

Strategic Goal A: NZ statement

Many thanks once again to the panelists this afternoon for their engaging presentations.

A number of cross-cutting themes and concepts emerged from the excellent papers prepared by the Secretariat. For New Zealand, further exploration of these themes is essential for implementation of the Strategic Plan and achievement of the targets. While these comments relate to Strategic Goal A they could equally apply to the other goals that we will be considering in the course of this week.

One such theme is that of effectiveness – that is, effectiveness of the policy support tools, observation and data systems among other things. Effectiveness should refer to the ability of the tools and systems in place to accomplish their objectives – whether it is behavioural change or ecological change. We also agree with the comments made this afternoon by Canada. Not only do we need to be certain that the tools we currently have are effective, but we need to carefully consider the need for any future tools and look to develop these only when clear gaps have been identified.

We agree with several others who have spoken today that the tools developed at the global level - while providing useful guidance - often have to be tailored to be effective and have impact at the local level - this is certainly New Zealand's experience and we have developed a number of country-specific community and outreach vehicles, including through the use of social media, to engage New Zealanders at the grassroots level.

New Zealand also supports emphasis on the theme of collaboration across sectors and agencies. As noted in one of the papers, collaboration can also include citizen science, a potentially significant source of data, information, and action. Although collaboration comes with its own set of challenges, it is through effective cooperation and partnerships that innovation occurs, duplication is avoided, and greater gains can be made.

Lastly, the critical role of incentives was evident in the papers and we have already had a useful discussion here this afternoon about the role of incentives. New Zealand applies a multi-pronged approach to addressing incentives. In this regard, we work to avoid incentives that have negative outcomes and implement those that produce positive results. Work on both fronts is important in our view.

Generally, when speaking about incentives, the focus has tended to be on economic incentives, such as subsidies. Addressing distortive or harmful subsidies has been identified as an important means of mitigating ecological damage from particular activities, and is a New Zealand priority. For instance, we are actively engaged through the Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform, which includes developed and developing countries, to support the reform of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. This is a useful example of cross-regional collaboration to address one of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss.

However – as mentioned in one of the papers – it is also essential to examine non-economic incentives, such as those related to the psychology and sociology underlying unsustainable consumption. It is through these mechanisms that we can promote behavioural change that leads to positive outcomes. This is an area where perhaps more work can be undertaken and we were interested to hear from Professor Zakri this morning that IPBES will be looking at the role of social sciences in this regard. Mr Asah's observations this afternoon were also interesting and provide much food for thought.

