



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 5 No. 101

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development

Tuesday, 21 April 1998

CSD-6 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 20 APRIL 1998

On the first morning of the two-week session, delegates to CSD-6 heard opening statements and reports of preparatory meetings. Three presentations on national experiences in the area of freshwater management were given during the afternoon.

OPENING STATEMENTS

CSD-6 Chair Cielito Habito (Philippines) opened CSD-6 by leading delegates in a moment of silence in memory of Bella Abzug (Women's Environment and Development Organization) and her contributions to sustainable development.

Chair Habito highlighted the importance of proper and judicious management of freshwater for peace and security. He noted the dominant role of industry in sustainable development and said it could be the biggest source of funds for sustainable development, especially since the world has moved away from the Rio funding targets. He also stressed the need for partnerships with major groups and noted the wisdom in institutionalizing stronger participation.

Nitin Desai, Under Secretary-General, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), described the impact of UN reform on the CSD. He said integration of development work in the DESA will strengthen the impact of the CSD. Other relevant developments include: a task force, chaired by the new Executive Director of UNEP, Klaus Töpfer, to strengthen the environmental work of the UN; an Executive Committee on economic and social affairs to look at ways to improve coherence between economic, social and development agencies; and a General Assembly process on financing development to culminate in a conference before 2001. He said the CSD process must go beyond the multilateral procedures used by other bodies to define rights and obligations on security-related issues because the CSD involves commitments to action by non-State actors and requires prior processes of analysis, agreement on facts, and policy consensus building. The post-Rio process, including UNGASS, has already promoted this more open political process. He suggested that the CSD consider direct interaction with national sustainable development fora.

The INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE said the role of industry in the CSD process goes to the very heart of the UN Secretary-General's desire for a better means of communication between industry and the UN. Industry has addressed the complex sustainable development agenda by implementing voluntary codes of conduct and launching international environmental management systems, and through a business-driven technology revolution to introduce ESTs. On responsible entrepreneurship, she underlined the

particular challenge of environmental management for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). On technology cooperation, she warned that excessive government regulation can stifle access and innovation, and called on governments to enhance the business environment to catalyze commercialization. On water, she underlined awareness raising, notably within the agriculture sector.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Delegates elected Miloslav Hettes (Slovakia) to the Bureau as a Vice-Chair. Rogatien Biaoou (Benin), Michael Odevall (Sweden) and Marta Ines Galindo (Colombia) were elected Vice-Chairs on 22 December 1997. Vice-Chair Galindo will also serve as Rapporteur.

INDONESIA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA and supported by INDIA, SUDAN and CUBA, said the delayed distribution of documents had made it difficult to ensure adequate preparation for productive dialogue, and noted that the amount of time scheduled for the drafting exercise is limited. He said any draft decisions should be ready by the second day of this session. He also said that: the Bureau should ensure balanced representation between developed and developing countries during the industry segment; the Chair's draft must be based on the various proposals from this meeting, rather than other meetings; the High-Level Segment should provide scope for an integrated overview, and not focus on just freshwater; and the side events should not divert attention from the intergovernmental process of the Commission. IRAN said the CSD should focus on mechanisms to implement existing programmes rather than elaborate on new programmes of action.

The Secretariat noted that they have made every effort to improve and streamline the provision of documentation, which was issued earlier for this session than for previous sessions. She said the availability of documentation is still below ECOSOC's standard, and while the Secretariat endeavors to meet that deadline, it is often very difficult.

Vice-Chair Hettes introduced the organization of work, highlighting the formation of three drafting groups: Drafting Group One (DG-1), to be chaired by Vice-Chair Biaoou, will consider freshwater and SIDS; DG-2, to be chaired by Vice-Chair Odevall, will consider industry and the UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection; and DG-3, to be chaired by Vice-Chair Hettes, will consider the cross-sectoral themes of technology transfer, capacity-building, education, science and awareness-raising. He said no more than two drafting groups will meet at any one time. He stressed that the High-Level Segment should focus on key issues and statements should not exceed seven minutes.

INDIA emphasized that the intersessional meetings should facilitate but not substitute for deliberations at the official CSD session and said it is unfortunate that there is insufficient time to consider their

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results. The Chair said that there is limited time for such discussions because the CSD sessions have been shortened to two weeks, and they have had to rely on the work of the Intersessional Working Groups to a greater extent. SUDAN said CSD member States must have time to exchange views and influence the outcome of the session. CUBA suggested that three days is insufficient time for the drafting groups to consider the issues and called for informal consultations with the Bureau in this regard. Following informal consultations, the Chair announced that there would be one hour of open debate on sectoral issues on Thursday.

Delegates invited the Ramsar Convention and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development to attend CSD-6 as observers (E/CN.17/1998/L.1 and 2).

REPORTS OF PREPARATORY MEETINGS

Vice-Chair Biauou presented the Report of the Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management (E/CN.17/1998/13). He highlighted the need for integrated water management and emphasized recommended measures and means to take action, including capacity building, technology transfer and provision of financial resources. He noted the recommendation that the international community consider the establishment of a financial mechanism.

Vice-Chair Odevall presented the Report of the Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Industry and Sustainable Development (E/CN.17/1998/14). He said the Group stressed the importance of building and extending a dialogue with industry. He noted the need to further develop and elaborate the idea of eco-efficiency to encourage changes in unsustainable practices. He also stressed the importance of follow-up.

GERMANY described a global conference co-sponsored by her government and the World Bank, on Global Water Politics - Cooperation for Transboundary Water Management, which took place in Petersberg, Germany from 2-5 March 1998. The Conference was likely the first in history to have an integrated focus on measures to address the development, security, environment and public-private partnership aspects of water resources management. Recommendations addressed complementary actions, critical factors and the need for a shared vision, the importance of an integrated approach, the institutional framework and human resources, and public-private partnerships with companies and community-based organizations (CBOs).

FRANCE reported on the International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development at UNESCO Headquarters from 19-21 March 1998. Representatives of 84 countries took part together with NGO, industry and regional actors. They adopted a Final Declaration and a priority programme of action to be transmitted to the CSD. The Conference addressed, *inter alia*, management at the watershed level, participation, institutional capacity expansion and information, education and training, integrated information systems, public and private finance, innovative financial mechanisms, water pricing and measures to guarantee water access for the poorest.

NATIONAL PRESENTATIONS ON FRESHWATER MANAGEMENT

CHINA provided background information regarding its geography, climate and population, and outlined its problems in the water sector, including: a water deficit of 6 billion tons per year; the lack of financial resources; water pollution that threatens the freshwater supply of most Chinese cities; soil erosion of 5 billion tons annually; and waste due to unsophisticated techniques of irrigation and lack of advanced water saving facilities. While numerous efforts have been made, many difficulties remain. He stressed that bilateral and multilateral cooperation, with both developed and developing countries, is needed for investment and technology introduction.

ZIMBABWE said three forces conspire to create water scarcity: depletion or degradation of the resource; population growth, which has doubled every 20 years since 1931; and unequal distribution or access, exacerbated by the concept of "priority of application date" which denies new stakeholders. Other problems include: budgetary constraints; reduced governmental capacity; resurgence of drought; subsidies resulting in inefficient usage; and uncontrolled groundwater development. Zimbabwe's priority actions include changing the national Water Act to improve access and implementing a Water Resources Management Strategy. He also discussed hydro-environmental integrity, capacity building and shared international water-courses. Participants asked questions on linking environmental and human health, integrating land and water management, and amending national laws.

VENEZUELA outlined its efforts to undertake integrated and holistic management of water resources. He said Venezuela's water laws have incorporated the economic value of water, ascribed high priority to conservation and holistic management of catchments and other basins, emphasized the important role of the state, recognized the important relationship between water resources and territorial management, as well as public participation, and stressed multi-sectoral management. He outlined institutional reforms in Venezuela's water sector, focusing on decentralization to local and sub-regional levels and separating regulatory functions from the provision of water services. He emphasized the need for, *inter alia*: human resources development and training; new opportunities for private sector participation; awareness-building for public officials; and development of sub-regional markets for services.

DEBATE ON CROSS-SECTORAL THEMES

The Secretariat presented the background documentation for the cross-sectoral themes of transfer of technology, capacity building, education, science and awareness raising: the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.17/1998/6 and Add. 1-3) and nine background papers. He noted that the themes are closely interlinked and there is a need for greater use of partnerships in implementation, increased national and international investment in these activities, and enhanced transparency of information exchange, among others. He also presented background documentation for the "Other matters" on the CSD-6 agenda on national reporting and promoting regional cooperation: E/CN.17/1998/7 and /8 and four background papers (23-26). The general debate on the cross-sectoral themes will begin Thursday, 23 April.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Where does industry and corporate responsibility end and accountability begin? That is one of the questions preoccupying environmental NGOs and some 70 industry representatives at the CSD this week as participants prepare for a unique exchange on industry's role in the shift to sustainable development. There appears to be a consensus across industry and UN agencies such as UNEP that existing voluntary codes of conduct need to be revisited. However, an industry representative has signaled that any attempt by environmental NGOs to turn that consensus into an argument for a policing body will meet stiff resistance.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

INDUSTRY SEGMENT: The industry segment will be held in the ECOSOC Chamber. The Dialogue on Responsible Entrepreneurship will take place during the morning and the Dialogue on Corporate Management Tools will take place during the afternoon.