

CSD-12 Briefing

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By Pamela Chasek
Editor, Earth Negotiations Bulletin
International Institute for Sustainable Development
pam@iisd.org

The Chair of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Norwegian Environment Minister Børge Brende, gave a briefing on preparations for CSD-12 at UN headquarters on Friday afternoon, 23 January 2004 at 3:00 pm. The briefing followed the fourth meeting of the CSD-12 Bureau.

In his introductory remarks, Minister Brende stressed the urgency of the substantive topics on the CSD's agenda: water, sanitation and human settlements, citing a number of examples. He told the more than 200 people in Conference Room 1 that we will do "an honest and transparent" review this spring. Reporting on the day's Bureau meeting, Brende distributed the "Note of the Bureau of the Twelfth Session of the CSD on its Fourth Meeting" and an introductory note on the "Organisation of Work During CSD-12" (soon to be posted on the CSD www site: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/csd12.htm>). He noted that he has invited ministers with relevant portfolios to the high-level segment and has had a positive response. He has also invited UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the opening of the high-level segment, which is expected to be the major Millennium Development Goals implementation event of the year. He added that the regional implementation forums have produced impressive results and are giving real input into the CSD. He also stressed the importance of interlinkages between water, sanitation and human settlements.

He then proceeded to explain the organization of work during the high-level segment, which will take place from Wednesday, 28 April, through Friday, 30 April. Each day will start with an informal breakfast meeting, to be followed by morning and afternoon sessions. The first day will feature opening speeches, followed by a thematic discussion on *Meeting Targets Goals and Timetables: Key Elements for Sustainable Development*, with a focus on constraints, obstacles, possible approaches and best practices for implementation. The afternoon session will focus on *Creating an Enabling Environment: Policies, Governance and Finance*. Thursday morning will include a dialogue between ministers and heads of UN agencies on constraints, obstacles, possible approaches and best practices for implementation, followed by a discussion on partnerships. The afternoon will focus on the role of major groups and will include stakeholder participation, followed by a session on *Meeting Basic Needs in Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements*. This discussion will continue on Friday morning.

Joanne DiSano, Director, UN Division for Sustainable Development, went through the annotated agenda for the rest of the meeting. CSD-12 will actually start on 14 April. The election of officers, adoption of the agenda and organization of work for CSD-12 will be dealt with at this time. After the opening of the session, there will be three days where the CSD will act as the

Preparatory Committee for the Ten-Year Review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The agenda for this portion of the meeting will be available following the conclusion of the Inter-Regional Meeting being held in the Bahamas from 26-30 January.

Beginning on Monday, 19 April, discussions of the CSD themes will take place in two conference rooms. Discussions in Conference Room 1 will focus on the review of progress in implementation as well as obstacles and constraints, against the targets, goals and timetables of water, sanitation and human settlements commitments made in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and those commitments made in relevant CSD sessions only. This is not a meeting to review any and all meetings held on water, sanitation and human settlements. Discussions in Conference Room 2 will focus on more operational aspects through review of case studies, national policy experiences, lessons learned and best practices related to implementation. The sessions have been scheduled to avoid an overlap of discussions on the same theme in both rooms at the same time. The sessions will include a brief “lead off” discussion by way of a panel, speaker or point-counterpoint presentation. This will be followed by an interactive discussion.

There will also be regional meetings spread throughout. It is hoped that the heads of the regional commissions will present the results of the regional implementation forums, which would then lead into an interactive discussion. Major groups will participate in all of the interactive discussions. One day is set aside for a status report requested by CSD-11, covering inter-agency coordination, partnerships, national reporting and indicators. There will also be a parallel partnership fair and learning center.

Both DiSano and Brende continually reminded the delegates and major group representatives present that this would not be a negotiating session, but rather a review session. The floor was then opened for comments.

Qatar, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, asked for some clarifications on the agenda, including how the regional meetings would be organized, and asked if general statements were necessary during the first week and the high-level segment. He also asked for details on regional meetings and the status report. He also asked if there would be a preparatory meeting in February. The Chair responded that most of these issues were addressed in the annotated agenda and had been discussed at the Bureau meeting that day. DiSano responded that there would be no preparatory meeting in February as some delegations had requested. This would send a mixed message since at CSD-11 everyone agreed there would be no preparatory meetings. The Secretariat and the Bureau have consulted with regional groups and will continue to do so.

Russia said that he needed more details on the high-level segment so that he could plan his minister’s schedule. The Chair responded that page 13 of the annotated agenda has a detailed outline of the high-level segment.

Iran, on behalf of the G-77 and China, said that they didn’t want a preparatory meeting, but that CSD-11 and the General Assembly resolution this year requested open-ended and transparent

consultations on organizational modalities for CSD meetings. He said they were asking for 3 hours rather than 2-3 days.

The Chair responded that he's pleased with the huge interest in preparations for CSD-12, but he thought that this meeting was an informal consultation. He said that they will also have a meeting like this after the next Bureau meeting, scheduled for 19 March, but that there would be no meeting in February. He reiterated that this was a review year, not a negotiating year.

The Women's Environment and Development Organization wanted assurance that gender will be on the agenda as a cross-cutting issue. DiSano responded that the Secretariat has asked stakeholders to bring this to the meeting and gender is taken into consideration in the Secretary-General's report that is now being cleared for distribution.

Iran, on behalf of the G-77 and China, returned to the issue of consultations. He argued that March was too late to make changes to the agenda. He said that delegations needed time to reflect on the agenda and come back and discuss it in February.

The NGO Committee on Human Settlements expressed concern that the necessary interlinkages will not be made since many of the people involved do not have expertise on human settlements. DiSano responded that the task force on human settlements that contributed to the Secretary-General's report has expertise. She urged Major Groups to work together.

Ghana asked for clarification on the distribution of meetings between the two conference rooms and how the results will be integrated. DiSano responded that this is normal practice for the UN. Everything on the agenda cannot be discussed in one room. She described the modalities, as set out in the annotated agenda.

A representative of Southern NGOs called for greater support for the participation of developing country NGOs at the CSD meeting. The Chair said that his government will do what it can. DiSano said that there were extremely limited funds for this so they can take care of NGOs who have been identified to speak. They cannot fund everyone, but this has always been the CSD practice.

The US said that it would see value in consultations once capitals have seen the draft agenda. Ireland, on behalf of the EU, said that the EU was committed to the success of the review year and would discuss the need for consultations within the EU.

The Chair thanked everyone for their input. He said that the Bureau is set up so all regions are represented in putting together the agenda. However, there is clearly a keen interest to have more time to study the agenda in capitals. He suggested that all input be given to the Bureau members in advance of the next Bureau meeting. As a compromise measure, he said that he would look into scheduling the next Bureau meeting in late February or early March and will meet with everyone following the Bureau meeting. He closed the briefing at 5:05 pm.