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THE AD HOC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUPS OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: 23 FEBRUARY TO 6 MARCH 1998

The Commission on Sustainable Development's Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Groups will meet for two weeks at UN Headquarters in New York. During the first week, 23-27 February 1998, the *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management will deliberate. During the second week, 2-6 March 1998, the *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group on Industry and Sustainable Development will deliberate. Participants are expected to lay the groundwork for related decisions that the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-6) will consider during its 20 April-1 May 1998 meeting.

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 has met annually since then.

CSD 1-4: The CSD's first substantive session met from 14-25 June 1993 and adopted a multi-year thematic programme of work. CSD-2, CSD-3 and CSD-4 subsequently met at UN Headquarters in New York during annual spring sessions. Each session reviewed different sectoral chapters in Agenda 21. They all considered cross-sectoral issues including finance, technology transfer, trade and the environment, and consumption and production patterns. CSD-2 added panel discussions to the work method to enable participants to enter into a dialogue on the session's agenda items. CSD-3 established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF). CSD-4 completed the Commission's multi-year thematic programme of work and began considering preparations for the 19th Special Session of the UN General Assembly to Review Implementation of Agenda 21 (UNGASS). Most delegates agreed that the CSD should continue its work, but that it should not conduct another chapter-by-chapter review of Agenda 21.

CSD-5 AND UNGASS: Negotiations on the text adopted at UNGASS began during the CSD's *Ad Hoc* Open-Ended Intersessional Working Group in February 1997 and continued in April 1997 at CSD-5. Further progress was made at informal consultations in New York the week before UNGASS. During the Intersessional meeting, most delegates highlighted freshwater, energy and transport, forests and oceans as issues of new or priority concern. Delegates also noted the importance of the cross-sectoral issues of poverty and bringing about changes in consumption and production patterns.

The fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development convened from 8-25 April 1997. Delegations continued to identify and elaborate the emerging priority issues that they had considered in the Intersessional Working Group. CSD-5 Chair Mostafa Tolba (Egypt) and Vice-Chair Monika Linn-Locher (Switzerland) began consultations on a draft political statement to be adopted by the Heads of State and Government expected to attend the Special Session. Due to the large number of outstanding issues, Chair Tolba convened informal consultations from 16-21 June 1997. The draft political statement attracted extensive amendments, and some noted that delegates were re-negotiating issues covered in greater detail in the draft proposed outcome.

The 19th United Nations General Assembly Special Session to Review the Implementation of Agenda 21 met at UN Headquarters in New York from 23-27 July 1997, five years after UNCED. Fifty-three Heads of State and Government, along with ministers and other high-level officials, addressed the Assembly during the week-long meeting. Negotiations held in a Committee of the Whole, as well as several Ministerial groups, produced a Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. The draft political statement, however, was withdrawn on the last day and replaced with a brief Statement of Commitment. In this text, participants commit to ensure that the next comprehensive review of Agenda 21 in the year 2002 demonstrates greater measurable progress in achieving sustainable development than the first five years.

Delegates, NGOs and other observers left UNGASS with mixed feelings. Some felt that the meeting had been a failure because governments had shown a lack of political will to force more than convoluted compromises. Others, including United Nations General Assembly President Razali Ismail (Malaysia), felt that the meeting proved to be an "honest attempt to try and make an appraisal of the results, and of how far we have gone from Rio. There was little attempt to try to sweep things under the carpet or put a gloss over something that's not there."

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CSD-6 TO CSD-10 PROGRAMME OF WORK: Among the decisions adopted at UNGASS was the CSD work programme for the next five years. It 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. The sectoral theme for the 1998 session is "strategic approaches to freshwater management." Additional themes and sectors for 1998 are transfer of technology, capacity-building, education, science, awareness-raising and industry.

The outstanding chapters of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Programme of Action will also be reviewed. In 1999, the CSD will consider: oceans and seas; consumption and production patterns; and tourism. In 2000, it will consider integrated planning and management of land resources, financial resources, trade and investment and economic growth and agriculture. There will also be a "Day of Indigenous People." The sectoral themes in 2001 will be atmosphere and energy and transport. International cooperation for an enabling environment, information for decision-making and participation will be considered as cross-sectoral themes. CSD-10 in 2002 will consist of a comprehensive review of implementation.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE AD-HOC INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

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. Robert Ainscow (UK) and Sibekile Mtetwa (Zimbabwe) co-chaired the meeting, which was attended by more than 170 experts. In addition to Plenary meetings, participants established four Working Groups to ensure in-depth consideration of specific agenda items, namely: Water as the Key Resource in Sustainable Development; Freshwater Ecosystems and Water Quality; Economic and Financial Issues; and Participation and Institutions for Integrated Water Resources Management.

The meeting's report was presented as a Co-Chair's summary, prepared in collaboration with moderators for each Working Group. 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.

REPORT ON THE 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 govern-

ments, consumer organizations, business and industry, academics, NGOs and international organizations. Ambassador Celso Amorim (Brazil) and Fabio Feldman, Secretary of the Environment Secretariat of the State Government of São Paulo, co-chaired the meeting. The meeting, conducted in plenary and working group sessions, focused on a background paper prepared by the Division for Sustainable Development, including proposed new guidelines prepared by Consumers International on the basis of extensive regional consultations. During the meeting, additional proposals were presented and considered.

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 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.

BUREAU MEETING AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS: The CSD Bureau met on 21 January 1998 and made a number of recommendations regarding procedure for the *Ad-Hoc* Intersessional meeting. Each Intersessional Group will be led by two Co-Chairs, one Bureau member and one CSD Member State that is not represented on the Bureau. In accordance with the tradition established in the CSD, one Co-Chair will be from a developed country and the other from a developing country.

The recommended schedule of work is as follows. General discussion on the Secretary-General's report and other relevant inputs will be entertained on Monday and Tuesday morning, 23-24 February. On Tuesday afternoon, delegates will be encouraged to discuss freshwater issues with a focus on technology transfer related issues. Delegates will exchange national experiences on integrated water management for sustainable development on Wednesday. The Co-Chairs' draft text is also expected to be distributed on Wednesday and discussed on Thursday. A revised draft is expected to be discussed on Friday and included in the report of the Working Group. A similar schedule was recommended for the second week's consideration of industry and sustainable development, with the substitution of a discussion of the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection instead of national experiences on Wednesday. The group may draft possible conclusions and proposals for action on the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection.

The Bureau pointed out that the Co-Chairs' texts will not be negotiated in the Working Groups but will serve as the starting point for further discussion/negotiations in the CSD. The Bureau also suggested that general discussion in both groups provide for an integrated consideration of cross-sectoral issues as well as financing and other relevant means of implementation.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

AD HOC WORKING GROUP: The Intersessional *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management will convene at 10:00 a.m. in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. The provisional annotated agenda is contained in document E/CN.17/ISWGI/1998/1.