



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

.....  
A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 5 No. 91

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development

Wednesday, 25 February 1998

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CSD INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP TUESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 1998

Delegates to the Commission on Sustainable Development's *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management continued to exchange views on freshwater management and possible CSD responses during the morning. In the afternoon they were encouraged to focus on technology transfer in relation to freshwater.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

The CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY said the CBD can contribute to the CSD and noted that its focus this year includes the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems. UNEP's High-Level Committee of Ministers and Officials will consider proposals for a UNEP freshwater strategy and plan of action at its second meeting from 2-4 March. UNEP co-sponsored regional expert workshops to examine the cost-effectiveness of alternative technologies, on which a global source book is being prepared.

The WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) noted elements in the organization's work programme that support the conclusions of the meeting in Harare, including guidelines for the protection of water quality with regard to human health, for public health criteria, for safe use of waste water and for surveillance systems. SWEDEN noted the importance of listening to poor people when designing environmental projects and added that ODA has a continuing role. On gender, he said successful integrated water management must account for how gender differences affect access, priorities for development, bargaining power, decision making and household responsibilities.

The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION (WMO) recalled that an assessment of water resources submitted to UNGASS characterized current patterns of water use as unsustainable, and data collection systems as inadequate and deteriorating. He called for improved knowledge bases for water resources and nationally harmonized information systems. ECUADOR highlighted a recent expert meeting that called for strengthened international cooperation in the use of water resources. He said the scope of the GEF should be extended to water management.

SWITZERLAND and PERU said emphasis should be placed on sustainable development of mountainous regions. Switzerland is preparing a brochure entitled "Mountains of the World: Water Towers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." BRAZIL said the Secretary-General's reports include conclusions that pass judgements on the role of government in providing resources and their emphasis of a commercially-led approach detracts from earlier discussions. He said a feasible financial mechanism would involve a comprehensive work programme. TURKEY has implemented integrated water management since 1954 and has put the responsibility for water projects under one authority and has thus brought multi-sectoral concerns together in one framework.

IRELAND said all users, particularly women, should be involved in water management. He said accelerating demand and urbanization have forced domestic capital investment and awareness-raising measures. Water and sanitation are also priorities of the Irish overseas aid programme. IRAN said a strategic approach should address the need for: governments to secure water and wastewater services for all citizens; attention to water catchment; national and international agreements to prevent pollution; and technology transfer and financial resources for developing countries. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA called for comprehensive plans at the river basin level and coordination between governments and local communities to address shared water resources. Supported by PAPUA NEW GUINEA, he suggested that establishing a multilateral forum among public entities to promote cooperative initiatives in information sharing, capacity building and technology transfer might be useful.

GUYANA underscored the need to reinforce public education and participation to change attitudes toward water use and management. He said pricing policies will place an undue burden on the poor. In seeking global solutions, he highlighted the need to: consider the special circumstances of individual countries; build capacity for water resources assessment; establish or strengthen regional centers for data collection and analysis and training; and provide new and additional resources to assist developing countries to build and rehabilitate infrastructure. VENEZUELA noted that the "enterprise" approach presents difficulties for some developing countries, particularly those with a constitutional responsibility to ensure adequate access to water resources. She called for an examination of developing country problems with implementation and the need for technology, investment and training. She supported Colombia's call for a financial mechanism.

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*© <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Chad Carpenter, LL.M <chadc@iisd.org>, Peter Doran <pfedoran@ecology.u-net.com>, Kira Schmidt <kiras@iisd.org> and Lynn Wagner, Ph.D. <lynn@iisd.org>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation, the Government of Canada (through CIDA) and the United States (through USAID). General Support for the *Bulletin* during 1998 is provided by the Government of Norway and the Ministry for the Environment in Iceland. Funding for the French version has been provided by ACCT/IEPF, with support from the French Ministry of Cooperation and the Québec Ministry of the Environment and Wildlife. The *Bulletin* can be contacted by e-mail at <enb@iisd.org> and at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted by e-mail at <info@iisd.ca> and at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Managing Editor. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>. The satellite image was taken above Harare © 1998 The Living Earth, Inc. <http://livingearth.com>. For further information on ways to access, support or contact the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.



CHINA underscored the UN's role in addressing freshwater issues and in promoting technology transfer on preferential terms. He said any strategy should consider that countries are at different stages of social and economic development. He called for new and additional funding. ZIMBABWE highlighted recommendations by the Harare Expert Group meeting. He said private sector funding is relevant in only a few cases and governments and donor funds should be mobilized where cost recovery is not possible. He also highlighted the African Ministers' Cape Town Declaration. NORWAY said the Cape Town Declaration and recommendations positively signal that governments are working on their own strategies. He welcomed the World Bank policy on integrated water resource management and hoped the CSD-6 deliberations would impact the 20/20 concept in regard to water and sanitation for the poor.

POLAND highlighted its experience with improving water management, including efforts to introduce market principles and integrate permits for water supply systems with relevant wastewater treatment. KAZAKHSTAN called attention to the environmental problems of the Aral Sea. UGANDA supported adopting a holistic and integrated approach to water resources development within the context of economic and social priorities and based on universally accepted norms and principles of international law, particularly the sovereign right of states to use their resources as they see fit. RUSSIA highlighted several controversial elements in the Secretary General's report, including: an overemphasis on economic parameters; total commercialization of the water sector; and reduction of water resources for irrigation. He noted that the private sector does not necessarily take into account social factors, and state monitoring will continue to play a key role.

NAMIBIA said the report does not adequately address drought-related issues and the ISWG cannot overlook their effect on food security. She called for gender balance in water management structures and equal sharing of benefits. She supported the 20/20 concept. EGYPT highlighted water management efforts in the Nile Basin.

The World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) said governments must ensure legislative standards and regulatory frameworks so the private sector can contribute. He stressed standards for water provision quality and availability. The NGO FRESHWATER CAUCUS emphasized the participatory approach, integrating traditional knowledge and giving priority to gender concerns. She said UNEP should: convene a meeting of UN convention secretariats to examine programme overlaps and gaps; expand its freshwater work plan to address the CSD outcome; and conduct a study of present legal provisions on transboundary watercourses.

The US said governments have individual and shared responsibilities in mobilizing financing for the water sector. He emphasized that: cost recovery can attract investment in the water sector; subsidies should be transparent; and the role of the private sector must be encouraged. He said the creation of a new independent funding mechanism is not a feasible or practical framework. UNESCO outlined its current initiatives in the water sector, such as coordination of national research activities. He said water is not amenable to a technical fix, but the solution lies at the crossroads of science, education and culture.

## **TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER IN RELATION TO FRESHWATER**

Delegations proceeded to discuss transfer of technology in relation to freshwater. The CSD Secretariat discussed the sectors where water technologies are needed and their sources. He also highlighted: availability of relevant technologies in the public sector; demand for soft as well as hard technologies; requirements for databases to accelerate transfers; the need for focused research to develop low-cost technologies; and the need for policy frameworks to generate incentives for users and suppliers to seek out and use new technologies.

The EU, supported by AUSTRALIA, highlighted the role of industry in technology transfer in the context of freshwater. He said CSD-6 provides an opportunity to review industry's role, including its own requirements for clean water and to encourage the private sector to play a full role in finding efficient and sustainable solutions. He said water management represents a particularly fruitful area for successful technology cooperation involving public and private sectors and advocated the creation of a conducive enabling environment for technology-related private investment. He recommended that the CSD call on industry to present proposals for implementation of codes of conduct on the positive role of industry. PAPUA NEW GUINEA described the management of water resources as an excellent example of the public sector working in alliance with private interests.

JAPAN described the work of its UNEP-sponsored International Environmental Technology Center on technologies for sustainable water management and called on the Co-Chairs to reference the Center in their summary of the discussion. The NETHERLANDS described the industrial nature of its agriculture sector and the problems it generates. He noted that a large share of water technology is held by governmental and semi-governmental organizations and that his country is prepared to share it with developing countries. He invited the CSD to develop practical suggestions for such cooperation. CHINA said water technology transfers should be central to international cooperation on water resources management. Developing countries urgently need to import practical technologies and expertise. He noted the role developed countries could play given the number of ESTs in public hands.

The US recounted its international efforts to address water quality improvements, increased health protection, integrated watershed planning and decreased pollution. He noted the importance of emerging technologies, such as enhanced weather forecasting and modeling tools. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted its recent hosting of a conference on EST transfer. He highlighted: the potential for transferring publicly owned technology; the need to promote and encourage public laboratories and institutes involved in the development of such technologies; and support for the diffusion of ESTs. EGYPT said suitability of technology involves environmental and cost considerations. He proposed comprehensive needs assessments and long-term training, among others. AUSTRALIA proposed consideration of low-, traditional- and no-technology options. He highlighted the problem of getting institutions that are used to top-down models, such as those involved with research and development, to focus on bottom-up approaches.

## **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**ISWG:** The Group will meet in the Trusteeship Council room to exchange national experiences on Integrated Water Management for Sustainable Development in a morning session. No afternoon meeting is scheduled so delegations can consider the draft Co-Chairs' text.