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Partners or Competitors? Policy Integration for Sustainable - Development between United Nations Agencies

This paper will analyse policy integration and institutional interlinkages within the United Nations system. In particular, we will focus on two major UN programmes in the field of sustainable development policies, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). We will systematically analyse processes of cooperation and collaboration between both programmes in particular with a view to the integration of their respective policy objectives—environment and development— within the overall framework of sustainable development. We argue that a comprehensive operationalisation of sustainable development must target both poverty reduction and environmental protection; it must not trade off one priority versus the other, since protection of natural resources is a precondition for successful poverty reduction. We high¬light strengths and weaknesses of both UN programmes, in particular where they refer to the ecological pillar of sustainable development, and show a lack of coherence in the operationalisation of sustainable development policies within the United Nations. Based on an extensive assessment of political, structural and functional factors that contribute to this situation, we will then discuss how institutional interplay and policy integration between UNEP and UNDP could be adjusted to further implementation of policies for sustainable development that do not trade off environmental concerns for economic growth. Conceptually, our paper will draw on a theoretical framework on analysing the effectiveness of intergovernmental bureaucracies currently developed within a larger international research project on international environmental organizations; politically, our paper attempts to contribute to the current UN debate on the reform of international environmental governance and on the institutional operationalisation of the Millennium Development Goals.