

NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: 2-13 MAY 2011

The 19th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 19) opens today and continues through 13 May 2011, at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates will focus on the thematic cluster of transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and the 10-year framework of programmes (10YFP) on sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The CSD meets annually in two-year “Implementation Cycles,” with each cycle focusing on one thematic cluster alongside cross-sectoral issues. This approach was outlined in a multi-year programme of work (2004-2017) adopted at CSD 11 in 2003. Each cycle is comprised of a Review Year and a Policy Year. CSD 18 conducted a review of the barriers and constraints in implementation, as well as lessons learned and best practices, in relation to the thematic cluster. CSD 19 will thus comprise negotiations on policy recommendations based on CSD 18’s review of the issues.

Delegates will also convene in a multistakeholder dialogue and high-level segment, including a ministerial roundtable. A Partnerships Fair, Learning Center and side events will take place in parallel with CSD 19.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSD

The Commission on Sustainable Development emerged from Agenda 21, the programme of action for sustainable development adopted in June 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the “Rio Earth Summit.” Agenda 21 called for the creation of the CSD to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, enhance international cooperation, 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 adopted resolution 47/191, which established the CSD’s terms of reference and composition, organization of work, relationship with other UN bodies, Secretariat arrangements, and guidelines for the participation of Major Groups. The CSD is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and its decisions are forwarded to ECOSOC. The CSD has 53 member states, although all UN member states are invited to participate in its sessions. The Division for Sustainable Development (DSD), within the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), serves as the CSD’s Secretariat.

The CSD held its first substantive session in June 1993 and has convened annually since then at UN Headquarters in New York. During its first five years, the CSD systematically

reviewed the implementation of all chapters of Agenda 21. In June 1997, five years after UNCED, the 19th Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS-19), also known as “Rio+5,” was held to review the implementation of Agenda 21. Negotiations produced a Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. Among the decisions adopted at UNGASS-19 was a five-year CSD work programme organized around sectoral, cross-sectoral and economic thematic issues. The economic, sectoral and cross-sectoral themes considered, as determined at UNGASS, were as follows: industry, strategic approaches to freshwater management, and technology transfer, capacity building, education, science and awareness raising (CSD-6); tourism, oceans and seas, and consumption and production patterns (CSD-7); sustainable agriculture and land management, integrated planning and management of land resources, and financial resources, trade and investment and economic growth (CSD-8); and energy and transport, atmosphere and energy, and information for decision-making and participation and international cooperation for an enabling environment (CSD-9).

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) met from 26 August-4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and adopted two main documents: the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development. The JPOI is designed as a framework for action to implement the commitments originally agreed at UNCED and includes chapters on: poverty eradication; consumption and production; the natural resource base; health; SIDS; Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; and the institutional framework. The Johannesburg Declaration outlines the path taken from UNCED to the WSSD, highlights present challenges, expresses a commitment to sustainable development, underscores the importance of multilateralism and emphasizes the need for implementation.

The WSSD called for the CSD to meet in seven two-year “implementation cycles,” and a multi-year programme of work for the 2004-2017 period was adopted at CSD 11 in 2003. The CSD 12 and 13 cycle adopted recommendations to address water, sanitation and human settlements. CSD 14 and 15 considered energy, industrial development, air pollution/ atmosphere and climate change, but did not reach agreement on recommendations for action. The CSD 16 and 17 cycle adopted recommendations related to drought, desertification, agriculture, land, rural development and Africa.

CSD 18 convened in May 2010. Delegates embarked on a two-year cycle focused on the thematic cluster of transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns. At the conclusion of CSD 18, delegates expressed satisfaction with discussions on all the thematic clusters, especially for mining, transport and SCP, which do not fall under any other international bodies for policy coordination. A suggestion to evaluate ways to improve implementation of CSD decisions was also received with interest, as many participants privately questioned the utility of a long CSD “review” year.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

UNCSD PREPCOM I: The first session of the PrepCom for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) was held from 17-19 May 2010, at UN Headquarters in New York. The PrepCom took up both substantive and procedural matters. On the substantive side, delegates assessed progress to date and the remaining gaps in implementing outcomes of major summits on sustainable development. They also discussed new and emerging challenges, a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. On the procedural side, participants met in contact groups to organize their work in the lead-up to 2012, and to consider the UNCSD’s rules of procedure.

FIRST INTERSESSIONAL MEETING FOR THE UNCSD: The first Intersessional Meeting for the UNCSD convened from 10-11 January 2011, at UN Headquarters in New York. During the meeting, delegates listened to a summary of the findings of the Synthesis Report on securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges. They also heard panels on green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Delegates then engaged in interactive discussions with the panelists.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING: The Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM) for CSD 19, which took place at UN Headquarters in New York from 28 February to 4 March 2011, provided a forum to discuss policy options and possible actions to enable the implementation of measures and policies concerning the thematic issues under consideration during the CSD 18/CSD 19 (2010-2011) two-year “implementation cycle.” To facilitate this, the IPM considered each thematic area and delegates outlined possible policy options and actions for adoption at CSD 19. Delegates also considered inter-linkages, cross-cutting issues and means of implementation, as well as small island developing states (SIDS). Finally, there were two multistakeholder dialogues designed to elicit feedback from different groups on the thematic issues, as well as on expectations for CSD 19 in the context of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development. The IPM’s deliberations resulted in a Chair’s draft negotiating text, which most delegates felt would provide a good starting point for negotiations at CSD 19.

UNCSD PREPCOM II: The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the UNCSD convened from 7-8 March 2011 at UN Headquarters in New York. During the meeting, delegates discussed: securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and

addressing new and emerging challenges; a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Late in the afternoon of the second day, delegates adopted by consensus a decision on the process for the preparation of the draft outcome document for the UNCSD.

INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS: Seven intersessional meetings were also organized around the topics on the CSD 19 agenda.

The 5th meeting of the Regional EST (Environmentally Sustainable Transport) Forum in Asia convened in Bangkok, Thailand, from 23-25 August 2010 resulted in the adoption of the Bangkok 2020 Declaration setting out sustainable transport goals for 2010-2020, including strategies to avoid unnecessary travel and reduce trip distances, shift toward sustainable modes of transportation and improve transport practices and technologies.

The second meeting of the Regional 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) Forum in Asia met from 4-6 October 2010, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to discuss 3Rs for green economy and sound material-cycle society.

The 6th Intergovernmental Forum (IGF) on Mining, Metals and Sustainable Development took place from 1-4 November 2010, in Geneva, Switzerland. The Forum finalized the IGF Mining Policy Framework, to be tabled at CSD 19, which compiles best practices to enhance contribution of mining to sustainable development and is proposed as a global baseline for mining good governance.

A Senior Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Development of Lithium Resources in Latin America took place from 10-11 November in Santiago, Chile. Participants discussed market trends, resource availability, mining, current legal environments, infrastructure requirements, long-term life cycle, and multistakeholder perspectives with a view to providing input to CSD 19 and the Rio+20 preparatory process.

The Intersessional Meeting on Solid Waste Management in Africa convened in Rabat, Morocco from 25-26 November 2010, examined key problems such as e-waste, and produced the Rabat Declaration on Sustainable Waste Management in Africa. The Declaration, *inter alia*, states: the urgent need to formulate and implement national policy, legal and institutional frameworks; access to funds at the national and local level need to be enhanced; well-designed integrated solid waste management systems can be more profitable if based on the 3R principle; the role of the informal sector is under-recognized; and transboundary movement of waste poses risks to human health and the environment.

The Intersessional Meeting on a 10YFP on SCP was convened in Panama City, Panama from 13-14 January 2011, providing a non-negotiating space for participants to discuss potential programmes to be included in the 10YFP on SCP to support regional and national initiatives, the possible structure of the 10YFP, and the visions and objectives it could serve.

The Intersessional Conference on Building Partnerships for Moving Towards Zero Waste was held from 16-18 February in Tokyo, Japan, during which participants endorsed the establishment of an International Partnership for Expanding Waste Management Services of Local Authorities to be launched during CSD 19.