MONGOLIA'S NATIONAL STRATEGY ON GREEN DEVELOPMENT

National Partner Agency: Ministry of Environment and Green Development (MEGD)  
9.00-13.00; 29 March 2013 Ulaanbaatar

CONTEXT

Mongolia’s accelerated economic growth driven by the mining sector has been accompanied by rising carbon emissions. The rise of the Mongolian economy has come at the cost of social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Mongolian production processes and practices involve high energy intensity and raw materials extraction. Energy efficiency mechanisms and modern production technologies are rarely available in the mining sector. This means that a lot of waste and pollutants are being generated and released into a once pristine environment. Moreover, the greenhouse gas emissions and atmospheric particulate matter in urban areas are such that the annual average particulate matter concentrations are 14 times higher than WHO’s recommended level. Amplifying the climate change impacts, the main threats to the environment include over-exploitation of forests, land degradation, water and air pollution, loss of biodiversity, and environmental damages due to mining.

Despite its growth, Mongolia has corresponding social issues it must tackle. Approximately 30% of the population lives below the poverty line. There is a growing disparity in income and this has given rise to various elements of social unrest, including increased alcoholism, domestic violence and uncontrolled migration to urban centers. In a shade of the dramatic growth of the mining industry, a disproportionate development and inappropriate distributive arrangements still pervades and the vast majority of Mongolians have not seen a substantial improvement in their standard of living.

To respond to these and other challenges, the Government established a new ‘core’ Ministry of Environment and Green Development (MEGD). This is a welcome step and indicates the country’s eagerness to transition to a sustainable development model and a low carbon economy. The Rio+20, June 2012 provided a platform to discuss socially inclusive low carbon and sustainable development. While some broad guiding principles and priorities were articulated, the discussion in Rio did not provide detailed practical guidance for implementation by national governments.

As such, the MEGD with UNDP support has been working to develop a National Green Development Strategy and a corresponding action programme. Currently in draft form, the strategy has drawn upon the results of a Government-commissioned study and an international consultant to include plausible pathways, priority measures, realistic targets and needs for developing necessary capacities at various levels to shift to a green economy.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Mongolia has shown a strong commitment to sustainable development and has initiated a number of interventions towards green development. The key points for discussion will be on the draft national Green Development Strategy which are anticipated to help validate the key elements of the strategy, create awareness of the potential for enhancing low-emission and climate-resilient principles for future economic growth in Mongolia, and support the Government’s efforts to shape its priorities for green growth and the Post 2015 development framework.

Specifically the Dialogue hopes to address but is not limited to the following guiding questions:

- What is Green Development and how should it align with the long term goals of Mongolia?
- What are and the prevailing issues to be addressed to progress the document to finalization?
  - Should Mongolia adopt a whole-of-Government approach to Green Development (a policy mainstreaming approach)?
  - Can Mongolia feasibly allocate 5-7% of GDP to implementing the Green Development Strategy?
  - Are there other economic sectors with high “greening” potentials that can be leveraged?
  - As, social inclusion is a key part of sustainable and green development, what mechanisms should Mongolia consider for the equitable distribution of wealth?
  - Is the issue of corruption impeding Mongolia’s opportunity to adopt a Green path to Development?
- What policy areas within the Strategy can Mongolia adopt in the short term to catalyse further green development in the medium to long term?
- Are the Action Plans in their current form, sufficient to facilitate policy design, development and delivery? If not how can the Ministry work to this end?
- How can the Mongolian Government promote greater collaboration across Ministries to promote Green policies across Ministry portfolios?
- What role can Civil Society Organisations and Non-Government Organisations play in adopting a green development model?
- What initiatives are required in the education system to help transform the general public to greener lifestyle choices and what is the role of public media in the process?

DIALOGUE STRUCTURE

The Dialogue will be initiated with a presentation by MEGD on the draft National Green Growth Strategy followed by an open discussion which will provide an opportunity for an exchange of views among participants and help increase understanding of the issues and challenges in formulating and implementing a green growth strategy in Mongolia. The aforementioned questions will be addressed one by one in an open discussion with the facilitation of a panel of speakers that is expected to consist of Parliament members, Ministers, an advisor to the President of Mongolia and representatives from academia and civil society.

1 World Bank: Study Identifies Best Options to Improve Air Quality and Thus Reduce Health Impacts in Ulaanbaatar, the Most Polluted City in the World in Wintertime; 2011
2 Wilkinson and Pickett argue that income inequality is a driver of social ills in society. The Spirit Level; Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger(2009)