipalities at least ten years to have the capacity and means to manage their development and integrate the concept of sustainable development. In this sense, the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment is preparing a project to develop local development planning tools with municipalities based on the experiences and lessons learned from the local Agenda 21 initiatives.

At national level, development planning, a five-year undertaking led by the Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation, is being carried out on a participatory basis through a process of intersectoral and regional consultation and concertation, based on a "Strategic Guidance Note". The concept of sustainable development, which has been incorporated since the 10th Five-Year Development Plan for 2002-2006, has long been part of the political discourse. However, despite the initiatives undertaken, the sectoral and centralised nature is predominant and the integration of the three components of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) into a common vision remains minimal<sup>26</sup>. The regional development programmes implemented by the Office of the General

<sup>24</sup> DGAFTA: Directorate General of Agricultural Land Development and Conservation

<sup>25</sup> DGGREE: Directorate General for Rural Engineering and Water Development

<sup>26</sup> Environmental profile of Tunisia,

[http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/tunisia/documents/projets/profil\\_environnemental\\_tunisie\\_oct2012\\_fr.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/tunisia/documents/projets/profil_environnemental_tunisie_oct2012_fr.pdf)

Commissioner for Regional Development do not always integrate the principles of sustainability. Several of its projects heavily exploit natural resources and cause significant degradation; one such example is irrigated perimeter projects whereby water resources are exploited excessively, either from the outset or after irrigated areas are extended, and the limits of available resources are not taken into account, leading to the depletion of groundwater.

Project monitoring capacities are limited and the available indicators are not sufficiently concise to easily understand the sustainability of projects and programmes, integrate sustainability principles from the planning phase or take the necessary corrective measures during implementation.

### Box 2. Good practices

#### Elaboration of reports and guides on sectoral sustainability

The elaboration of sectoral sustainability reports had a twofold objective: firstly, to develop visions of greater sustainability in the main development sectors and, secondly, to create spaces for dialogue and exchange between different actors and stakeholders with regard to the sustainability of various areas. Indeed, and since 1999, actors in the environment and sustainable development sectors have felt a pressing need to establish a debate around the notion of sustainability in order to give a more concrete meaning to this concept that is considered abstract, with a view to gradually uniting it with decision-makers and actors.

In a bid to anchor the principles of sustainable development and to set up a tool for evaluating and monitoring policies, strategies and programmes in certain sectors, sectoral reports and guides on sustainable development have been prepared for several sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, industry, tourism, energy, water, transport, etc.

The Tunisian Observatory for the Environment and Sustainable Development (OTEDD) has been selected as the management body of this programme and as a space for dialogue and exchanges on the integration of sustainability into sectoral policies and strategies.

Each report and guide present the situation of the sector in question as well as the challenges and prospects for its sustainability. They also propose objectives and measures to ensure the sustainability of the sector and define a set of indicators to monitor sustainability.

Sources: Study on the Observatory and Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators, Tunisia. Mission 1: Analysis of the current environmental information and accounting system, Samir Meddeb, 2014 - <http://www.environnement.gov.tn/index.php?id=131#XS9bFS17Sfc>

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- The green economy and the blue economy can be seen as necessary, efficient and feasible ways to respond to the economic and social crises facing the country as well as to the continuing environmental crisis, with both short- and long-term concerns regarding growth, sustainable development, employment and poverty reduction, as well as food and energy security priorities. The recommendations of the Regional Conference "Towards a Green Economy in the Mediterranean"<sup>27</sup> should be adapted to the specific conditions of Tunisia, at national, regional and local levels.<sup>28</sup>
- The NSSD is an essential tool to break down the SDG at national level. The development of a 2030 national vision as a NSSD allows the country to define both its priorities and goals in view of its context, specificities, as well as the way to respect its commitments at international and national levels.
- The "silo" approach to SD, SDGs and strategies is necessary for in-depth work in the sectors. An integrated approach to sustainable development should therefore not reduce sectoral specialisation. However, there should be a mechanism to ensure the coherence of the system as a whole towards sustainable development. A National 2030 Agenda/Vision that identifies country-specific development challenges, defines priorities, strategic objectives and lines of action is needed. This would highlight the links between the different SDGs and between the different dimensions of sustainable development.

<sup>27</sup> Marseille, France, 23 & 24 May 2021, [https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/publications/green\\_economy\\_recommandationsfr.pdf](https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/publications/green_economy_recommandationsfr.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> « Towards a Green Economy in the Mediterranean » The environment as a source of growth and job creation, Regional Conference in Marseille, 23 and 24 May 2012; - [http://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/publications/green\\_economy\\_recommandationsfr.pdf](http://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/publications/green_economy_recommandationsfr.pdf)



## VI. Governance and inclusiveness

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The process of developing the 2016-2020 NSSD involved all stakeholders. It was led by a Steering Committee which ensured the representativeness of all categories of stakeholders and the coordination of the development process. However, the Steering Committee did not continue its activities after the NSSD validation workshop.

Tunisia has established an institutional framework for intersectoral coordination and concertation (see Box 1). However, the National Commission for Sustainable Development established in 1993 has not met since 2010 and the Body on Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations has not yet been established.

It is important to define and secure the measures to be implemented in order to ensure decentralization and delegation of powers at the regional and local levels. The current decentralized human resources at the central level<sup>29</sup> are insufficient to ensure monitoring and control in the various technical fields and to provide appropriate support to local actors.

The regional commissions for sustainable development are not given the necessary priority nor attention within the Regional Councils. More exchanges and consultations between regional and national levels should be considered so that the CNDD can be informed of the regional priorities and problems of the regional commissions as well as the innovative solutions they may propose.

The MDIIC-led process for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs should more closely involve the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment to ensure greater coherence between the objectives of the NSSD and the country's commitments to implementing the SDGs.

Despite the growth it has experienced since early 2011 and the increasingly active role it now plays in promoting sustainable development and eco-citizen initiatives, civil society as a whole, and NGOs in particular, have limited capacities and remain highly dependent on external funding; their roles, mandates and limits need to be further clarified.

Despite the opportunities and promises of change brought by the revolution, the culture of communication/cooperation and exchange with civil society is still poorly developed at government level. The political commitment to engage civil society exists, but appropriate mechanisms in this regard have not yet been put in place. The need for capacity building and especially for multi-stakeholder and multidimensional communication, exchange and dialogue is important and includes capacity building for all relevant actors (civil society structures, municipalities, state structures, private sector, etc.).

The role of the private sector is not clarified in the 2016-2020 NSSD, although several strategic areas fall within its competence. Its involvement in the implementation of the NSSD remains minimal and is limited to a few initiatives such as those launched by the Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment with:

- The Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA) regarding CSR, the modification of the production processes of single-use plastic bags and the energy efficiency of the cement sector within the framework of a Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) in this sector, etc.;
- The Confederation of Tunisian Citizen Enterprises (CONNECT) regarding CSR;
- The National Order of Pharmacists and supermarkets for the prohibition of the use of single-use plastic bags;
- The banking sector in the context of integrating societal and environmental responsibility into its activities.

Other sectoral initiatives target the private sector to promote sustainable development. In particular, they concern environmental upgrading (Ministry of Industry and SMEs), energy efficiency and renewable energies (ANME and the Ministry of Industry) and CSR (UTICA, CONNECT, APTBEF). They are generally carried out within the framework of external financing or international commitments (mitigation and/or adaptation to climate change, etc.) without necessarily being an explicit part of the implementation of the 2016-2020 NSSD.

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<sup>29</sup> Regional Directorate for the Environment, Regional Commission for Agricultural Development, Offices of National Coastal Protection or Environmental Protection Agencies, etc.

### Box 3. Good practices

#### The body on sustainable development and the protection of the rights of future generations

The Constitution of the Tunisian Republic, promulgated on 27 January 2014, establishes independent constitutional bodies to ensure, in addition to the legislative, executive and judicial authorities, a balance of powers. The five constitutional bodies of Title IV of the Constitution are: the Election Authority (Art. 126); the Authority for Audiovisual Communication (Article 127); the Authority for Human Rights (Art. 128); the Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Authority (Art. 130) and the Sustainable Development and Rights of Future Generations Authority (Article 129). Article 129 stipulates that "the Sustainable Development and Rights of Future Generations Authority shall be consulted on draft laws relating to economic, social and environmental matters, as well as on development plans. The Authority may give its opinion on matters falling within its field of competence."

Tunisia is one of the few countries, along with Morocco, to mention the rights of future generations in its Constitution. It thus confirms its commitment to ensuring that economic growth is an inclusive and trans-societal phenomenon, paving the way for a fairer, greener and more sustainable country.

The Sustainable Development and Rights of Future Generations Authority was established by Organic Law No. 60/2019, chapter II of which specifies its missions and prerogatives to strengthen participatory democracy in all of its fields of activity.

Article 4 of the law describes the Authority's mission, which is to ensure that sustainable development is implemented in the policies and measures taken by public authorities at all levels (national, regional and local). It also works to preserve the aspirations of future generations, to defend their rights, including the right to their cultural legacy, the heritage of their civilisation and national identity, as well as their right to a healthy and balanced environment, a stable economic and social environment and sustainable natural resources and resources that meet the economic, social and cultural needs of future generations, guaranteeing them the continuity of a secure life.

Article 9 of the law provides that the Authority may be petitioned by a citizens' initiative of at least 1000 signatures, whereby its opinion on matters relating to its area of competence may be requested.

Pursuant to article 11, chapter III, the Authority is organised into three levels and consists of a Council, an Assembly and an administrative body. In terms of internal governance, the Council would be the central decision-maker and external representative, the Assembly the deliberative body and the administrative body the executive. The assembly will be composed of individual members from the different stakeholder groups, thus allowing civil society and the country's general interests to be represented.

Sources: Official Journal of the Tunisian Republic (in Arabic) <https://www.pist.tn/jort/2019/2019A/Ja0592019.pdf> - Opinion on the draft organic law regarding the Sustainable Development and Rights of Future Generations Authority, European Commission for Democracy through Law, Venice Commission, 119th Plenary Session, 21-22 June 2019

### Box 4. Good practices

#### Public-Private Partnership for the management of household and similar waste

Private sector involvement in the collection and transport of household and similar waste (DMA) dates back to the 1990s. Today, about 18% of municipalities rely on the private sector to collect DMA. Depending on the municipality, the private sector handles between 20% and 100% of the quantities of DMA.

Private sector capacity building was one of the development areas for waste management within the integrated and sustainable waste management strategy (2007-2016) by means of a range of reforms and incentives. This orientation was confirmed in 2015 by the select ministerial councils for the environmental cleanliness and protection programme.

The National Programme for Cleanliness and Environmental Improvement (PNPEE) supports the efforts of municipalities to improve cleanliness through the conclusion of framework agreements for the collection and transport of DMA, the mechanical and manual sweeping of main roads, city entrances and public spaces, the maintenance of green spaces, etc.

The private sector is also involved in different levels of the green waste (compost) sector, the collection and transport of construction and demolition waste, the maintenance of green spaces and road-sweeping. It also ensures that 100% of the DMA will be transported and landfilled.

### The inclusive approach to forest management

Tunisian forests cover an area of more than 1.1 million ha and rangelands span 4.4 million hectares. They are home to a significant ecological richness and more than 800,000 people, equivalent to 8% of the Tunisian population and 23% of the rural population; the pressure on forests is very high with an average population density of 90 persons/km<sup>2</sup>.

Given the vulnerability of these ecosystems, the choice of a development model based on the principles of inclusion and solidarity is essential. The participation of forest populations, organised into grass-roots communities, is a key element of the choices for the new national strategy for achieving the sustainable development and management of forests and rangelands by 2024.

In accordance with co-management contracts established between local populations and the General Directorate of Forestry, forest populations may benefit from the right to use certain resources in return for the provision of certain services, such as fire-fighting or training sessions for new members. The establishment of these co-management contracts is preceded by a study on the potential of the territory as well as on the population's capacity and knowledge for its effective use.

Both direct and indirect outcomes are expected, such as an improvement in citizens' quality of life as well as the efficient management of forest resources. In particular, it is expected that improved production, particularly in terms of adding value to non-timber forest products at the local level, will encourage the creation of small processing companies as part of the establishment of integrated value chains. These could have access to markets greater than local or national ones and may involve secondary processing industries linked by productive alliance contracts

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- It is very important to involve the whole public administration, especially those working with departments and units that are not directly related to SDG activities. Reaching the level of lower-tier civil servants, or regional and local administrative levels is essential to their involvement in proposing approaches and solutions as well as in their implementation.
- Similarly, addressing the lack of awareness and knowledge of public officials and improving awareness and communication within and between different units of a ministry or regional/local authority, or between different departments is highly important. This would allow the interaction of SDGs in the establishment and implementation of the SDS to be inclusive and responsive to the priorities of different SDGs.
- To this end, a broad and inclusive campaign/programme should be established to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness, but also to enable the participation of all public sector actors at all levels of public administration, including central and regional/local. This should include activities such as training seminars and newsletters communicating the goals and progress achieved and should entail feedback from all.
- While the role of civil society in these programmes can be important, these activities must be based on specific, measurable and targeted objectives. Substantial priorities for public participation and information should also be provided for so that the gap between civil society and the public can be narrowed and citizens can feel confident to participate.
- At the same time, providing incentives (advertising, fiscal, tax or other) to the private sector to align its CSR activity and investments with the objectives of the SDS is important for the inclusion of the private sector in the process, but also for obtaining the necessary additional financial and human resources.
- Thus, capacity building for the green and blue economies of companies, including corporate environmental responsibility, the implementation of specific charters concerning them, professional training by branches<sup>30</sup> and the strengthening of the corresponding CSR reporting regulatory framework are ways to increase the mobilisation of the private sector in implementing SD.

<sup>30</sup> Recommendations of the Regional Conference on the Green Economy held in Marseille in 2012, cited above.

- Product labelling, tagging and consumer awareness are avenues to be explored in order to introduce significant market-driven changes in production methods.
- The role of the banking sector is also very important in mobilising the private sector towards the clean and sustainable production of goods and services. The provision, with the support of the State and development partners, of grants for loans encouraging the introduction of clean and sustainable practices, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, the use of renewable energy, the reuse and recycling of products, etc. can be an important asset for sustainable industrial development. Tunisia's experience, from the 1990s onwards, in the promotion of solar water heaters should be emphasised and scaled up in other sectors.

## VII. Resources and means of implementation

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As the NSSD has not been accompanied by an action plan, no budget has been set for its implementation. The budgets and action plans of the ministries do not make it possible to monitor the financing of their sustainable development actions. The goal-based planning currently being adopted by the sectoral departments and their decentralized structures requires the use of a new budgetary nomenclature. This opportunity must be seized to better monitor sustainability of the development programmes implemented by the sectoral departments.

Sustainable development projects still depend to a large extent on external, bilateral and multilateral, specialized financing, such as the Green Climate Fund, for example. The MDIC is responsible for mobilizing this funding; it considers that the funding constraints for sustainable development are due to the quality of the application documents and the lack of national expertise with regard to developing arguments and scientific studies, collecting factual data on climate change, etc.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are opportunities to finance sustainable development. However, in order to be designed for the municipal level, they require a new vision of the private sector to encourage the establishment of local companies that are anchored in the territory with profitability requirements consistent with the available market.

Civil society is mobilizing external funding for the implementation of pilot projects, but these are not necessarily part of the implementation of the NSSD. Their dissemination and expansion with a view to achieving greater impact and effectiveness would require more effective engagement and mobilization of public, central and local authorities, which is still difficult to achieve. However, this dissemination could promote a better integration of the principles of sustainable development into development programmes and projects and facilitate access to allocated funding.

The funding for sustainable development is not yet integrated by the banking sector and financial institutions. The Tunisian Professional Association of Banks and Financial Institutions (APTBEF), as a member of the Francophone Banking Union, has been actively involved in the fight against climate change. It has taken actions to raise awareness and inform its members on the impacts of climate change and has also promoted energy efficiency and renewable energies in its headquarters. But a real integration of sustainable development into financing principles and actions must go beyond financing renewable energies.

The relocation of European firms to Tunisia and the standards imposed on Tunisian firms that export to Europe are an incentive to improve environmental and social conditionality levels. However, the banking sector is undergoing a process of major reforms to bring itself up to international standards and the economic situation is difficult due to a lack of liquidity and a decline in the pace of investment. This situation does not encourage the recognition of the principles of investment sustainability and the need to improve environmental and societal standards. Despite these difficulties, there is a growing interest among banks for training in this area. Several CSR initiatives exist, but these actions are not structured within a common and standardized strategic framework. Currently, only one bank (the Bank of Tunisia) has a certificate in CSR.

### Box 5. Financing mechanisms for environmental upgrading and sustainable development

A range of mechanisms has been put in place, including special funds (the National Fund for Energy Conservation (FNME), the Industrial Pollution Control Fund (FODEP), the City Improvement Fund) and financial incentives and taxes to encourage sustainable investment.

The legal investment framework has been reviewed and includes Law No. 2016-71 of 30 September 2017, Law No. 2017-8 of 14 February 2017 and Decree 2017-389 of 9 March 2017. It contains several financial incentives to encourage sustainable investment under the Investment Law:

- Among the priority sectors targeted by the bonus for increasing added value and competitiveness are tourism (accommodation and tourist entertainment projects carried out as part of the development of cultural,

ecological, health, desert and golf tourism); agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, and related services; activities for the preliminary processing of agricultural and fishery products; the assembly, reuse, transformation and treatment of solid and liquid waste; projects for the protection and promotion of natural sectors, biodiversity and the fight against desertification, etc.

- Regional development incentives for all economic activities are determined according to groups of regional development areas in favour of less developed areas.
- The following sectors are eligible for the sustainable development bonus:
  - Projects to address water and air pollution caused by the company's activity;
  - Projects adopting clean and non-polluting technologies, enabling the reduction of pollution at source or the control of resource exploitation;
  - Collective equipment for pollution control carried out by public or private operators on behalf of several companies carrying out the same activity or emitting the same type of pollution.

The Public Procurement Law has been amended to introduce the notion of "best offer" instead of "lowest offer" and to promote "sustainable procurement" by the Administration. However, working methods are difficult to change and awareness of these new provisions needs to be raised in order for them to be put into practice.

Source: <http://www.tunisieindustrie.nat.tn/fr/doc.asp?mcat=12&mrub=212#axe1>

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- Before considering increased funding for sustainable development, attention should be paid to the effectiveness of financing. Assessments of the impact of the overall fiscal framework on sustainable development in the country should also be conducted. These assessments should lead to the adoption of policy measures aimed at eliminating environmentally harmful subsidies, including subsidies for fossil fuels, agriculture, fisheries, construction in coastal and natural areas and transport; this should be carried out in a gradual, predefined and pre-announced manner, allowing time for consumers and producers to adapt, whilst maintaining direct social measures benefiting the most disadvantaged sectors of the population.
- The diversification of sources of funding is necessary to overcome the limits of public finances: public-private partnerships, micro-credit, greening of budgets, improvement of the living conditions of populations and their access to increasingly efficient services at a fair price, etc.
- The public sector must apply environmental criteria more rigorously in public procurement and government tenders. The modification of the notion of "lowest bidder" by the notion of "highest bidder" in the new law on public procurement will have to be better disseminated and promoted at all administrative levels.
- The funding of pilot projects to demonstrate the existence of alternatives can be a lever for the mobilisation of international funding. Similarly, civil society has the capacity to mobilise international and regional associations and networks of associations. As well as accessing additional human and financial resources to contribute to the implementation of the NSSD and SDGs, the contribution of such collaborations is important to increase awareness, acceptance and participation of all citizens and stakeholder groups. This is particularly important when objectives and targets are well defined and transparency of actions is ensured.
- Public-private partnerships (PPPs), the outsourcing of certain public services to the private sector and, above all, the creation of green industries are promising ways of involving the private sector in the implementation of the NSSD, thus allowing for appropriate investment sizing and efficient management of infrastructure and equipment. Tax and publicity incentives, including tax returns, interest subsidies and other provisions such as national competitions for the sustainability of private initiatives are useful tools to integrate into the planning phase to attract private funding and mobilise human resources for the implementation of the NSSD.

## VIII. Monitoring

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The NSSD is accompanied by 90 monitoring indicators. Fifty sustainable development indicators have been developed and published by the Tunisian Observatory for the Environment and Sustainable Development (OTEDD). These are published four times a year and the last edition was published in 2014. The OTEDD also publishes an annual environmental report. However, the OTEDD has been experiencing operational difficulties since 2011, which have led the Government to consider its restructuring and a regulatory text to this effect is currently under review.

For its part, the National Institute of Statistics (INS) has been mandated to collect and process the data needed to develop indicators for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs. A platform is being set up by the MDIIC for the dissemination of these indicators. However, mechanisms for the coordination and sharing of information with other stakeholders have not been defined nor put in place. The INS must simply "rely" on the goodwill of other departments and sectoral observatories to provide it with the necessary data related to their fields of activity.

Monitoring and evaluation is an important step that is crucial for the implementation of a strategy. It ensures the efficiency of the process but also its transparency and accountability towards citizens. It also serves as an instrument of coordination and consultation by sharing the same indicators with other stakeholders and involving them in data collection and processing. However, it assumes that information is shared and available and that there is coherence between the different sets of indicators (NSSD, SDGs, sectoral, national, Mediterranean, international, etc.).

The role of the media is important in ensuring the dissemination of relevant information to the general public. Organic Law N° 2016-22 of 24 March 2016, guarantees "the right of any natural or legal person to access information for the purpose of:

- Obtaining information,
- Strengthening the principles of transparency and accountability, especially with regard to the management of public services,
- Improving the quality of the public service and building confidence in the bodies subject to the provisions of this law,
- Strengthening public participation in public policies with regard to their elaboration, the monitoring of their implementation and their evaluation,
- Strengthening scientific research"<sup>31</sup>.

The implementation of these legal provisions is not yet fully ensured.

### Box 6. Sustainable development indicators

Tunisia tested the sustainable development indicators of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999 and has also been testing those of the United Nations since 1998 with the execution of several studies on sustainable development indicators. These tests and studies focused, essentially, on two aspects: the relevance of the indicators to Tunisian specificities and problems and the technical aspect regarding the availability of the information and the calculability of these indicators.

All these studies made it possible to identify, at national level and after consultation with specialists and various stakeholders, a list of indicators judged to be relevant and of high priority. These indicators best reflect Tunisia's concerns and are adapted to its socio-economic context.

Within the framework of the support programme for the Association Agreement, the Tunisia - European Union Action Plan (P3A) and more specifically for the activity relating to the "Development of sustainable development monitoring tools", the OTEDD revised the list of sustainable development indicators in 2013, in light of the national sustainable development strategy and the 9 challenges it identifies as priorities.

Among the indicators corresponding to the 9 challenges, 4 indicators were not monitored due to a lack of available data. These indicators are:

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<sup>31</sup> Law N° 2016-22 of 24 March 2016, Article 1.

- Quantity of phytosanitary products imported annually and applied per hectare
- Share of ecotourism revenues in comparison to total tourism revenues or Rate of "ecological" beds/nights in total
- Ratio of the highest average annual expenditure per household against the lowest average expenditure by major region
- Proportion of rural (non-communal) tracks in relation to the total length of the road network

Source: Sustainable development indicators ; - 2014 Edition ; - [http://www.environnement.gov.tn/fileadmin/medias/pdfs/admin\\_papier/ind\\_nati\\_dd\\_2014.pdf](http://www.environnement.gov.tn/fileadmin/medias/pdfs/admin_papier/ind_nati_dd_2014.pdf)

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEERS

- The establishment of a common framework and the definition of a set of indicators that respond to the specific needs of the country are prerequisites for an effective monitoring-evaluation mechanism.
- The credibility of the indicators developed must be safeguarded if the data collection and processing procedures are to be adopted and if the national indicators are to be a reference used by all stakeholders, including development partners and cooperation agencies. To this end, a monitoring-evaluation system for major development programmes should be defined in a participatory manner so that all stakeholders, including development partners, find the information useful to them and consequently become involved in supplying it with data and developing its products.
- The media plays an important role in communicating the indicators to the general public. This step should not be left to statisticians and their institutions, because, as they are never completely satisfied with their results and in their constant quest for improvement, they would tend to criticize their own results at the risk of reducing their credibility. The capacities of the media should be strengthened in the area of SD and SDGs so that they are able to convey clear messages and understandable information to the general public.



# Conclusion

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Tunisia's National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) by 2020, 2016-2020 NSSD, is part of a political context marked by the constitutionalization of the right to water and the joint responsibility of the State and society to preserve water resources (Art. 44), climate security (Art. 45), a healthy environment (Preamble and Art. 45) and the establishment of five constitutional bodies, including one dedicated to sustainable development and the rights of future generations.

Designed as a process to strengthen the coherence of the country's major processes already in place, the NSSD aims to define and implement synergies, identify gaps and establish a single monitoring and evaluation system to assess the sustainability of national development activities.

The NSSD is not a new political layer imposing itself on other policies, but rather it promotes the integration of policies into a common framework based on a common long-term vision, ensures the coordination of actions and facilitates decision-making through better mediation of cross-sectoral issues.

The 2016-2020 NSSD was developed in a participatory and inclusive approach that involved all stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. However, its implementation has not been sufficiently appropriated to serve as a strategic reference framework for sectoral and other more horizontal strategies being developed by sectoral departments, often in the context of initiatives funded by development partners. Civil society mobilization for the NSSD implementation, as well as the private sector's, could be greatly improved with a better integration within public and sectoral policies.

The year 2019 is a pivotal year in the process of implementing the NSSD which, due to expire in 2020, will need to be reviewed. The SIMPEER 2018-2019 is thus an opportunity for Tunisia to initiate this revision process and benefit from the contribution of these peers to highlight the good practices identified and the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of its NSSD.

Established with regard to the five fundamental dimensions of an effective NSSD, the analysis of the process shows that the implementation of the 2016-2020 NSSD suffered from a lack of political leadership at a high governmental level in a difficult national context where economic and social crises suppressed environmental priorities and the necessary change in the development paradigm. The number of challenges identified by the NSSD (9), the absence of clearly identified objectives and the absence of an action plan were obstacles to the accountability and meaningful engagement of other stakeholders in its implementation.

Tunisia is currently undergoing major structural transformations in terms of development governance. In particular, the ongoing decentralization and municipalization of the entire national territory pose a dual challenge in terms of the abilities of local and regional authorities to integrate the principles of sustainability into their local and regional development planning and the challenge of mechanisms put in place to ensure coherence between planning at these levels of governance and sectoral and regional orientations at the national level.

The NSSD, although developed concurrently with the MSSD, is not directly based on it; however, it is based on some of its principles and orientations aimed at integrating the SDG process into the Mediterranean sustainable development process. However, both the NSSD and SDGs processes having started simultaneously in Tunisia, seem to follow different trajectories and are based on different processes that could be more coordinated during the next phase. Indeed, the revision of the NSSD to be carried out in 2020 at the same time as the preparation of the next five-year development plan should provide an opportunity to align the three processes. This is so that, on the one hand, the new NSSD clearly refers to the implementation of the SDGs and constitutes their adaptation and prioritization at the national level and, on the other hand, the NSSD clarifies the national planning process in order to integrate the sustainability dimension within it. The role of the various ministries and other components of government, but also of other private sector and civil society stakeholders, should also be better clarified and reinforced.

Peer discussions focused on these and many other points raised in relation to the five dimensions of the analysis and the recommendations that emerged. The recommendations of the Peers suggest ways to address the challenges and thus inform the NSSD review process.

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# Annex

Table 3. Complementarities and integration of the different strategic frameworks

2016-2020 NSSD	2016-2020 FYDP	MSSD	SDG
<b>Challenge 1 : Sustainable consumption and production</b>			
Change behaviour: influence supply and demand	E5.4 Adoption of clean production and consumption methods	Obj.5 : Transition to a green and blue economy / SO 5.3	SDG12 : Establish sustainable consumption and production methods
Agriculture respectful of ecological balances and adapted to climate change (CC)	Obj.2. Ensure food safety E5.2.2.2 A modern agriculture that guarantees food safety E5.3 Update the agricultural map / Fishing / Pastoralism /	Obj.2 : Promote resource management, production and food safety through sustainable forms of rural development	SDG 2: Eradicate hunger, ensure food safety, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Environmental upgrading of industrial companies	E5.4 Environmental protection / Industrial pollution		
Environmental dimension in the tourism sector and natural resource recovery	See Priority 2 : From a low-cost economy to an economic hub 3. Tourism, Tributary of economic growth / Promote high added value tourism projects: cultural tourism, Saharan tourism, health and well-being tourism Upgrade tourist units, improve the quality of services and promote the training system		
Adaptation of buildings / development of new buildings that are economical in terms of natural resources and energy		SO 3.6: Promote the construction of green buildings to help reduce the ecological footprint of the built environment	
<b>Challenge 2 : Efficient economy and social equity</b>			
Dynamic and innovative economy			SDG 9 : Build a resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialisation that benefits all and encourages innovation
Social equity			SDG 10 : Reduce inequalities within and between countries
Competitiveness of the regions, solidarity and complementarity	E5.1.3. Conservation of natural balances and redistribution of economic and social activities		
<b>Challenge 3 : Sustainable management of natural resources</b>	E5.3 : Environmental conservation		
Water resources / unconventional resources	Obj. 1: Ensure water security E5.2.1 Governance of water resources and the new Water Code Obj. 7 Wastewater recovery and reuse		SDG 6: Ensure universal access to sustainably managed water supply and sanitation services

Vegetative cover and programmes to combat desertification	E5.3 Protection of natural resources (combating desertification, rural areas)		SDG 15 : Preserve and restore terrestrial ecosystems, ensuring their sustainable use, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation processes and halt the loss of biodiversity
Biodiversity			
Governance of natural resources and natural environments		Obj.2 : Promote resource management, production etc.	
<b>Challenge 4 : Land use / sustainable transport</b>	E5.1 Equitable land use and respect for ecological balances	SO 3.5: Promote urban land use models and technological options that reduce transport demand and stimulate mobility and sustainable accessibility in urban areas	
Reduction of regional disparities and spatial planning policies	E5.1.1 New land use planning policy E5.1.2 Establishment of a new governance for land planning Priority 4: Realising the ambitions of the regions / Making the most of the regions' comparative advantages / Strengthening the regions' capacities in territorial marketing and encouraging decentralised cooperation		
Coastal zone, coastal erosion, coastal and island ecosystems			SDG14 : Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources in view of SD (The NSSD is limited to ICZM)
Transport in planning			
Environment in transport strategies			
Energy efficiency of transport and pollution control			
Efficient public transport			
<b>Challenge 5 : Quality of life of citizens</b>			SDG 1: Eradicate poverty in all its forms and everywhere in the world SDG 3: Enable everyone to live in good health and promote the well-being of everyone at all ages
City planning and management		Obj.3: Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities	SDG 11: Ensure that cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Capacity of local populations			
Sustainable and integrated waste management	Obj. 8 Recycling of household and similar waste 5.4 waste management and urban cleanliness	Strategic Orientation SO 3.4 : Promote sustainable waste management in the context of a more circular economy	

Sustainable sanitation and urban and industrial wastewater quality	5.4 Environmental protection and SD / sanitation		
Good air quality			
Quality of life in rural areas			
Citizenship and involvement			SDG 16 : Promote the development of peaceful and inclusive societies for SD, ensure access to justice for all and establish effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
<b>Challenge 6 : Promotion of new and renewable energies:</b>	Obj. 6 Improvement of the country's energy independence indicator		SDG 7 : Ensure access for all to reliable, sustainable and modern energy services at affordable prices
Red 7 : Reduce energy intensity in the tertiary industry and transport sector			
Promote new and renewable energies	Obj. 5 Increase the share of renewable energies in the energy mix		
<b>Challenge 7 : Capacities to adapt to CC</b>		Obj. 4: Address climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean	SDG 13 : Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Knowledge of CC at the different regional, national and local levels		SO 4.1. Increase scientific knowledge, awareness and technical capacities to cope with CC and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting climate services for the adaptation and mitigation of natural ecosystems	
Knowledge of the impacts of CC			
Organisational and institutional mechanisms for consultation, valorisation and capitalisation of knowledge			
<b>Challenge 8 : Knowledge-based society</b>	Priority 3: Human development and social inclusion		SDG 4: Ensure universal access to quality education on an equal footing and promote lifelong learning opportunities
Develop and modernise the education system			
Acquisition of social and civic skills			
Training and employability			SDG 8 : Promote long-lasting, shared and sustainable economic growth, full employment and decent work for all
Teacher training, exchange and mobility			
Develop and modernise higher education / Society of intelligence and knowledge		SO 6.4: Promote education and research for SD	

Boost and adapt scientific research		SO 6.4.	
Capitalise on knowledge - implementation of an SD monitoring system		SO 6.5: Strengthen regional information management capacities	
Capacities of environmental and SD actors			
M&E capacity and information flow			
Designate a suitable body for the implementation of the NSSD			
<b>Challenge 9 : Adapt governance to better promote SD</b>		Obj,6 : Improve governance in support of SD	
Strengthen the integration of the environment into sectoral development policies, plans and programmes	Systematically take the <b>environmental dimension</b> into account in all development projects		
Strengthen regional environmental planning and action	Implement strategic action plans for sustainable development at the level of <b>local communities and rural councils</b>		