



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 20 APRIL – 1 MAY 1998

The sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-6) will meet at UN Headquarters in New York from 20 April - 1 May 1998. Participants are scheduled to consider the economic theme of industry and the sectoral theme of strategic approaches to freshwater management, as well as the cross-sectoral themes of technology transfer, capacity-building, education, science and awareness-raising. A High-Level Segment will take place from 29 April - 1 May. Three drafting groups will be established to prepare decisions on: freshwater and Small Island Developing States (SIDS); industry and consumer protection; and the cross-sectoral themes. Numerous side events also are scheduled throughout the two-week session.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSD

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was envisioned in Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Agenda 21 called for the creation of the CSD to: ensure effective follow-up of UNCED; enhance international cooperation and rationalize intergovernmental decision-making capacity; and examine progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local, national, regional and international levels. In 1992, the 47th session of the UN General Assembly set out, in Resolution 47/191, the terms of reference for the Commission, its composition, guidelines for the participation of NGOs, the organization of work, the CSD's relationship with other UN bodies and Secretariat arrangements. The CSD held its first substantive session in June 1993 and has met annually since then.

In June 1997, five years after UNCED, the General Assembly held a special session to review implementation of Agenda 21 (UNGASS). Negotiations held in a Committee of the Whole, as well as several ministerial groups, produced a Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. Among the decisions adopted at UNGASS was the CSD work programme, which identifies sectoral, cross-sectoral and economic sector/major group themes for the next four sessions of the Commission. Overriding issues for each year will be poverty and consumption and production patterns.

### RECENT MEETINGS RELATED TO CSD-6 AGENDA ITEMS

A number of recent meetings have addressed issues related to the CSD-6 agenda and will provide input to the CSD-6 deliberations.

#### EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON STRATEGIC

**APPROACHES TO FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT:** In preparation for the *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group and CSD-6's consideration of strategic approaches to freshwater management, an

Expert Group met in Harare, Zimbabwe from 27- 30 January 1998. It was hosted by the Government of Zimbabwe and organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The meeting's report was presented as a Co-Chairs' summary. It notes that integrated water resources management, within a national economic framework, is essential for achieving efficient and equitable allocation of water resources and thus for promoting sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation. Recommendations include: recognizing water as a social and economic good; developing national and, where relevant, sub-national water policies and continually reviewing them; managing demand for and allocation of water resources based on the principles of equity and efficient use; strengthening institutional and human capacities at national and local levels; financing, establishing and maintaining effective data collection and dissemination, information management systems and research; ensuring efficiency, transparency and accountability in water resources management; strengthening consultation mechanisms aimed at improving donor/recipient dialogues for the mobilization of financial resources; and taking into account actions to implement a number of existing conventions and programmes of action relevant to freshwater when formulating and implementing integrated water resources management policies and programmes.

#### INTER-REGIONAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE

**CONSUMPTION:** The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with the Environment Secretariat of the State Government of São Paulo, convened an Inter-Regional Expert Group meeting in São Paulo, Brazil from 28 - 30 January 1998. Approximately fifty people participated, including representatives of governments, consumer organizations, business and industry, the academic community, NGOs and international organizations. The meeting focused on the UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection and new guidelines proposed by Consumers International on the basis of extensive regional consultations.

The Expert Group Meeting did not attempt to reach consensus on precise wording for new guidelines, but focused on identifying the issues relating to sustainable consumption that should be incorporated into consumer protection policy and making recommendations as to how they might be effectively addressed. Participants focused on issues related to sustainable consumption. They did not review or revise the existing text of the UN Guidelines or consider other areas in which the Guidelines might be extended. In some cases, however, it appeared that sustainable consumption could best be integrated into the Guidelines by introducing additional words into existing paragraphs, without otherwise changing the existing text.

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### **INTERNATIONAL EXPERT MEETING ON THE ROLE OF PUBLICLY-FUNDED RESEARCH AND PUBLICLY-OWNED TECHNOLOGIES:**

The International Expert Meeting on the Role of Publicly-Funded Research And Publicly-Owned Technologies in the Transfer and Diffusion of Environmentally Sound Technologies (ESTs) was held in Kyongju, Republic of Korea from 4 - 6 February 1998. Sponsored by the Korean government and organized by UNCTAD, UNDESA and UNEP, the workshop addressed: the relevance of publicly-funded R&D in the generation and diffusion of ESTs; examples of technology cooperation to promote the commercialization and diffusion of ESTs in developing countries; and policies and institutional frameworks to facilitate the wider diffusion of publicly-funded ESTs. The meeting's findings and suggestions for new policy initiatives note that many governments explicitly refer in their public policy statements to the need to share ESTs with the developing world, but the extent and pace of transfers are inadequate. There is considerable room for governments to play a role in supporting and promoting new transfer and diffusion mechanisms, which could collectively constitute a framework for identification, adaptation, assessment and post-transfer follow-up.

### **CSD INTERSESSIONAL AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT:**

The CSD Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management met from 23-27 February 1998 at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates exchanged views on freshwater issues, highlighting the economic and social values of water and accompanying governmental responses as well as cooperation among riparian States on transboundary or international water-courses. Delegates also offered comments on two iterations of the Co-Chairs' draft report, which was revised to include remarks on the second iteration and will provide the basis for negotiation at CSD-6. The report outlines key issues and challenges, calls for action and means of implementation in the areas of information for decision-making, institutions, capacity building and participation, technology transfer and research cooperation, and financial resources and mechanisms. The report also presents recommendations for follow-up and assessment.

### **CSD INTERSESSIONAL AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON INDUSTRY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

The CSD Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Industry and Sustainable Development met from 2-6 March 1998 at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates exchanged views on the issue and then offered comments on two iterations of the Co-Chairs' draft report. The second draft will be revised based on the closing remarks and form the basis for negotiations at CSD-6. The Co-Chairs' report offers recommendations for governments, industry and the international community. A final section on future work recommends that, *inter alia*: international organizations study voluntary schemes for industry; the CSD consider, with industry, how the dialogue with industry might be followed up to ensure an effective and continuing input from the sector; and governments and industry improve their progress reports on voluntary initiatives and environmental protection. Delegates also briefly considered proposed elaborations of the UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection. Several delegations preferred to put off detailed discussion on these until CSD-7 in 1999.

### **MEETING ON THE GLOBAL ISSUES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

A High-Level Meeting was held in Budapest, Hungary from 13-15 March 1998 to discuss key issues on the international environment and sustainable development agenda that emanated from UNGASS, the Third Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and UNEP's High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials. The meeting was attended by environment ministers and representatives from 19 countries and the European Commission, the UN Under-Secretary General for Social and Economic Affairs, the Executive

Director of UNEP and the CEO of the GEF. Participants said the main political challenge for CSD-6 is to achieve tangible results, secure further commitments to action and advance international consensus on the issues placed on the CSD agenda. They stressed the importance of CSD building upon the participatory approaches developed during previous sessions and exploring new ways for even more effective involvement of major groups and other partners. Regarding strategic approaches to freshwater management, participants expressed hope that the CSD would decide on the specific modalities for further policy dialogue to be held under its aegis, on concrete actions towards advancing integrated approaches to sustainable water management, and on effective measures to support national efforts through international cooperation. They noted the importance of making equity considerations, in particular in addressing the problems of the poorest people, an integral part in the formulation of strategic approaches to integrated water management. They said an equally important goal is to ensure that water use does not undermine the integrity of ecosystems.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

The International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development took place from 19-21 March 1998 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The Conference, sponsored by the Government of France, gathered approximately 600 participants, including Ministers and high-level officials from public bodies in charge of water management in 84 countries and representatives of civil society, UN agencies, international organizations and development banks involved in the water sector. French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin addressed the Conference. The objective of the Conference was to contribute to the elaboration of strategies necessary for improving freshwater resources conservation and management in rural and urban areas to ensure better-controlled drinking water supply, sanitation and irrigation, while integrating desertification control into these objectives.

Over the course of the conference, participants convened in three parallel experts' workshops, on improving knowledge of water resources and uses for sustainable management, favoring the development of regulatory tools and institutional capacity building, and defining strategies for sustainable management and identifying appropriate financial resources. In these workshops, delegates heard presentations on a number of case studies and discussed a series of draft recommendations which they later finalized and submitted to the Ministerial session for adoption.

The Conference adopted a Programme for Priority Actions, comprised of recommendations from three expert workshops, as well as a Ministerial Declaration. These documents will be submitted as official documents and will provide input for discussion at CSD-6.

## **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**PLENARY:** During an opening Plenary in Conference Room 1, delegates are expected to elect officers, adopt the agenda and hear introductory statements. Reports of the *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Groups on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management and on Industry and Sustainable Development will also be presented. During the afternoon, they will hear presentations of national experiences in the area of freshwater and debate the cross-sectoral themes of transfer of technology, capacity building, education, science and awareness raising.