

## Israeli NGOs Call for a Non-Business as Usual Future

The State of Israel has taken several significant steps forward in various issues related to sustainable development during the passing decade.

However, its overall policy can be described as taking one step forward and two steps back.

Since there is no long term, comprehensive policy for sustainable development, nor a vision for a sustainable, prosperous Israeli society, the government often promotes contradictory means, paddling forward with one hand while paddling backwards with the other at the same time.

The Paths to Sustainability Coalition of Israeli NGOs calls upon the government of Israel to adopt a bold and strategic policy and shift away from its "business as usual" track, taking advantage of the state's unique renewable resources: sun light, innovation and creativity.

### From Johannesburg to Rio+20: What have we learned?

The increased global awareness to the urgent need of a different type of development patterns has influenced Israel as well. The vibrant activity of the diverse civil society, presented by wide array of NGOs, has been increased, and is still challenging the government to move the Israeli society into a more sustainable future.

Alongside some major achievements, the past decade has also shown deterioration in our journey towards sustainability:

- Environmental legislation has been advanced significantly. However, its enforcement is insufficient, and many of our natural resources are facing unprecedented threats by private and governmental initiatives.
- Market based incentives are applied, yet for contradictory directions (e.g. ranking vehicles' pollution potential while granting subsidies for private vehicles of employees).
- GHG reduction plan has been created and budgeted; however, the government promotes an oil shale extraction project, switching back into polluting fossil fuels.
- The civil society has become more involved, educated and active; yet formal routes to participate in decision making process are continuously challenged and decreased.
- Environmental Education has become prevalent in Israeli schools, but it is not yet a mainstream phenomenon, nor is it budgeted by the Ministry of Education. It focuses mainly on technical aspects such as recycling, rather than value-based education.

# Key Actions for the Israeli Future We Want:

## Energy & Climate

Israel must prepare for the post natural gas era, and invest in renewable, clean and decentralized energy sources.

The National Mitigation Plan should be updated for more ambitious targets and long term strategy, to include all government ministries.

The implementation of both mitigation and adaptation policies should be coordinated by an independent, professional entity, that will ensure mainstreaming of climate related guidelines into decision making processes.

## Resources & Green Economy

Israel should continue the round table process towards Green Growth, and expand its mandate to include all government ministries.

A list of complementary indices must be adopted alongside the GDP, to define true "growth".

Exploitation of natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, water and land should be taxed, while royalties are secured for implementation of sustainable solutions for the future generations.

## Sustainable Cities

The State of Israel should promote cities as hubs of sustainability and natural resources: efficient, walkable, suitable for all, with thriving local economy and thriving democracy.

National desk of local sustainability for integration must be established.

Apply long term urban planning, including mixed usages, dense and affordable housing, as well as reliable public transport and bicycles infrastructures.

Mainstream green building practices by creating incentives, issuing a national retrofitting plan, making the GB standard obligatory and promoting local utilization of renewable energy sources.

## Water Management

Promoting water efficiency techniques, betterment of infrastructures, grey water and education over desalination will reduce environmental impacts, and create abundance of new, much needed jobs.

## Protecting the Sea

Israel depends on the sea for energy and water resources, and must regard it as a national asset.

Strict regulations regarding the different uses of the marine environment must be completed and enforced.

A master plan must be prepared, defining marine nature reserves as well as development areas.

## Building Resiliency

Due to its location Israel is highly prone to climate change impacts and geo-strategic pressures. The increasing shortage of water and political turmoil in its neighbouring countries jeopardizes the area's fragile stability.

The Israeli government must actively promote regional collaboration to solve joined environmental challenges, while using the Israeli technological advancements.

## Food Security

Israel should promote a comprehensive policy for a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system.

### *The Paths to Sustainability Coalition*

The Paths to Sustainability Coalition promotes national policies that address sustainable development issues and climate change since 2002. The Coalition, comprised of dozens of NGOs, publishes reports critiquing government policy, advocates at the parliament, and participates in relevant national and international fora. The Coalition operates under the auspices of Life & Environment – the Israeli Union of Environmental NGOs.