

## THE ENVIRONMENT AS CATALYST: UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

**Good environmental governance should be a consequence of empowered decision-making through improved access to good information and minimal duplication of effort. The outcomes of good governance should reflect due and fair processes and should lead to empowerment through participation and consultation with stakeholders in the decisions that are made. The essence of good governance hinges on the awareness that every decision and process has stakeholders, and that accountability, and sustainability, is best ensured through cooperation, collaboration and transparency.**

**In unpacking sustainable development, an important role that good governance plays is that of unpacking the stakeholders themselves – understanding the roles, obligations and liabilities that multiple sets of stakeholders have in carrying out their tasks and in taking decisions. This broad issue – good governance through aligning and empowering stakeholders – is addressed in the National Environmental Management Act of 1998, through environmental implementation and management planning requirements.**

**The Act, read as a set of minimum requirements, obliges government departments and other organs of state to be accountable and aligned with each other when environmental issues are at stake. The principles and practices of good governance that will be entrenched in government's environmental functions should not be construed as being applicable only to the governmental sphere. The environment has many non-government stakeholders with diverse interests and contributions to make towards environmental governance.**

**This paper discusses how governance provides for the “integrated” component of integrated environmental management. Integrative instruments – policies, processes, partnerships and tools – illustrate why good governance is essential for minimizing environmental and developmental failures. Key instruments that have the potential to facilitate stakeholder involvement in environmental governance are highlighted, and principles and lessons presented.**

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is on governance and process. The view of the authors is that sustainable development is an outcome of good environmental governance. *Good governance* will integrate and coordinate the responsibilities and actions of the various role-players in sustainable development. It will facilitate the development and articulation of an appropriate *management system* for environmental management.

Such a management system will have various environmental management instruments, role-players, and interactions. In order to entrench this system, an instrument is required to provide for good environmental governance.

The Environmental Implementation and Management Plans, required by the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA, (1998), provide a basis for the development and articulation of an improved system of integrated, cooperative environmental governance. The role of the public sector will be strengthened if an equally prominent role is developed for civil society. In terms of good governance, instruments and mechanisms being developed in the environmental arena can provide lessons for other policy areas, such as integrated development planning.

## GOOD GOVERNANCE

### Definitions

Governance is a term that has come into common use relatively recently, and is used in different ways by different authors. In this paper, *governance* in its broadest sense is deliberately used as opposed to *government*, since *governance* more accurately conveys the activities that are discussed. The concept is used here to describe -

“All those interactive arrangements in which public as well as private actors participate aimed at solving social problems, or creating social opportunities, and attending to the institutions within which these governing activities take place.” Kooiman (1999: 70).

In similar vein Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan believe that “governance can roughly be described as ‘directed influence of social processes’ ” (1997: 2), while the Commission on Global Governance describe governance as “the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs” (1995: 2). In other words it is the *process* of governing, rather than the institution of government on which this paper focuses.

What makes governance good is also a matter for debate. “Participants at an international UNDP workshop in 1996 identified the following core characteristics of good governance systems (UNDP, 1996; see Bernstein, 2000)

- **Participation**, which implies that all stakeholders have a voice in influencing decision-making. Participation is the foundation of legitimacy in all democratic systems.
- **Transparency**, which implies that the procedures and methods of decision-making should be open and transparent so that effective participation is possible. Transparency is based on the free flow of information so that processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them.
- **Accountability** of decision-makers to the public and to key stakeholders; ...
- **Effectiveness and efficiency** in carrying out key functions.
- **Responsiveness** to the need of all stakeholders.

- Grounded in the **rule of law**, which implies that legal frameworks guiding decision-making must be fair and enforced impartially.
- Gender **equity**, which implies that all institutions and organizations of governance have responsibilities for ensuring gender equality and the full participation of women in decision-making” (Hemmati, 2002: 41).

This paper adds **consensus orientation** to this list, implying that good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group. **Equity** considerations must go hand in hand with **inclusivity**, thereby ensuring that all members of society have the right to participate.

Manor (1999) advances a similar list, suggesting that good governance “mean[s] (in general terms) a broad array of practices which maximise the common/public good. More specifically, this terms refers to the following things, within civil society and especially within governments: transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness, and accountability; the rule of law, and the acceptance of diversity and pluralism. In all of this, we are also concerned with practices that benefit poor and excluded groups”.

Closer to home the Presidential Review Commission (1998) took the view that good governance includes “an effective culture of democratic governance”, and went on to suggest that the essential elements include, *inter alia*, “Effective service delivery; Coherent organisational structures ...; and Viable forms of inter-governmental relations”. The Presidential Review Commission, however, paid scant attention to the need for stakeholder participation beyond endorsing a customer orientation.

### **Motivation and outcomes of good governance**

All these theoretical considerations are designed to create the conditions in which the process of governance should lead to empowerment and empowered decision-making through improved access to information with minimum duplication of effort. The outcomes of good governance should reflect due and fair processes, consultations and participation by stakeholders in the decisions that are made. Decisions should be taken in a transparent manner, subject to the rule of law, with mutual accountability amongst those who take the final decisions and those who are affected by them.

The essence of good governance hinges on the awareness that every decision and process have stakeholders, and that accountability is best ensured through cooperation, collaboration and transparency. This has been described as part of the process of political institutionalisation, which must address -

“strengthening [of] three types of political institution: the state administrative apparatus (the bureaucracy); the institutions of democratic representation and governance (political parties, legislatures, the electoral system); and the structures that ensure horizontal accountability, constitutionalism and the rule of law, such as the judicial system and auditing and oversight agencies” (Diamond, 1999: 93).

In addition to the above, this paper contends that the role of the citizenry, as represented by organs of civil society, must and should be strengthened in this process since these groupings have an increasingly significant function in the ‘institutions of democratic representation’.

## Good environmental governance

Good environmental governance hinges on the awareness that the state of the environment affects everyone, and that environmental management places people and their needs at the forefront of its concern. It therefore adopts a human rights approach to governance and implies that government is accountable to the people.

Good environmental governance was introduced in 1987 with the publication of *Our Common Future* and took centre stage when the ideas put forward were adopted as Agenda 21 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The idea that public participation and consultation could contribute to improved environmental conditions and promote sustainable development has since become embedded in many of the provisions and mechanisms of governance, both globally and nationally. For example the *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters*, more generally known as the Aarhus Convention, requires signatories to actively promote public participation in environmental decision-making (United Nations, 1998).

The above follows the global recognition that involvement of people who have to live with the results or impacts of decisions is a prerequisite for successful planning, government and decision-making in general (Barnard, 1999). Civil society therefore needs to be empowered to share responsibility for governance, and be accountable for the quality of decisions taken through its participation.

Good environmental governance promotes environmental justice, which is inextricably bound up with the concept of human rights. In South Africa Chapter 2 of the 1996 Constitution entrenches a Bill of Rights that lays the foundation for all governance. Section 24 specifically outlines environmental rights, and by extension the requirements for good environmental governance.

Similarly the White Paper on Environmental Management Policy (1998) gives meaning to environmental governance by defining the principle to mean “depending on mutual trust and reciprocal relations between government and people”. This is “based on the fulfilment of constitutional, legislative and executive obligations, and acceptance of authority, responsibility, transparency and accountability”. The environmental governance model portrayed by this Policy emphasises the need for effective institutional mechanisms to address environmental matters, which includes coordination of decision-making processes, and the establishment of mechanisms and processes to ensure effective public participation in environmental governance.

NEMA, (1998) attempts to give effect to the Policy and provides for cooperative environmental governance by introducing principles for decision-making on matters affecting the environment, institutions that will promote cooperative governance, and procedures for coordinating environmental functions. The Act, however, fails to give meaning to the nature of interactions between state and people as implied in the policy.

Corporate involvement is a vital element of environmental governance is. A recent development in South Africa, the *King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa* (2002), outlines the requirements for good corporate practice and conduct. It further gives guidelines for corporate environmental governance, with particular emphasis on integrated sustainability reporting. It requires that every company should report on the state of its social, transformation, safety, health and environmental management policies and practices. All companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, and state-owned entities, are required to *comply*, and all other commercial and industrial organisations are *encouraged* to subscribe to this code. All subscribing entities have to demonstrate continual improvement in these areas through annual reports.

Each of these attempts at creating a framework for good governance has in common the necessity for transformation, information sharing and transparency.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Definition**

Sustainable development, recently described as the “triple bottom line” in the parlance of many sectors and organisations, is the integration of social, economic and environmental factors into planning, implementation and decision-making so as to ensure that development serves present and future generations (NEMA, 1998). It requires the consideration of ecosystems and biodiversity, and of cultural heritage; the avoidance, minimisation and remediation of pollution and degradation of the environment; the avoidance, minimisation, re-use and recycling of waste; the responsible and equitable use of non-renewable resources which takes into account the consequences of the depletion of the resource. It also requires that renewable resources and the ecosystems of which they are part are developed, used and exploited in a manner that does not exceed the level beyond which their integrity is jeopardised. Sustainable development applies a risk-averse and cautious approach, taking into account the limits of current knowledge about the consequences of decisions and actions. Negative impacts on the environment and on people’s environmental rights are anticipated and prevented or at least minimised and remedied (NEMA, section 2).

### **The role of good governance**

The definition of sustainable development provided above does not sufficiently stress the roles and importance of institutions. This has been a common shortcoming in analysts’ efforts to understand the building blocks of sustainable development. The range and nature of institutions and institutional linkages will influence the extent to which the integration of the “triple bottom line” meets sustainability objectives. It would seem logical that sound and pragmatic institutions, that are well networked, aligned and accountable, would promote sustainable environmental management and development through cooperative behaviour, information exchange, innovation and continuous learning.

Good governance should be understood as a relative term in the context of continuous learning and improvement. Key to achieving good governance is an enabling environment and framework of rights, accountabilities, responsibilities and obligations. Without this framework, governance concerning environmental and other aspects of sustainable development can only hope to be partially effective, if not extremely weak. At the same time, if a sufficiently enabling environment gives rise to effective governance structures and processes, that environment has to enable learning and change as and when needs arise for governance structures to be proactive rather than static.

## **DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **Constitutional setting**

South Africa adopted a democratic constitution that makes government accountable to the people. The South African Bill of Rights provides for an environmental right and its application. Various sections of the Bill have relevance for environmental management and implications for the environmental functions of all government departments in all spheres of government. These rights are further extended in Section 195(1) of the Constitution (1996) by prescribing accountability and participation.

The structure of government reflects three distinctive, interdependent and interrelated spheres, each of which is assigned their functions in terms of the Constitution (1996). Environmental functions cuts across the three spheres, and legislation governing these functions may prescribe concurrent obligations, or may be assigned to a specific sphere only. This creates an institutional framework that is not necessarily harmonised and a legislative system that is not necessarily integrated. Such a

system opens the door to potential inconsistency and duplication in the implementation of environmental functions.

Besides government's environmental functions, various other sectoral functions are exercised that have the potential to impact detrimentally on the environment. The policies, legislation and programmes of these sectoral functions do not automatically integrate environmental considerations.

The Constitution recognises that responsible environmental governance requires coordination in all spheres of government to ensure responsible environmental custodianship. Chapter 3 of the Constitution sets out principles of cooperative government and intergovernmental relations, which is of particular relevance for environmental administration.

### **Process for cooperative environmental governance**

The process for cooperative environmental governance in the South African context is aimed at the collective development of an environmental management system.

NEMA provides for cooperative environmental governance by setting out principles for decision-making on matters affecting the environment, creating institutions that will promote cooperative environmental governance, and developing procedures to promote the integration and coordination of environmental functions exercised by the various organs of state. NEMA's purpose is to set up a system that will facilitate an integrated institutional framework and legislation, as well as mechanisms to ensure holistic and integrated planning and management. It requires the public sector to develop environmental management and environmental implementation plans that will coordinate and harmonise the activities of all the various departments and organs of state.

These procedures ensure that the activities (policies, plans and programmes), and functions of public bodies that may affect the environment are aligned with the principles of sustainability in order to promote consistency in the exercise of functions. It further ensures that all public bodies that administer environmental functions coordinate and harmonise their functions and activities in order to minimise the duplication of procedures and functions. The development of such a management system creates an opportunity to monitor the achievement, promotion and protection of a sustainable environment in the country as a whole.

The above legal requirement is an achievement for South Africa in terms of the Agenda 21 programme (UNCED, 1993) areas relating to the integration of environment and development in decision-making. Whereas in the past, policies were made and executed by development-orientated administrative bodies without integrating environment or considering their affect on the environment (Fuggle & Rabie, 1998), NEMA introduced an effective framework that allows for these same bodies to consider the consequences of their policies and decisions on the environment. It allows for these institutions to become accountable for their actions. Accountability is facilitated and reinforced by a national Committee for Environmental Coordination (CEC), which can be mirrored at provincial and local level.

The principles and practices of good governance that will be entrenched in government's environmental functions should not be construed as being applicable to the governmental sphere alone. NEMA does not emphasise the role of civil society, despite the provision for a National Environmental Advisory Forum (NEAF), which is the civil society equivalent to the CEC. This forum, which could provide a vital link between government and civil society, has yet to be constituted. The creation of this forum, with a meaningful relationship to the CEC, would establish a system of environmental governance, rather than government. In the absence of the NEAF, the system has a governance void.

## **Capacity for environmental governance**

The quality of environmental governance is a function of the capacity of a government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions that will affect the environment. In turn, the quality of governance will impact on sustainable development.

Hilderbrand and Grindle (1997) assess capacity using a five-dimensional framework which involves reviewing the Action environment; Institutional context of the public sector; Task network; Organisations; and Human resources.

With reference to this framework, it is evident that South Africa's new constitutional dispensation and governance philosophy may place pressure on its present capacity to implement environmental governance. The country's urgent need for economic growth and development, severe economic constraints, a young democracy, and social values that are changing at a very fast rate, are all critical challenges in implementing effective environmental governance. These conditions influence the performance of government in the balancing act of addressing its economic demands whilst giving effect to the constitutional rights.

The set of organisations involved in accomplishing good environmental governance, the "task network" (Hilderbrand and Grindle, 1997) not only consists of public sector organisations, but also private bodies and civil society. This network is fragmented in South Africa and many of the players are not in a position to understand fully the interrelatedness of their functions and responsibilities, policies and programmes. It is submitted that the *process* of good environmental governance will enhance the capacity of government to discharge its environmental responsibilities. *Partnerships* between government, business, and civil society will mobilise and harmonise the relative strengths of each sector. This broad issue of good governance through aligning and empowering stakeholders is addressed in NEMA through environmental implementation and management planning requirements.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN PRACTICE**

### **Environmental Implementation and Management Plans as tools for environmental governance**

Coordination of decision-making processes in all spheres of government, as an essential requirement for effective environmental governance, has commenced with the development of a system of Environmental Implementation and Environmental Management Plans as prescribed by NEMA. Scheduled national departments exercising functions that may *affect* the environment, and provinces, are required to draft Environmental Implementation Plans (EIPs). Departments who exercise functions involving the *management* of the environment are required to prepare Environmental Management Plans (EMP). A consolidated Environmental Implementation and Management Plan (EI&MP) may be a requirement where functions involve both affecting and managing the environment. Collectively, these plans address the integration of environment and development. For ease of reference the EIPs and EMPs are hereafter referred to as Environmental Plans. The focus of this paper is mainly on the EIPs.

The Environmental Plans, in their current status as first edition documents, reflect either partial or complete descriptions of government department mandates, functions, institutional arrangements, cooperative agreements and other material deemed important in terms of NEMA requirements. Collectively, the information contained in the plans for provinces and national government departments is an important starting-point to understand the complexity of the change in form of environmental governance in South Africa. The change in form is a process, requiring, sometimes huge, adjustments by the people and organisations involved. This change also involves realigning government resources to build capacity in all departments/provinces to give effect to the state's

environmental obligations. The Environmental Plans are expected to be mechanisms by which departments/provinces can put in place the infrastructure to deliver environmental management and monitoring.

The value of the process lies in the fact that it is designed to ensure accountability through cooperation, collaboration and transparency *between* organs of state. Accountability and transparency *within* a specific department is further enhanced by the annual reporting requirement against the stated objectives of the department's plan. All of this is intended to lead to empowerment and empowered decision-making through the improved access to information with minimum duplication of effort.

Through the process of integration and implementation, and the exchange of information and best practices, new mechanisms, measures and instruments may emanate, which will improve environmental management across the three spheres.

A clear commitment exists in the process of building and monitoring the capacity of institutions and individuals to make decisions that support sustainable development. There needs, however, to be a commitment to improve internal operations, procurement and management practices. These should support and promote sustainable development. This remains a challenge for institutions in applying the rule of law. "Greener governance", taking cognisance of the "polluter pays", and life-cycle responsibility principles, will assist these institutions to practice good environmental governance.

### **The Environmental Implementation Plan as a network**

Provinces, in drafting their EIPs, are faced with a complex governance landscape. This landscape comprises national government departments, provincial departments, municipalities, and various private groupings. Such complex networks of players are extremely difficult to manage, particularly from the point of view of choosing the most suitable "manager". Because of the intermittent nature of their involvement it is clear that the need for continuity of management is important. It is in this context that the relevant provincial environmental authority may be best placed to coordinate the compilation of a Provincial EIP. However, the role of the environmental authority should be "manager of the instrument", implying that its role is to coordinate and facilitate the gathering of information, and not assuming responsibility for the Environmental Plan in its entirety. To do so will not promote the characteristics of good governance. The *process* of collecting and exchange of information lays the foundation for better, if not good, environmental governance.

The concept of network management (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, 1997; Peterson, 1997) through an instrument such as the EIP, hinges on the awareness that the environment is a system with various elements and interrelationships. The management of the system must reflect the integrated nature of the system. This view is supported by the Environmental Management Policy's (1998) projection of a *holistic and integrated environmental management system* that will lead to sustainable development.

The system has many institutions and stakeholders; they must interact and coordinate with each other. The mechanisms, measures and instruments applied by all need to be aligned and implemented consistently. They must subscribe to the same governing principles. The lead agents' (DEAT and provinces) role is to coordinate, integrate and facilitate the development of the system.

### **Stakeholders and their involvement**

The realisation that environmental management takes place in a complex system, and that the Environmental Plans are instruments to coordinate and manage the elements of such a system, creates an awareness of the need to ensure that all the relevant stakeholders are part of the process.

The staggering amount of information generated in the Environmental Plans for provinces and national government departments is an important starting-point for non-government role-players to acquaint themselves with the organization, undertakings, commitments and targets set out for national and provincial departments.

These plans, having been drawn up as required by NEMA, and hence focusing on government's roles and activities for environmental governance, generally have not fully examined the roles that the non-government sectors can play in cooperative governance. This is not to say that the interests of non-government role-players have been excluded. Rather, focus has been placed on examining how national and provincial government departments can coordinate and streamline resources and functions relating to environmental management, in the interests of improved service delivery.

While government departments and other organs of state are consequently defining their role *vis-à-vis* each other, the roles of non-government stakeholders are less clearly spelled out. The non-government sector has to understand and define its own roles, responsibilities and accountabilities within a framework set down through what is currently a fairly exclusive inter-departmental process. This implies furthermore that non-government stakeholders have to organize themselves to articulate their interests and objectives, should they wish to be visible to government departments, which usually cooperate and collaborate with institutions rather than individuals.

The objectives of different stakeholder groups are varied. Some non-governmental organizations lobby for cleaner industry, residential and tourist associations seek to protect land-use interests and rights, and industrial bodies seek to comply with laws and regulations while sustaining or growing output.

Access to information is key to the success of these non-government stakeholders, so that they may inform their constituents of their environmental rights and opportunities. Access to information may also enable stakeholders to become better organized and more strongly positioned to advance their interests. Stakeholder participation in generating and disseminating environmental information has been shown to be an extremely effective tool for spurring interaction and debate, as has been demonstrated recently in the Durban South Basin in KwaZulu-Natal.

To date, the non-government stakeholder sector has not been invited to express opinions on what its potential role in cooperative environment governance and environmental management might entail within the context of Environmental Plans. Given that these plans, as instruments, are intended in large part to strengthen government capacity and effectiveness in environmental management while delivering services, it may be argued that the private sector, NGOs and civil society in general would not have a crucial role to play, and that existing channels for their involvement with government are sufficient. That, however, downplays the possibility that the non-government sector may nonetheless add significant value to Environmental Plans and their implementation.

Allocating resources to ensure that the principles of participation, equity and inclusivity can be implemented in the EIP process will enhance good environmental governance.

### **Implications for instruments promoting Integrated Environmental Management (IEM)**

The value of an EIP as an environmental *governance* instrument lies in understanding its interaction with the existing environmental *management* instruments. It is not the purpose of this paper to expand on the variety of instruments. The interaction can be explained by means of examples.

#### *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)*

Good governance is essential for minimising environmental and developmental failures. For example, the EIA process as an integrative instrument for sustainable development subscribes to the notion of good governance in a fairly adequate manner. Participation is encouraged through an

opportunity for public input in the decision-making. Information is made accessible to those concerned with the development, which ensures transparency. Accountability for each decision taken is facilitated through a Record of Decision and the rationale behind it. The process is designed to produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources and should therefore reflect effectiveness and efficiency. The process is further designed to mediate differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the interest of the group. And it applies the rule of law in that it gives effect to the environmental rights enshrined in the Constitution.

Information in an EIP outlines the environmental concerns of the province or organ of state and sets out the roles and responsibilities of their strategic partners. It also indicates the connections between the biophysical environmental issues and the socio-economic issues pertaining to the area of governance covered by the plan. EIAs conducted in the light of, or against the background of, the relevant Environmental Plan(s) are likely to be more sharply focussed and to take better cognisance of the interrelationship between the site- and project-specific impacts and the wider environment in which the specific project is located. It follows that processes are aligned through the empowerment of environment and development practitioners.

#### *Integrated Development Plan (IDP)*

Provincial governments are required to ensure that municipalities comply with the provincial EIP. In addition, provincial governments must ensure that municipalities adhere to NEMA principles in the preparation of any policy, programme or plan, including the establishment of integrated development plans and land development objectives. An (IDP) is required to contain an Environmental Management Plan, which guides the municipality's response to the environmental constraints in its area of jurisdiction. The Provincial Environmental Plan can offer the municipality a basis for compiling its environmental management plan. The EIP therefore becomes a valuable instrument for integration. Information and data provides the basis for cooperation in this system. Compliance monitoring on a local level will establish a dialogue and feedback mechanism to provincial and national government. This will help orientate strategies and enable priorities to be defined on the basis of shared observations.

The development of an indicators system that can be used as a basis on which spheres with different administrative cultures may assess and validate their needs and resources is crucial to integration. These indicators may relate to key governance issues which will be able to assess the state of governance. Reporting is the crucial instrument for cooperation. Reporting will facilitate the exchange of experience and the transfer of know-how. The challenge is to find the means to disseminate information.

#### *State of Environment Report (SoER)*

NEMA's requirement to report on the implementation of Environmental Plans focuses on organisational performance for which performance indicators are being developed. Reporting will also reflect the extent to which activities (policies, plans and programmes) comply with sustainability principles. It follows that effective environmental governance will reflect on the state of the environment. This, however, will be monitored through yet a different instrument, the State of Environment Report. Sustainable development indicators relating to the condition of the environment have been developed for this purpose.

#### *Environmental Management Cooperation Agreements (EMCAS)*

NEMA promotes cooperative environmental governance by providing a co-regulatory instrument whereby interactive relationships among industry and public authorities can be enhanced. EMCAS are established for the purpose of promoting compliance with sustainability principles. The instrument potentially can help to fill the void in South Africa's environmental governance. This is

an opportunity that should be considered as a matter of priority in developing the relationships between regulators and stakeholders for environmental management.

In summary, instruments that hold implications for the quality of governance and decision-making around environmental management complement each other.

## CONCLUSION

Environmental Plans will facilitate the development of an *integrated and comprehensive management system* for the environment

The complex integrative nature of sustainable development makes it clear that participatory democracy and good governance are essential tools for sustainable development. The interrelationship between governance role players will inevitably reflect on the state of the environment. It is this interdependence that links the different role players in the first place. And it is within the framework of good governance that the various stakeholders must be identified. Understanding the roles, obligations and responsibilities that multiple sets of stakeholders have in carrying out their tasks and in taking decisions must be done within an environmental governance framework.

The Environmental Management Policy (1998) provides such a framework, projecting an integrated environmental management system that will lead to the ultimate goal of sustainable development. The development of this desired system in South Africa is driven by seven strategic goals. These goals and their supporting objectives can only be achieved if the identified role-players, public and private, implement them interdependently. Successful implementation is, however, dependent on a clear understanding of the *role and functions of government*, and the *role of the public and civil society*. It is also vital to be clear on the *nature of the interactions* between state and social role-players and the *rules that govern the relationship*. Successful implementation of the goals for sustainable development also depends on empowering the stakeholders. It follows that sustainable development depends on the quality of governance, which has still to be fully articulated, and NEMA lays the foundation.

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