



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSD

Agenda 21 called for creation of a Commission on Sustainable Development as a means to ensure effective follow-up of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity, and to examine progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels. In 1992, the 47th session of the UN General Assembly set out 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, in resolution 47/191.

**1993 SESSION:** The CSD held its first substantive session at UN Headquarters in New York from 14-25 June 1993. Amb. Razali Ismail (Malaysia) was elected the first Chair of the Commission. During the course of the session, the Commission addressed the following items: adoption of a multi-year thematic programme of work; issues relating to future work; exchange of information regarding the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national level; progress in the incorporation of recommendations of UNCED in the activities of international organizations and within the UN system; progress achieved in facilitating and promoting the transfer of technology, cooperation and capacity-building; and initial financial commitments, financial flows and arrangements to give effect to UNCED decisions. On 23-24 June 1993, over 50 ministers gathered to participate in the High-Level Segment on issues related to the future work of the CSD and implementation of Agenda 21.

**1994 SESSION:** The second session of the CSD met in New York from 16-27 May 1994. During the course of the session, the Commission under its Chair, Klaus Töpfer (Germany), examined the first cluster of issues according to its multi-year thematic programme of work. Delegates discussed the following cross-sectoral chapters of Agenda 21: Chapters 2 (accelerating sustainable development); 4 (consumption patterns); 33 (financial resources and mechanisms); 34 (technology cooperation and transfer); 37 (capacity building); 38 (institutions); 39 (legal instruments); and 23-32 (roles of major groups). By the conclusion of the session, the Commission adopted seven decisions on: information provided by governments and organizations; decision-making structures; transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity-building; major groups; trade, environment and sustainable development; changing consumption and production patterns; and finance.

On the sectoral side, delegates examined the progress in

implementing the following chapters of Agenda 21: Chapters 6 (health); 7 (human settlements); 18 (freshwater resources); 19 (toxic chemicals); 20 (hazardous wastes); 21 (solid wastes and sewage); and 22 (radioactive wastes). By the conclusion of the session, the Commission adopted six decisions on: protecting and promoting human health; human settlements; toxic chemicals; hazardous wastes; freshwater; and radioactive wastes. The Commission also adopted a decision on intersessional work, which called for the establishment of a new *ad hoc* open-ended intersessional working group to examine the sectoral issues that will be addressed by the Commission at its 1995 session (land management, agriculture, desertification, mountains, forests and biodiversity). The session concluded with a High-Level Segment attended by over 40 ministers and high-level officials.

The members of the CSD determined that although some progress has been made, until there is an increase in official development assistance and an improvement in the international economic climate, it will continue to be difficult to translate the Rio commitments into action. Likewise, many participants who attended the two-week meeting agreed that unless the CSD's format is changed, it will be impossible to shift from rhetoric and speech-making to dialogue and action.

**AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUPS:** The Commission on Sustainable Development's *Ad Hoc* Open-Ended Working Group on Sectoral Issues met from 27 February - 3 March 1995, under the chairmanship of Sir Martin Holdgate (UK). Delegates discussed the six reports of the Secretary-General on the following sectoral issues: integrated management of land resources, forests, combating desertification, sustainable mountain development, sustainable agriculture and rural development, and biological diversity. Among the recommendations is a request for the CSD to consider establishing an intergovernmental panel on forests to assess work already done and to propose further action. The Working Group also recommended that the CSD promote: the exchange of views by governments on integrated land management; the development of tools for integrated land management; priority to technology-related issues; the signature, ratification and implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification; action for the sustainable development of mountain areas; integration of energy-related issues into efforts for sustainable agriculture and rural development; and future work on the protection of traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to conservation and sustainable use.

The *Ad Hoc* Open-Ended Working Group on Finance met from 6-9 March 1995, under the chairmanship of Dr. Lin See-Yan

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(Malaysia). The Working Group recommended that the CSD should secure the implementation of all financial recommendations in Agenda 21, including meeting, as soon as possible, the accepted target of 0.7% of GNP for ODA; urge developed countries to take appropriate new measures towards a solution to the external debt problem of developing countries; encourage international financial institutions and development agencies to continue to enhance their efforts in support of sustainable development; promote capacity building to enhance the use of economic instruments; prepare a detailed feasibility study on an environmental user charge on air transport; encourage interested parties to undertake a pilot scheme on internationally tradeable CO<sub>2</sub> permits; examine the concrete modalities and usefulness of establishing environmentally sound technology rights banks; promote a detailed study of the Matrix approach; provide leadership in encouraging governments and organizations to launch specific initiatives to support and enrich its work in financing sustainable development; encourage the Working Group to involve private enterprise, research organizations, IFIs, development agencies and NGOs; and further promote the use of debt-for-sustainable- development swaps, as appropriate.

## INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**WORKSHOP ON INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The Governments of Belgium and Costa Rica, UNEP and the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) organized a workshop in Ghent, Belgium, on indicators for sustainable development. The 50 governmental, intergovernmental and NGO representatives who attended the workshop from 9-11 January 1995, recommended that the CSD consider producing a menu of indicators for countries to use in their national policies. These indicators may be used in national reports to the CSD and other intergovernmental bodies. Other recommendations included: testing and adjustment of the core set of indicators in some countries or regions, on a voluntary basis; and focusing scientific efforts on improving sustainability indicators.

**WORKSHOP ON ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** This workshop, which took place from 12-14 January 1995 in Pruhonice, was organized by the Czech Republic and the CSD Secretariat to generate inputs for the CSD *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Finance. The 88 representatives from 23 countries, UN organizations, business and NGOs examined: information on global aspects of financing sustainable development and aspects related to economies in transition; recommendations to the CSD and other international institutions; and recommendations to national policy makers. Recommendations to the CSD included: all stakeholders should participate in the debate about choice, design and implementation of economic instruments (EIs); EIs should address both the symptoms and causes of environmental degradation; real case studies should be supported to investigate the impact of specific EIs; the implementation of a non-binding and voluntary pilot programme of international CO<sub>2</sub> emission trading should be encouraged; and the framework, modalities, technical and legal aspects of a charge on air transport should be further evaluated.

**ROUNDTABLE ON TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER:** UNIDO, in cooperation with UNEP and the DPCSD, convened a Roundtable on Technology Transfer, Cooperation and Capacity Building for Sustainable Development in Vienna, Austria, from 6-8 February 1995. Participants produced a text, "Elements of a Work Programme on Environmentally Sound Technologies." This document addresses the following issues: policy development, particularly the use of economic instruments in national policies; national needs assessments in support of environmentally sound technology transfer and capacity-building; promotion of environmentally sound technology centers; North-South and South-South cooperation; and technology intermediaries.

**OSLO ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION:** This ministerial roundtable, sponsored by Norway, took place in Oslo, from 6-10 February 1995. Participants agreed that more sustainable production and consumption will require long-term structural change to economies and lifestyles. Among the recommendations, particular emphasis is placed on: building partnerships for sustainable consumption between different sectors of society; establishing a policy framework for sustainable consumption; extending producer responsibility for the environmental impacts of goods and services; setting governmental example in sustainable consumption through environmentally sound public procurement and administration; and empowering individuals and households to adopt more sustainable consumption patterns.

**SECOND EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON FINANCE AND AGENDA 21:** The Expert Group Meeting on Finance and Agenda 21, co-sponsored by Malaysia and Japan, took place from 15-17 February 1995, in Glen Cove, New York. Participants emphasized that: private financial flows are an increasingly important source of financing for many environment-related infrastructure projects; the CSD should continue to support efforts aimed at reaching the target of 0.7% of GNP for ODA; and IFIs should seek closer cooperation with national sustainable development councils. The participants also explored innovative international mechanisms, including the environmental user charge on air transport, internationally tradeable CO<sub>2</sub> permits, and joint implementation, and suggested that the CSD further study these options. Finally, the expert group examined a matrix approach to sectoral and cross-sectoral finance and recommended that the CSD support efforts to consider additional policy-relevant dimensions of the matrix.

**WAGENINGEN WORKSHOP ON INTEGRATED LAND MANAGEMENT:** The Netherlands and the FAO co-sponsored the Workshop on Integrated Land Management from 20-22 February 1995, in Wageningen, the Netherlands. More than 80 representatives from 32 countries and six intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations discussed the intermediate level (meso level) as a platform for participatory approaches to integrated land management. The Workshop recommended: managing a multi-stakeholder planning process; and possibilities for sustainable economic development in rural areas. Some of the recommendations to governments included: review land tenure arrangements or legislation; provide investment in rural areas to implement Agenda 21; promote capacity building in rural areas; incorporate indigenous knowledge and methods of land resources management into policies; develop criteria and performance indicators for sustainable land use; and develop partnerships between public authorities and stakeholders.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** Outgoing Chair Klaus Töpfer will open the third session of the CSD this morning. After election of the new Chair, Henrique Calvalcanti (Brazil), the Commission will adopt the agenda and programme of work, contained in E/CN.17/1995/1. Statements will also be delivered by Birgitta Dahl, on behalf of the High-Level Advisory Board and Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development Nitin Desai.

In the afternoon, the Commission will turn to Agenda Item 4, Financial resources and mechanisms. Dr. Lin See-Yan (Malaysia), Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group on Finance will present the report of the Group's meeting in February. This will be followed by a panel discussion on financial resources and mechanisms chaired by Dr. Lin. Other panelists include Nitin Desai, Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Grzedorz Kolodko, Andrew Steer of the World Bank, Vito Tanzi of IMF, Hillary Thompson of the National Westminster Bank, and Maximo Kalaw of Green Forum of the Philippines.