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SUMMARY OF THE CSD INTERSESSIONAL *AD HOC* WORKING GROUP ON INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING AND PARTICIPATION AND ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT:

12-16 MARCH 2001

The Commission on Sustainable Development's Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Group on information for decision making and participation and on international cooperation for an enabling environment met at UN Headquarters in New York from 12-16 March 2001. The session was held in accordance with resolution 1997/63 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) establishing *ad hoc* working groups to assist the Commission with preparations for CSD sessions, and decision 8/8 of the Commission at its eighth meeting and a subsequent Bureau recommendation to hold an intersessional meeting on information for decision making and participation and on international cooperation for an enabling environment in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-9).

The session's deliberations were based on the Secretary-General's reports on information for decision making and participation and on international cooperation for an enabling environment. Participants' output consisted of four documents: a summary of the discussion on each theme and outlines of elements for draft decisions for action-oriented decisions on each theme at CSD-9. The outputs are also intended to highlight political issues that require ministerial input at CSD-9, which is to take place from 16-27 April 2001, in New York.

Most of Wednesday afternoon and Thursday and Friday were dedicated to informal consultations on controversial aspects related to indicators in the elements for a draft decision on information for decision making and participation. During Friday's Plenary, which was scheduled to conclude discussion on the revised draft decisions on both issues, the Co-Chairs announced their intention not to have a second reading, but to forward the documents, as revised, for CSD-9 consideration. Several delegations opposed including text on indicators in the elements for a draft decision on information for decision making and participation as a basis for negotiations at CSD-9.

In their assessment of the session, many participants acknowledged the usefulness of the outputs as a starting point for CSD-9 negotiations. However, it is expected that many will revert back to positions held at the start of the session, while others may adopt a "package deal" negotiating strategy by linking this session's themes, with those of transport, energy and atmosphere to be dealt with at CSD-9. There is also an expectation that CSD-9 will be one of the most difficult sessions in the history of the CSD, due not only to the lack of consensus on several issues but also to the approaching Earth Summit 2002.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSD

The CSD emerged from Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June 1992. 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 of Agenda 21 implementation at the local, national, regional and international levels. In 1992, the 47th session of the General Assembly set out in Resolution 47/191 the CSD's terms of reference, its composition, guidelines for the participation of NGOs, the organization of work, its relationship with other UN bodies, and Secretariat arrangements. The CSD held its first substantive session in June 1993 and has since met annually.

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In June 1997, five years after UNCED, the General Assembly held a Special Session (UNGASS-19) to review the implementation of Agenda 21. Negotiations produced a Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. Among the decisions adopted at UNGASS was a new five-year CSD work programme, which identifies sectoral, cross-sectoral and economic sector/major group themes for the subsequent four sessions of the CSD. Overriding issues for each year are poverty, and consumption and production patterns.

CSD-6 met from 20 April to 1 May 1998. Participants considered the economic theme of industry and the sectoral theme of strategic approaches to freshwater management. They also reviewed implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and discussed the cross-sectoral themes of technology transfer, capacity building, education, science and awareness raising.

CSD-7 met from 19-30 April 1999 to consider the economic theme of tourism, the sectoral theme of oceans and seas, and the cross-sectoral theme of consumption and production patterns. Participants also prepared for the UNGASS review of the Barbados Programme of Action.

CSD-8 met from 24 April to 5 May 2000. Participants considered the economic theme of sustainable agriculture and land management, the sectoral theme of integrated planning and management of land resources and the cross-sectoral themes of financial resources, trade and investment, and economic growth. The conclusions and proposals in the final report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests were also discussed, as were preparations for the ten-year review of UNCED.

CSD ENERGY EXPERT GROUP: The multi-year programme of work for the CSD, adopted by UNGASS in 1997, mandates CSD-9 to consider the sectoral theme of atmosphere/energy. At CSD-7, the *Ad Hoc* Open-Ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development was formally established to prepare inputs to CSD-9, and governments, civil society and other major groups, including the private sector, were called upon to actively participate in the preparatory process.

The first session of the Expert Group met in New York from 6-10 March 2000, and considered reports of the UN Secretary-General on "Energy and sustainable development: Key issues" and national submissions, and produced a Co-Chairs' summary of the discussions. Delegates also agreed on an intersessional programme of work and a provisional agenda for their second session.

The second session was held in New York from 26 February to 2 March 2001, and focused on key issues relating to energy, energy efficiency, renewable energy, advanced fossil fuel technologies, rural energy and energy-related issues in transportation, and regional and international cooperation. Delegates failed to reach agreement on a number of contentious issues, most notably nuclear energy and international cooperation. Delegates agreed to forward to CSD-9 a heavily-bracketed, revised Co-Chairs' proposal for elements for the draft decision on energy.

CSD INTERSESSIONALS ON TRANSPORT AND ATMOSPHERE: The Commission on Sustainable Development's Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Transport and Atmosphere met in New York from 6-9 March 2001. Delegates considered the Secretary-General's reports on transport and on protection of the atmosphere and prepared two documents on each theme, one summarizing the discus-

sions and the other outlining possible elements for action-oriented decisions to be taken at CSD-9. The draft elements under each theme highlight the aspects dealing with international cooperation and recommendations for action at the national level. Both draft elements documents were adopted as negotiated text for CSD-9.

REPORT OF THE INTERSESSIONAL *AD HOC* WORKING GROUP

CSD-9 Chair Bedrich Moldan (Czech Republic) opened the session and invited delegates to consider organizational matters. Delegates elected by acclamation Alison Drayton (Guyana) and Madina Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan) as Co-Chairs. Co-Chair Drayton introduced, and delegates adopted, the agenda and other organizational matters (E/CN.17/ISWG.II/2001/1). She noted that the session would produce: Co-Chairs' summaries on each theme that reflect the discussions, positions stated by delegations and alternative views; and concise, action-oriented papers on elements for draft decisions for negotiation at CSD-9.

Delegates held Plenary sessions to discuss each of the draft reports, following which the Co-Chairs prepared summaries on each topic and the draft elements for decisions for each, which were also discussed in Plenary and in informal consultations.

INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING AND PARTICIPATION

Delegates formally discussed information for decision making and participation during three sessions. On Monday, 12 March, the Secretariat presented the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.17/2001/4 and Add.1). He elaborated the three-phase process undertaken to develop the set of indicators for sustainable development and said the report recommends that the Working Group could recognize the important role countries have played in testing the indicators, and endorse the core set of indicators.

Canada presented the report of the International Expert Meeting on Information for Decision Making and Participation held in September 2000 in Aylmer, Québec, Canada. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Government of Canada, the UN Department on Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Environment Programme. The main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting covered issues such as: public access and participation; information integration and coordination; the CSD Work Programme on indicators of sustainable development; uses of traditional information; harmonization and rationalization of data and indicators; weaknesses in data collection and core data sets; remote sensing and space technologies; Internet-based information systems; and partnerships for financing and mutual support for sustainable development information.

Following a general discussion, the Co-Chairs prepared a summary that delegates considered on Wednesday, 14 March. No comments were raised from the floor. The Co-Chairs' first draft document on elements for the draft decision was also presented and discussed on Wednesday. Extensive informal consultations took place regarding text on indicators of sustainable development on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. A revised version of this document, which included a new section on indicators, was distributed during Friday afternoon's Plenary. During discussions on this draft, the G-77/China, with Saudi Arabia, stated that the new section on indicators was not acceptable as a basis for negotiations at CSD-9.



CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION ON INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING AND PARTICIPATION:

Introduction: The introduction indicates that the meeting agreed that information is a cross-cutting issue critical to implementing all dimensions of sustainable development.

Bridging the Data Gap: On the section regarding indicators of sustainable development and their use, the summary states that many participants recognized the valuable role that a wide variety of governments and, in particular, the testing countries, played in developing the CSD Work Programme on indicators of sustainable development. The summary notes further work that might include: building basic information and statistical capacity in developing countries; identification of indicators for emerging problem areas such as disaster vulnerability; and the identification of linkages among the different elements and intergenerational aspects of sustainable development. The summary also indicates that participants stressed that further work should be voluntary, take into account national particularities, be suited to country-specific conditions, and not lead to conditionalities in the provision of aid and support to developing countries. On improved data collection and use, many countries emphasized the need for improved coordination and harmonization of data collection, and several delegations suggested that efforts are made toward coordinating the work of the CSD and other organizations.

Improving the Availability of and Access to Information: On making information useful for decision making, the summary states that many countries emphasized the continuing need for the development and deployment of information standards. On public access, the summary highlights discussions on: Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration; the Århus Convention on Access to Information; the important role of the media in identifying emerging issues and raising awareness; and the growing amount of information related to sustainable development generated by the private sector. Several delegations mentioned the need to find ways to balance the positive effects of a market-driven system of information with the continuing need to ensure free and open public access to such information. On financial support for information infrastructure and critical data-collection efforts, several delegations emphasized the need to: develop strategic partnerships between government agencies, civil society groups, multilateral organizations and the private sector; and strengthen assistance to developing countries and other countries that wish to enhance capacities.

New Information Technologies: It was generally agreed that the development of new information and communication technologies and the emergence of a new "knowledge economy" offer vast potential for more effective, wider and faster collection and dissemination of information, including for public participation. A number of delegations stressed the need to bridge the technology and information gap between developed and developing countries, as well as the challenge of meeting the information needs of currently excluded groups such as the poor, women, rural communities, Indigenous Peoples and other geographically and socio-economically isolated groups. On space-based and remote sensing technologies, some delegations pointed out the importance of earth observation, geographical information systems, video transmission technologies and Internet technologies for satellite data to obtain the information necessary for making policy and forecasts related to the global environment.

ELEMENTS FOR A DRAFT DECISION ON INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING AND PARTICIPATION:

General Considerations: This section highlights the progress made to improve the quality, coherence and cost effectiveness of data and information gathering, as well as the infrastructural, technological, human capacity and financial resource gaps in developing countries.

In discussions on this section, the EU called for reference to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and to public participation and environmental justice. The G-77/China suggested deleting references to international standards and to greater partnership between developed and developing countries. Nigeria and Saudi Arabia opposed language referring to environmental justice, since it would raise issues of social and economic justice.

The revised elements for a draft decision note that availability and use of information are issues that cut across all chapters of Agenda 21 and its implementation and emphasize: access to information and public participation; investment in human beings; and the power of stakeholder participation. The document states that: developing countries suffering from inadequate infrastructure and information systems and those parts of the population too poor to tap into new information sources are being left behind; and developing countries need technology transfer, capacity building and new and additional resources to modernize or establish their information systems.

Guidance to the Multilateral System: This section recommends that the international community take action in: function, coherence and coordination of the international system; training and capacity building; and indicators of sustainable development.

In discussions on this section, several delegates emphasized the Århus Convention and civil society participation and access to information on environmental issues, which was developed by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE). Canada proposed deleting references to the development of environmental statistics to be linked to economic, social and environmental indicators and, with the EU, to facilitating an increase in the number of computers supplied to developing countries. Australia said the accessibility guidelines for Internet information could take into account people with special needs.

The revised elements for a draft decision state that enhancing information for decision making in order to achieve sustainable development will require international cooperation and actions compatible with national priorities and circumstances. In seeking to provide assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to achieve sustainable development, the Commission could recommend that the international community agree to a number of actions. In the section on improvements in functioning, coherence and coordination, the revised document states that the Commission could:

- encourage: international organizations to rationalize their requests for information with respect to voluntary national reports; the adoption of accessibility guidelines for Internet information; and countries and relevant international organizations to develop information systems;
- strengthen: access by developing countries to information on sustainable development and ensure that the commercialization of information does not become a barrier to developing countries in this regard; and cooperation and coordination of global observations systems and research programmes; and
- promote: the development of innovative technologies such as



global mapping, geographical information systems, video transmission technology and Internet technology for satellite data.

In the section on training and capacity building, the revised elements state that the Commission could:

- undertake training and capacity building, particularly in developing countries and with the cooperation of relevant international organizations, which will help promote wide use of information and communication technologies;
- assist governments of developing countries to develop technological infrastructure for sustainable development through, *inter alia*, technology transfer and implementation of capacity building programmes; and
- assist in strengthening national information systems and statistical agencies to ensure that efforts in data collection and analysis are efficient and effective and are able to meet a range of decision making requirements.

Indicators of Sustainable Development: This section outlines actions the Commission may wish to take regarding indicators of sustainable development. In discussions on Wednesday, 14 March, the G-77/China suggested replacing paragraphs on the CSD Work Programme, national-level indicators and a continuing dialogue on indicators with text from ECOSOC and the Statistical Commission as the focal point for the review of indicators. He proposed text on the voluntary nature of indicators and on the importance of preceding the review by seeking the viewpoints of all countries. The US suggested that the CSD should attempt to resolve issues related to indicators before handing the topic to other agencies. Informal discussions on indicators were held Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday.

This section states that the Commission may wish to:

- emphasize that indicators used by the UN Secretariat in the context of the follow-up to UN conferences and summits should be developed with the full participation of all countries and approved by the relevant intergovernmental bodies;
- reiterate the need for the CSD to review the full range of indicators, with full participation and ownership of member States, with a view to avoiding duplication, as well as ensuring the transparency, consistency and reliability of these indicators, taking into account that such indicators should be of a voluntary nature, be suitable to country-specific conditions, and should not lead to conditionalities;
- recognize that ECOSOC has invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of the indicators used by the UN system;
- note the important role that testing countries played in pilot testing in the CSD Work Programme on indicators of sustainable development;
- encourage the development of indicators for the purpose of sustainable development in line with national considerations and priorities in defining and implementing national goals and priorities for sustainable development and encourage the involvement of all national stakeholders, as appropriate; and
- urge developed countries and international organizations to assist developing countries, as appropriate, in establishing the basic statistical and data capacities for the development of national indicators of sustainable development, through, *inter alia*, financial support, capacity building, technical assistance and twinning arrangements.

Recommendations for Activities at the National Level: This section elaborates actions on access to data and information and to indicators of sustainable development, which governments can encourage at the national level.

In discussions on this section, the G-77/China suggested deleting proposals on, *inter alia*: the appointment of a relevant institution or group of institutions to integrate and harmonize data; further work on indicators; and cooperation with international organizations in capacity-building and technology development programmes. Several delegations stressed the importance of gender-disaggregated data.

The revised elements for a draft decision encourage governments to the extent possible, taking into account their priorities and national circumstances, to consider:

- collecting and providing access to relevant information for decision making for sustainable development, including gender-disaggregated data, and incorporating Indigenous and traditional knowledge into information bases for decision making;
- assisting countries, particularly developing countries, to use satellite and remote sensing technologies for data collection and to further improve ground-based observations;
- establishing policy guidelines to distinguish between specialized information that can be effectively commercialized from information that should be freely available to the public;
- developing strategies to improve access to information and information technologies and strategic partnerships with NGOs and the private sector to stimulate data generation;
- incorporating sustainable development performance information produced by major groups in relevant decision making processes;
- promoting, with private sector participation, measures to give developing countries access to information essential for sustainable development; and
- fostering sustainable development by providing needed technological infrastructure to developing countries and implementing capacity building programmes.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

On Tuesday, 13 March, the Secretariat introduced the Secretary-General's report on international cooperation for an enabling environment for sustainable development (E/CN.17/2001/5) and invited delegates to make general comments. The comments were integrated into the Co-Chairs' summary of discussions.

On Thursday, 15 March, delegates discussed the elements for a draft decision on international cooperation for an enabling environment and made a few general comments on the Co-Chairs' summary of discussions. On Friday, 16 March, the revised summary of discussions and elements for a draft decision were circulated and no comments were made.

CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT: Introduction:

The summary notes that delegates agreed that countries need an enabling environment at both the domestic and international levels in order to promote sustainable development, economic growth, social development and environmental protection. This enabling environment requires partnerships among developed and developing countries, on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities and taking into account national particularities.



Delegates also noted that the discussion on an enabling environment and on the three pillars of sustainable development should be linked to work in other fora, especially the Third UN Conference on Least Developed Countries and the international conference on Financing for Development.

Globalization and Sustainable Development: Delegates recognized that globalization creates opportunities to overcome poverty through trade liberalization and economic growth. However, the uneven distribution of the impacts of globalization was acknowledged, particularly in developing countries where many have noted a growing disillusionment with globalization, which is blamed for the increased polarization of wealth and poverty. In response, some delegates called for, *inter alia*, emphasis on poverty eradication, a supportive external economic environment and global governance.

Many delegations noted inadequate levels of capacity building and technology transfer and unfulfilled UN official development assistance (ODA) targets. Some delegates suggested setting a framework to achieve the UN ODA targets of 0.7%, while others said it should be increased to 1.0% of gross national product (GNP) of donor countries. Some delegates stated that ODA could play a catalytic and complementary role to private sector resource flows, while others suggested that private sector flows should complement ODA. Many delegates noted foreign investments remain highly concentrated and volatile.

Attention was drawn to innovative mechanisms for financing sustainable development, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and some delegates stressed the importance of improving the work of the GEF. Delegates further welcomed the linkages between areas previously treated in isolation, such as trade, environment and development. Some delegates called for eliminating unnecessary duplication among bilateral and multilateral development institutions and for harmonizing procedures among donor countries, and others considered that all international development assistance should be disbursed through national governments in accordance with national priorities.

Many delegates called for poverty eradication or external debt cancellation in heavily indebted poor countries and improved market access for developing countries. Many welcomed the “everything but arms” initiative of the EU on duty- and quota-free access for least developed country exports.

Delegates acknowledged the role of: international development cooperation in enhancing the trade competitiveness of developing countries; governments in adopting strong and effective environmental and social policies; and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in responding to sustainability concerns. Some said trade obstacles should be eliminated, especially subsidies that are trade distorting and environmentally harmful, in particular, agricultural and energy subsidies. Some delegations stressed that environmental standards should not become trade barriers to products imported from developing countries. Many highlighted that increased market access for products from developing countries and integration of developing countries in the world trade system, notably through the WTO, would reduce the marginalization of developing countries exacerbated by globalization.

The responsibility of countries in creating a domestic environment favorable to private sources of support, through, *inter alia*, national sustainable development strategies, was also addressed. Some noted the role of the private sector in promoting the development of cleaner

technologies and its contribution to sustainable development, including through the Global Compact. Others said the current level of technology transfer was not sufficient. Several delegates noted the contribution of international civil society and the empowerment of women in enabling sustainable development.

ELEMENTS FOR A DRAFT DECISION ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT: Generally, delegates said the text could be more balanced regarding domestic activities, including on governance issues, private sector resource and trade flows, private investments and foreign direct investment and trade benefits.

Introduction: The introduction notes that the Working Group submits possible elements for a draft decision to CSD-9. No comments were raised on this section.

General Considerations: This section addresses the general considerations for an enabling international and domestic environment. Delegates’ comments on the first draft addressed, *inter alia*: an enabling international economic environment; globalization; the three pillars of sustainable development; technology transfer; good governance; and economic growth and increased trading opportunities.

The revised text recognizes the need for an enabling economic environment, both at the international and national levels, supportive of international cooperation to achieve the goals of sustainable development and through, *inter alia*, policies and governance measures. It also takes note of the need to balance the three pillars of sustainable development and highlights globalization as a critical element of the international economic environment. It recognizes that globalization has the potential to lead to economic convergence but can also increase inequalities among and within countries. Finally, it states that expanding international trade and investment and strengthening partnerships with the private sector can contribute to sustainable development.

International Cooperation: This section notes the role of the CSD in promoting an enabling international environment within the framework of Agenda 21.

Delegates raised several issues on the first draft, including: the role of ODA; whether the GEF should be replenished or improved; the effects of globalization; protectionist trade practices, subsidies and, in general, the world trade system; whether to aim at poverty eradication or poverty reduction; common principles of strategic planning; the need to distinguish developing countries from countries with economies in transition (EITs); coordination between international organizations and developed countries in their assistance to developing countries; debt relief; good governance; and eco-efficient production and processing.

The revised section recognizes that sustainable development will require international cooperation and specific actions based on national circumstances and suggests that the international community:

- reaffirm the role of the UN in promoting international cooperation for development;
- support developing countries in their efforts toward sustainable development, in accordance with their national development programmes;
- undertake all efforts to reverse ODA decline and meet agreed ODA targets;
- improve ODA coordination, based on recipient country priorities



and strategies;

- explore ways in which ODA and private resource flows can play complementary roles;
- reform and improve multilateral financial institutions;
- support efforts of developing countries in their management of capital and investment flows;
- improve the functioning of the GEF to make it more responsive to the needs of developing countries;
- find solutions to the debt problem of highly indebted poor countries (HIPC);
- improve market access for products from developing countries and assist developing countries to integrate into the world trading system;
- eliminate trade obstacles, including discriminatory trade practices, protectionist policies, non-tariff barriers and trade-distorting subsidies;
- promote efforts to make development, trade and environment policies supportive of sustainable development and poverty reduction;
- encourage investment in developing countries;
- develop mechanisms for mobilizing financial resources, including new financial instruments and public-private partnerships;
- enhance the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries and ensure that international assistance for technology transfer is demand-driven;
- assist developing countries and EITs in capacity building to support technology development and transfer, institutional strengthening and human resource development; and
- support regional and sub-regional cooperation, including South-South cooperation, in promoting sustainable development.

Recommendations at the National Level: This section guides governments, taking into account their national circumstances and with the support of the international community, on actions to create an enabling environment.

On the first draft, delegates discussed: meeting ODA targets; eligibility for the HIPC initiative; trade liberalization; national circumstances and priorities; a sound macro-economic framework; good governance, including transparency and absence of corruption; and domestic resource mobilization. India urged delegates to confine the elements of the draft decision to international cooperation, consistent with Rio+5 language and Saudi Arabia called for deletion of the entire section.

The final document encourages governments to:

- create an enabling domestic environment through, *inter alia*, the rule of law, capacity building and implementation of economic and social policies;
- formulate and implement national sustainable development programmes;
- improve opportunities for the private sector, NGOs and major groups to contribute to sustainable development, economic planning and poverty eradication; and
- develop and implement policies and incentives that integrate the three pillars of sustainable development.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday afternoon, 16 March, Co-Chair Drayton introduced the Draft Report of the Working Group (E/CN.17/ISWG.II/2001/L.1) for adoption, drawing delegates' attention to the revised Co-Chairs' summaries and elements for the draft decisions on information for decision making and participation and on international cooperation for an enabling environment.

Sudan called for reference in the Report of the Working Group to interventions by the G-77/China and Saudi Arabia regarding the section on indicators in the revised elements for a draft decision on information for decision making and participation. Delegates then adopted the Draft Report. Co-Chair Drayton thanked all delegates for their time, good humor and patience, and encouraged delegates to exchange views until CSD-9 in order to resolve their differences. The meeting concluded at 4:00 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE MEETING

THE COUNTDOWN

The turn of events towards the end of the intersessional working group provided a surprise twist to a meeting that some anticipated would raise few contentious issues and initially predicted would conclude mid-week. Due to time constraints, following protracted informal consultations on indicators, the session ended without a second reading of the revised elements for draft decisions. As a result, there were diverging views regarding whether both outputs provided an "agreeable" basis for CSD-9 negotiations, with developing countries expressing displeasure at the inclusion of some elements on indicators in the document on information for decision making. Some developed countries also informally expressed dissatisfaction with some elements on international cooperation for an enabling environment.

Until the closing Plenary, delegates seemed to implicitly agree that both drafts would serve as a basis for negotiations at CSD-9, but developments in the closing Plenary may have turned back the clock. Many participants predicted that governments would revert to positions held at the start of the intersessional and "start from scratch" at CSD-9, while others said entire negotiating approaches were bound to change. Whereas the two intersessional working groups considered the CSD-9 agenda items –energy, transport, atmosphere, information and international cooperation – independently, some cautioned that CSD-9 will face a "package deal" negotiating strategy, where delegates may negotiate all the themes together. This could potentially re-open issues already negotiated and concluded during the energy, transport and atmosphere sessions held prior to the session on information and international cooperation.

An understanding of these developments requires a review of the week's proceedings *vis à vis* its mandate and purpose and several intervening factors. Although participants departed with an appreciation that some progress was made on the issues under discussion, they recognized that a number of missed opportunities will constrain efforts to advance the agenda to the level they originally desired and thought possible. An examination of these facets provides the backdrop for assessing where we stand on the threshold of CSD-9, which is less than a month away.



LOOKING BACK TO FACE THE FUTURE

The CSD intersessional working groups were established to provide a forum for dialogue in a non-political environment where participants could draw out issues requiring consideration by governments for further action. Accordingly, the key intersessional output, namely the elements for draft decisions, should contain elements locating both the political and consensus areas for action at CSD sessions.

Participants at the 2001 intersessionals acknowledged that a healthy, albeit insufficient, exchange of views took place. On the one hand, debate on information for decision making drew out aspects such as access to information for developing countries, the role of the media, bridging the “digital divide,” capacity building for information technology adoption, narrowing the inequitable distribution of benefits from a knowledge-based economy, public participation and indicators. The debate on international cooperation for an enabling environment also highlighted a range of macro-economic and domestic factors that have constrained the evolution of a conducive international climate for the realization of sustainable development.

On the other hand, it was clear that not only was the opportunity for the mutual exchange of country experiences lacking, but that progress was impeded – and in some cases curtailed – on these and other equally important matters such as: information standards; environmental justice; linkage between the two issues and the overriding CSD themes of poverty and production and consumption patterns; and the link between information for decision making and participation and international cooperation. Although a number of factors are responsible for the working group’s inability to fully explore and reach conclusive agreement on these issues, the primary problem lay in what some participants called an “obsession with indicators.”

INDICATORS OF THE PROBLEM

The working group’s trouble with indicators started following the introduction of the Secretary-General’s report on information for decision making and participation. The presentation focused exclusively on indicators, rather than the broader aspects of information and participation, and it suggested the “endorsement” of a “core” set of indicators for use in national reporting on sustainable development. Many developing countries interpreted this as an attempt to introduce a new form of conditionality for the disbursement of development assistance earmarked for the Rio outputs. They were also loath to endorse anything, in light of the fact that only 22 countries had participated in the indicators exercise, contrary to an ECOSOC resolution requiring involvement of all countries. The G-77/China would not budge despite assurances through both formal and informal consultations with other governments and with the Secretariat that the indicators are voluntary, and despite evidence that other stakeholders and a number of developed countries, who chose to keep silent and let the G-77/China “do the fighting,” were equally opposed to anything but voluntary indicators. Thus, as with the previous week’s discussion on finance and technology, the G-77/China sought negotiated compromise text to settle the matter of indicators, which did not materialize.

TIMING AND STRATEGY GET IN THE WAY

Although indicators took center stage, additional factors contributed to the constrained dialogue and events of the week, including timing, structure, strategy and participation. Many participants were categorical in stating that the energy experts meeting held the week

prior to the intersessionals had “poisoned” the atmosphere for dialogue. A related observation was that, with the exception of information for decision making and participation, all other issues under consideration at the intersessionals were – in some manner – related to the climate change talks, which are controversial and highly sensitive. Others attributed the problem to the structure of the intersessionals, which encourages participants to quickly slip into “negotiating mode” whenever divergences surface.

Added to these reasons is a recognition that developing countries have lost patience with negotiations that do not deliver – in particular the Rio process, which had initially been perceived as an unprecedented developed country commitment to a holistic approach to the global environmental agenda, including the factoring in of economic choices.

Institutional memory loss across all regional groups – a majority of the participants from both developed and developing countries were either new to the CSD process or had been in it for less than two years – was also deemed a severe constraint. The debate, polarized by the political differences, could have been balanced by technical input of knowledgeable stakeholders, who were absent. These factors combined to create an “unfortunate conclusion” to the initial consideration of otherwise interesting and significant subjects.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS FOR CSD-9

Looking toward CSD-9, participants expect the session to be one of the most difficult in the CSD’s history. Despite the CSD Chair’s promise of “no night sessions,” they seem inevitable, even as early as the first week. In addition to the lost opportunities to make progress at this intersessional meeting, some anticipate that CSD-9 will be hampered as governments look ahead to Earth Summit 2002. They noted that negotiations at CSD-4 became more intractable as governments prepared for the Rio+5 review and suggested that this intersessional meeting mirrored that trend. Some offered forecasts that “countries will be jockeying for positions” at CSD-9 and that they began to do so at the intersessionals. The opportunity that many believe Earth Summit 2002 offers to overhaul the sustainable development agenda poses a big challenge for satisfactorily addressing the CSD-9 issues in 2001.

Despite the difficulties encountered on the issue of information for decision making and participation, some anticipate that this issue will provide the most fruitful output of CSD-9 since it has no competing processes and due to the fact that many of the issues raised on international cooperation were also discussed at CSD-8. Still, participants fear the CSD-9 negotiations will be starting at such a low point that it will be a “Herculean task” to move forward on the issues. Whereas delegates spilling out of the ECOSOC Chamber seemed to attach great importance to the Bureau’s decisions in the outcome of CSD-9, participants’ negotiating capacity – strategy and institutional memory – factor even more greatly into the session’s success.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE CSD-9

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE: This meeting will be held from 19-22 March 2001, in Berlin, Germany. Co-organized by UNEP and the German Ministry for the Environment, this meeting will provide a platform for environment ministers and senior officials from developed and developing countries and other stakeholders to discuss



areas of mutual concern in the environment, development and trade debate. For more information contact: Sophie Forster; tel: +41 22-917-8620; e-mail: sophie.forster@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.unep.ch/etu/etp/events/upcming/berlin.htm>

SOUTH EAST ASIAN CONFERENCE ON URBANISATION AND GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE: This conference will be held from 20-22 March 2001, in Jakarta, Indonesia. The conference's objectives include sharing regional experience on good urban governance practices and critically discussing the roles of various key actors and central government in promoting good urban governance. For more information, contact: Sri Husnaini Sofjan, The Urban Governance Initiative, c/o United Nations Development Programme, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; tel: +60 3-255-9122; fax: +60 3-253-2361; e-mail: tugi@undp.org; Internet: www.tugi.apdip.net

INTEGRATION, TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: This workshop will be held from 23-25 March 2001, in Montevideo, Uruguay. The workshop will address Uruguay's challenges in the Mercosur, FTAA and WTO context. For more information, contact: Gerardo Evia, e-mail: gevia@adinet.com.uy; Internet: <http://www.ambiental.net/sustentable2025>

MEETING ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE PAN-EUROPEAN INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE FORESTS MANAGEMENT: This meeting will convene from 26-27 March 2001, in Triesenberg, Liechtenstein. The workshop aims to provide an opportunity for a wider group of national and international experts to share experiences and views on improving the pan-European indicators for sustainable forest management and to give input to the work of the "Advisory Group" on the improvement of these indicators. For more information, contact: Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe, Vienna, Austria; tel: +43 1-710-7702; fax: +43 1-710-7702-13; e-mail: liaison.unit@lu-vienna.at; Internet: <http://www.minconf-forests.net>

GLOBALIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION – VIEWS FROM THE SOUTH: This conference will be held from 27-29 March 2001, in Cape Town, South Africa. Conference themes include: higher education in transition in the countries and regions of the South; relations in higher education between the advanced and the less industrialized countries; and the marketization of higher education and implications for less industrialized countries. For more information, contact: Society for Research in Higher Education; London, UK; tel: +44 20-7637-2766; fax: +44 20-7637-2781; e-mail: globalHE@srhe.ac.uk; Internet: <http://www.srhe.ac.uk/southafrica/globalHE.htm>

MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAS: This meeting will convene from 29-30 March 2001, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Environment ministers from the US,

Mexico, Caribbean and Latin America will attend a special meeting during the AMERICANA International Environment Trade Show and Conference in Montreal to set an agenda for significant contributions at the Third Summit of the Americas. For more information, contact: Environment Canada; tel: +1 819-997-2800; fax: +1 819-953-2225; e-mail: enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca; Internet: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/envhome.html>

WORK 2001 – FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EMPLOYMENT CREATION IN DEVELOPMENT: This conference will be held from 2-5 April 2001, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The conference will explore themes such as employment-intensive construction, transportation and employment, and tourism as an employment generator. For more information, contact: Department of Civil Engineering, South Africa; tel: +27 11-717-7137; fax: +27 11-339-1762; e-mail: filip@civen.civil.wits.ac.za; Internet: <http://www.work2001.cjb.net>

INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2001: This conference will take place from 5-6 April 2001, in Manchester, UK. Issues to be considered include development, policy perspectives, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development, instruments, country/regional profiles, Agenda 21 initiatives, NGOs and local action. For more information, contact: Elaine White, tel: +44 1-274-530408; fax: +44 1-274-530409; e-mail: elaine@erpenv.demon.co.uk; Internet: <http://www.erpenvironment.org/cfrence/sd.htm>

NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will convene in New York from 16-27 April 2001. This session will focus on: atmosphere; energy/transport; information for decision making and participation; and international cooperation for an enabling environment. The topic of the multilateral stakeholder dialogue will be energy and transport. For more information contact: Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1 212-963-5949; fax: +1 212-963-4260; e-mail: vasilyev@un.org; Internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd9/>. For information for major groups, contact: Zehra Aydin-Sipos, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1 212-963-8811; fax: +1 212-963-1267; e-mail: aydin@un.org.

TENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (PREPCOM I): The tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, acting as the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, will be held in New York from 30 April - 2 May 2001. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: vasilyev@un.org; Internet: <http://www.un.org/rio+10/index.html>