

Earth Negotiations Bulletin Briefing Note

Informal Consultations for the Organization of Work during the
Eleventh Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development,
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CSD-11 Chair, South African Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Mohammed Valli Moosa, convened informal consultations in preparation for CSD-11 on Monday and Tuesday, 24-25 February 2003, at UN headquarters in New York. The purpose of the meeting was to hear initial views of delegations on the scope and nature of the future programme of work of the CSD and, in particular, to allow for informal discussions on the Report of the Secretary General (E/CN.17/2003/3) and the proposed organization of work for CSD-11, as outlined in an introductory note from the Chair.

Opening the meeting Chair Moosa noted that since his election as Chair of CSD-11 he had held several *Ad-hoc* informal discussions and the overwhelming consensus was for CSD to operate in a substantially new way, moving beyond a “business as usual” approach. Highlighting the importance of CSD-11 as the first session since the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Moosa said that this session would either “succeed or fail” to set the tone for the CSD’s work for the coming decade. He stressed that CSD-11 has a crucial role to play in ensuring “sound” political direction to the implementation of the WSSD’s outcomes, Agenda 21 and to the next phase of the CSD’s work. He said that the Bureau had decided to move away from the CSD’s customary approach with experts and officials meeting in the first week, and then ministers addressing views in the second week. He proposed that in future sessions,

the CSD begin with a high-level ministerial segment, which would give firm political direction to officials for the second week of the CSD's work. He suggested that the ministerial segments build on the successful format used in Johannesburg and that this would include the participation of the Bretton Woods Institutions, the Global Environment Facility, relevant UN agencies and bodies, and should receive reports from international conferences held since the WSSD, such as the third World Water Forum and relevant MEA Conferences of the Parties. He also said that "high-level or senior representatives" from the major groups would be encouraged to participate in the ministerial segments. Addressing the themes of future CSD sessions, he said that these need to be relevant to various ministries, thereby enabling cross-cutting ministerial representation at the CSD. Moosa said that the proposed programme of work creates the opportunity for regional implementation forums and partnership meetings designed to track the implementation progress of partnership initiatives announced at the WSSD.

In the general discussion on the organization of work, delegations expressed overwhelming support for the ministerial segment to be held during the first week of CSD. However, Japan stressed that it was less important to have high-level ministerial segments during the CSD and questioned the idea of a ministerial segment during CSD-11. He said that the CSD-11 should focus on the implementation and promotion of the WSSD's outcomes. He also said there was no need to conduct negotiations during the CSD-11, that the focus should be implementation and action, and proposed that the next high-level segment be held in 2007. The US said there should be further discussion on the frequency of high-level segments.

Welcoming the integration of major groups and other stakeholders into the high-level ministerial segment, the US proposed that themes for the segment could include lessons learned from the WSSD with a particular focus on process, the roles of governments and major groups in implementation, and establishing a vision of what the world would look like in 2013. With regard to regional implementation forums, he questioned whether the UN regional bodies were the appropriate mechanisms to host such meetings and proposed the need to look at other relevant regional organizations or processes. Switzerland stressed the important role of major groups in the high-level segments, and with Norway and Canada, noted the need for a closer relationship

between the Chair's note and the Report of the Secretary-General. Norway said that CSD-11 was an important opportunity to maintain the political momentum, leadership, commitment and engagement created in Johannesburg. The Russian Federation highlighted the need to create adequate time for preparations before CSD-11 and, with others, supported a proposal to hold another informal consultation in March 2003. Morocco, speaking on behalf of the G-77, stressed that the main challenge for CSD was to ensure "real and effective" implementation of the WSSD's outcomes and that CSD-11 should focus on the "ways and means" to make sustainable development a reality. He said that the future programme of work should allow for the necessary flexibility to address new challenges and issues in sustainable development implementation. He stressed that the programme of work would address the following key issues: (1) identifying issues to be discussed in depth; (2) linkages between issues and sectors; (3) the scheduling of issues for consideration at future CSD sessions; and (4) the identification of responsibilities for implementation. He said that the scheduling of panels during the second week of CSD-11 should be cancelled to create more time for the regional implementation forums. Addressing the issues for consideration by the CSD, he proposed a focus on trade, means of implementation and funding. He then requested clarification on how the outputs of the high-level ministerial segment would be incorporated into the draft decisions and, with the EU, addressed the need for more clarity on the draft decision for CSD-11.

Anne Kerr, UN Division of Sustainable Development (DESA), briefly introduced the Report of the Secretary-General emphasizing: the need to integrate the WSSD's outcomes with other UN summits and conferences; the two-year multi-cycle of work; global and regional implementation forums; options for the identification of issues for future CSD sessions; partnerships; and enhancing the role of international organizations and major groups in the work of the CSD. She stressed that the goal of the CSD was to add value to the international sustainable development process.

With regard to the CSD's multi-year programme of work, delegations expressed their views on the Secretary-General's proposals for the selection of issues for the CSD. The Report proposes that the CSD's future work be divided into a two-year cycle with a review session in the first year followed by a policy focus in the second year. The Report also proposes three options for the selection of thematic issues for the CSD:

- 1. Two or three broad natural resource or economic sectors to be pre-selected at CSD-11 for each of the next 4-5 two-year cycles;
- 2. No pre-set thematic programme of work for the next 10 years and that two or three sectors be agreed for consideration during the first two-year cycle (2004-2005); and
- 3. A combination of the options described above, with 1 or 2 broad areas being pre-selected by CSD-11 for each of the next 4-5 two-year cycles.

New Zealand said that the CSD needs to maintain the flexibility to deal with new and emerging issues and, with Switzerland, Japan and Canada, expressed support for Option 3. Welcoming the proposal for a multi-year cycle, Norway noted that the challenge would be to maintain political momentum during the two-year period of work. She said it was crucial that the multi-year cycle establish an agenda for other international bodies which is consistent with the international development agenda. She proposed that CSD-11 select issues for the next three CSD sessions concluding in 2008. The US voiced concerns with the Secretary-General's proposed options and expressed interest in the elaboration of the Norwegian proposal. He supported the two-year cycle of work and stressed that the review year also look to address new sustainable development initiatives. He expressed a preference to refer to "implementation" instead of "review" and welcomed the proposal for a partnership fair and learning centers to be held during CSD sessions. Switzerland expressed concern with the proliferation of meetings in the new multi-year programme of work.

In relation to the identification of themes for the CSD's future work, New Zealand said that while the WEHAB initiative provides a useful issue filter, there needs to be a process for ensuring that key sustainable development issues outside of the initiative, such as oceans, do not fall off the CSD's agenda. The US noted a need to limit the number of issues addressed in each CSD cycle. The EU expressed support for defining the scope of the CSD's work, the inter-relationships and intersection of issues and having sector-specific and goal-oriented contexts. He said that it is not possible to have a "watertight" compartmentalization of issues, and noted the merits of a predictable and flexible mix of issues. He also said it would be necessary to "stay closer" to the chapters contained in the WSSD's Plan of Implementation. Norway

stressed the importance of dealing with freshwater and sanitation, while Switzerland highlighted the importance of addressing sustainable development of mountainous regions.

Addressing the issue of partnerships, the EU, Norway, Japan, and Switzerland proposed that the existing guidelines for developing partnerships, announced during the WSSD, be assessed for applicability and should be updated to include reporting requirements. Japan proposed the submission of annual reports to the CSD and said that partnerships should not be included as one of the negotiated outcomes of CSD sessions. Canada said that partnerships require transparent and credible reporting procedures, but cautioned against procedures that could be seen as a disincentive to the launching of new partnerships. The US said that partnerships should be based on the credible, flexible and publicly accessible reporting and that it was premature to develop new partnership guidelines so soon after the WSSD. The G-77 expressed concern that the Secretary-General's report overemphasized the role of partnerships and, with other delegations, reiterated that partnerships were not a substitute for government commitments or actions. He noted that the current guidelines have not been officially adopted, and requested sufficient time during CSD-11 to address the guidelines in a draft decision.

Welcoming the role of major groups in the CSD, the G-77 said that the modalities governing their participation should be well-defined. The EU noted its support for strengthening the role of major groups in the preparation of sessions, the examination of partnerships, and the conclusions of the sessions. He said that educators should be involved in the CSD's interactive discussions, that eminent scientists be invited to address the CSD's work on evolving issues, and highlighted the need for enhancing the role for the legislative and judicial branches of government, as well as the media in the work of the CSD. Canada welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendation that the 700 new organizations accredited to the WSSD be allowed to seek fast-track accreditation by ECOSOC.

The G-77 emphasized that the WEHAB initiative, procedurally speaking, has not been the subject of intergovernmental negotiations, and merits further discussion. He stressed that serious attention needs to be given to the issue of the reliability of

resources for implementation. With regard to UN system coordination and coherence, the EU and G-77 urged the CSD to take into account the work of the Open-Ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

In his concluding remarks, Chair Moosa welcomed the valuable contributions made by delegations and said that they would be extremely useful in guiding the further development of the programme of work and the organization of CSD-11. In response to issues raised by delegations, he noted that the Bureau would consider these options and attempt to incorporate them into a revised organization of work for CSD-11. He urged delegations to consult with capitals on the outcomes of the informal consultations and the Secretary-General's report, and emphasized the need for appropriate ministerial representation during CSD-11.

The meeting adjourned at 10.59 am.

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