

# **The Environmental Performance Review, a powerful tool for achieving Sustainable Development**

**Lessons Learnt from the Moroccan experience**



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa  
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# About this paper

Morocco is one of UNECA's Member States that have made great achievements in terms of environmental management and environmental education in recent years. In 2012 the country adopted its National Charter for Environment and Sustainable Development. It is currently developing two national strategies for environmental protection and sustainable development, national and regional observatories of the environment and sustainable development have been established and work is under way to define Sustainable Development indicators.

Despite the progress achieved in several areas, the country is still confronted with serious challenges like the degradation of agricultural soils, the increase in chronic respiratory diseases caused by air pollution, the weak control of the industrial sector's negative impact on the quality of water resources. This situation is foremost explained by the limitations in the legal and regulatory framework, the ineffective system of environmental monitoring, the inadequacy of funds allocated to the sector and the lack of expertise.

In order to reinforce the integration of environmental issues into all sectors, and to improve environmental management, Morocco became interested in making a systemic, in-depth analysis of a number of sectoral and cross-sectoral issues that affect the environment, such as environmental legislation, governance, monitoring, environmental education, economic and financial instruments as well as international cooperation. The choice fell on undertaking an Environmental Performance Review (EPR).

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, supported the process of undertaking the EPR, and wishes to share the successful experience with the North Africa sub-region and with the continent at large.

This advocacy paper aims at demonstrating the advantages and the usefulness for a country, to undertake an Environmental Performance Review, by using the Moroccan example. It gives the background, the objective and the key phases of an Environmental Performance Review (EPR). It focuses on the lessons learnt from the EPR process in Morocco and the potential benefits in using the EPR as a decision making tool.

The EPR is a strategic tool that allows for an in-depth analysis of a country's environmental problems, and identifies the best approaches and measures for implementation, in order to improve environmental performance.

# The Environmental Performance Review - what is it?

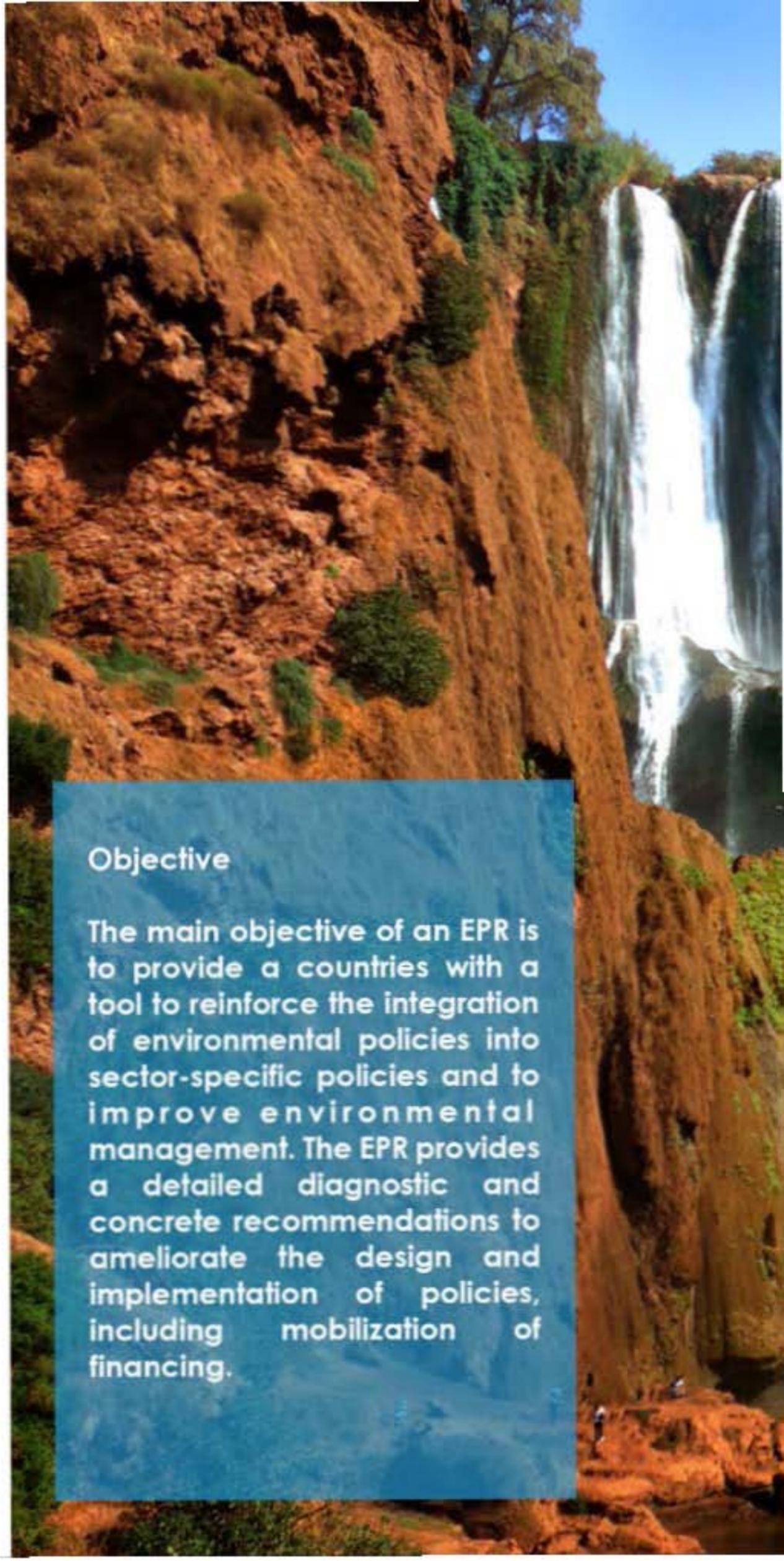
An EPR is an independent analysis of a country's environmental management that identifies progress made, good practices and makes recommendations to improve environmental policies and programmes. The planning of an EPR is based on the identification of the areas where environmental concerns are most crucial. This is done in collaboration with the country in question.

The following major areas are covered:

- i) Environmental Management of: air, water, nature/biodiversity and waste management, often the core tasks of Environment Ministries and related Agencies.
- ii) Sustainable Development defined in terms integrating environmental considerations into economic and social policies.
- iii) International Commitments and (global, regional and bilateral) co-operation on environmental matters (such as transboundary air and water pollution, transboundary movement of waste, marine and climate change issues ...).

## Objective

The main objective of an EPR is to provide a countries with a tool to reinforce the integration of environmental policies into sector-specific policies and to improve environmental management. The EPR provides a detailed diagnostic and concrete recommendations to ameliorate the design and implementation of policies, including mobilization of financing.





## EPR : THE KEY STEPS

### Preparation

An EPR is always done at the request of the country, and the process is co-led by a national coordinating institution and the supporting international organization. An initial planning mission is organized in order to gather information and to define the topics that are to be covered, taking into account the standard EPR topics and the specific country situation. The EPR process is presented to the different national sectorial focal points, who play a key role in providing the relevant information. Both international and national sources of information are used.

### Review Mission

The next step is the review mission, where an international multidisciplinary expert team (8-10), recruited by the international organization, travel to the country. Each expert is responsible for one of the EPR chapters. The team meets and discusses with all relevant actors: the national government, local authorities, private sector representatives from different sectors, NGOs and independent experts. Thereafter the team prepares the chapters of the draft EPR report, containing factual descriptions, analyses and recommendations based on the information gathered. Subsequently the international organization consolidates the chapters, and submits the first draft report for discussion at an Expert Review Meeting, with the involved sector departments.

*(N.B. This description is based on the EPR process at the OECD and UNECE, the steps could be adapted to each specific country context.)*

# History

In 1991 the OECD launched the EPR program, initially for its member countries, before it was extended to OECD non-members, in 1993. The institution in charge for the latter programme is UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

In October 2010, the Moroccan Secretary of State for Water and Environment turned to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) with a request for an EPR. Although Morocco is not part of the ECE region, the ECE's Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) agreed to support the review. This initiative is the first that the ECE has undertaken outside of its region.

The executive Secretary of the ECE sought the collaboration of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) whom confirmed its willingness to cooperate in undertaking the EPR, under ECE leadership. UNECA in turn designated its sub-regional office for North Africa, to which Morocco is a Member State. The Office mobilized part of the funds required for the preparation of the EPR and for the organization of the expert group meeting on environmental performance.





## EPR: THE KEY STEPS

### Expert Review Meeting

The Expert Review meeting focuses on the recommendations made in the draft report. The reviewed country is represented by a delegation and has the possibility to comment on the evaluation and the proposed recommendations. Observers are also invited, coming from NGOs, the private sector, international partners as well as from countries in the region. The recommendations are only finalized once the country delegation has given its consent.

### Peer review

The peer review is undertaken by a body, the ECE's Committee on Environmental Policy, to which all the member states have designated representatives. The reviewed country's delegation is headed by a high level government official, often the Minister or the Secretary of State. The delegates present from the reviewed country have an important role to provide additional information and to answer questions raised by the peers. After having discussed the recommendations and the possible amendments, the CEP approves the EPR report.

### Publication

The international organization publishes the report, and it is officially launched in the country. The reviewed country ensures its implementation and wide dissemination at national level, through national advocacy work.

# Lessons Learnt from the Moroccan experience

Morocco is the first African country who has undertaken an EPR. The country consider the review of its environmental performance as a strategic tool that complements the ongoing efforts to reduce the costs of environmental degradation and as one that contributes to the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

The EPR of Morocco covers the period 2003-2012 and provides a critical analysis of the progress made in achieving the objectives of the national environmental policy and of international environmental commitments. The report provides concrete recommendations on how performance could be improved in the domains and sectors covered: regulatory instruments for environmental protection, monitoring, information and education, economic and financial instruments for environment, international cooperation, air protection, water management, waste management, biodiversity and protected areas, health, industry, energy and agriculture.

The report was prepared by an international multidisciplinary expert team, based on the contributions from the Moroccan stakeholders, following the step by step process previously described.

An action plan for the implementation of the recommendations will be established after a broad consultation between the Department for Environment, the national stakeholders and relevant partners.

In order to adapt the EPR to its specific country context, Morocco chose to include a number of key sectors, agriculture, energy, water management, health, industry, waste management, biodiversity and air pollution. These sectors play a major role to economic and social development, as Morocco currently is heavily dependent of food and oil imports. In addition, the country's vulnerability to climate change is high. By improving environmental management in general and



in these sectors in particular it will allow the country to seize the opportunity to increase productivity and competitiveness, diversify its economy and create sustainable jobs. It is evident that more integrative policy making and planning would benefit not only the environment, but in the long term also the sustainability of these other sectors.

The analysis of each sector resulted in specific recommendations. The recommendations for the agriculture sector addressed the issues of land tenure for agricultural producers, the application of sustainable agricultural techniques, soil protection and the role of National Agency for the Sanitary Safety of Food Products. For the sectors industry, health and energy, recommendations targeted: ways to improve the monitoring of the environmental pressured exercised by industrial activities on the environment with the ultimate goal of transiting to a sustainable industry; institutional measures needed to better organize the management of the health/environment nexus including legislative proposals; and the strengthening of the role of private investors in renewable energy financing through incentive measures and the reform of the electricity pricing policy.

Cross-cutting issues such as institutional and policy frameworks, environmental legislation, governance and cooperation were also addressed. The need for a solid legal basis for monitoring to be developed as well the need for the establishment of an integrated environmental information system on the state of the environment were highlighted.

Also to be underlined, the Moroccan government received encouragements to continue building synergies in its efforts to implement the various multilateral environmental agreements that the country has ratified.



# Benefits of the EPR

The Moroccan experience has been very positive and rich in terms of lessons learnt. The EPR contributed to strengthening of both knowledge and capacity in the country. Specific recommendations were made targeting environmental legislation improvement as well as strengthening of institutional frameworks, in particular concerning institutional coordination and the participation of key actors.

The EPR can also be used in environment education efforts, which was particularly highlighted as an advantage by Morocco.

As for many policy areas, environmental management is hampered due to a lack of funds. The EPR recommendations propose specific tools, such as permit systems, polluter fees, tariff reform to improve cost recovery and financial sustainability of the water sector services.



The EPR pays special attention to the issue of environmental monitoring and data collection, and countries receive specific feedback on how to improve the continuous gathering and analysis of data.

The national ownership for the EPR process is fundamental for making the necessary information available, for writing the report as well as for the willingness to implement the final recommendations.

The strength of the EPR lies not only in the end-product, but also in the process itself. Although some topics are covered in all EPRs, countries have the possibility to tailor the report to suit their specific needs.

The multidisciplinary character and the experience of the team in charge of preparing the report allow for a good understanding of the challenges and for formulating recommendations that respond to country capacity and needs.



## **Promoting the exchange of information among countries**

The EPR offers several occasions for the reviewed country to interact with the European country representatives, members of the Committee of Environmental Policy at ECE. These representatives have a profound experience of environmental issues and their integration into public policy. During the peer review session, the feedback given contribute to a better understanding of the challenges in a given country, and help fine-tune the recommendations to ensure that they offer an adequate policy response, that can be put in use.

## **Integrating the environmental dimension into public policy and the sectors**

The EPR is a mainstreaming tool – it allows for countries to cross-examine how well integrated environmental concerns are in other key sectors of the economy and in social policy. It is also considered as a follow-up tool for monitoring the commitments made at Rio+20.

## **Promoting greater accountability to the public**

The EPRs can be used by the government as an advocacy tool in the national dialogue on environment and sustainable development.

## **Strengthening cooperation with the international community**

African countries are parties to many global and regional environmental conventions. The EPR can give recommendations on implementation of these agreements and conventions. A country having undergone an EPR also have a rich national resource to use when they take part in the elaboration of the international policy formulation on environment.



# The EPR – a tool for environmental governance in Africa

The economies of African countries are dependent on natural resources, the platform for the daily lives of people. A coherent body of environmental policy has been developed over the past years and steady progress has been made in terms of sensitization, capacity building, consolidation of legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks, including the integration of ecological perspectives into national development strategies.

However, the implementation of these policies is not yet satisfactory and the environmental degradation is ongoing. The coherent integration of environmental challenges through a multisectorial approach is necessary in order to achieve the continent's long and medium term development objectives. The EPR can contribute to these objectives and to improving decision making processes.





## Notes

To learn more on how to use the EPR in your country,  
contact UNECA's Office for North Africa for further information.

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