

GCSS-12/GMEF HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2012

On Tuesday, delegates convened for ministerial consultations in plenary in the morning and afternoon. Five parallel ministerial round-table discussions on the theme “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” also took place in the morning. In the afternoon the roundtable discussions focused on IFSD. The COW as well as drafting groups convened throughout the day.

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIONS

GREEN ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY

ERADICATION: Sha Zukang, Secretary-General of UNCSO, introduced the discussion document (UNEP/GCSS.XII/13/Add.1) reminding delegates that adopting the green economy as a Rio+20 theme had been a UN General Assembly decision and offered potential to integrate the economic, environmental and social pillars of sustainable development.

Keynote speaker Elliott Harris, International Monetary Fund (IMF), observed that a green economy bridges the divide between economic and environmental policy by building on the strengths of the market-based economy, and must be supported by a more coherent institutional framework that includes better ways of measuring progress. He emphasized the need for a whole-of-government approach, noting that many relevant policies can be adopted without waiting for external financing.

During the panel discussion, Edna Molewa, Minister for Water and Environmental Affairs, South Africa, called for enhancing public-private partnerships; strengthening the evidence bases for a green economy model; and ensuring solid fiscal policies to bolster the transition to a green economy.

Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for Environment, called for mobilization of funds from non-traditional sources to facilitate a smooth transition to a green economy, particularly in the developing world.

Najib Saab, Secretary-General, Arab Forum for Environment and Development, described the recently launched “Arab Green Economy Report,” which predicts large-scale employment creation and public savings through the transition to a green economy.

MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS: In the morning, ministers discussed opportunities and challenges in their countries in pursuing a smooth and socially-just transition to a green economy. Ministers highlighted the need for socially inclusive, pro-growth policies, expressing particular interest in: research and development for innovation; food security; sustainable urban areas; drought mitigation policies and impacts on smallholder farmers; fair and equitable access to resources; women, youth, and indigenous communities; clear and flexible

regulatory frameworks; training and capacity building in the transition period; indicators of progress; shared responsibility for good governance, and public participation. Many stressed that a green economy model must go beyond GDP as an indicator for growth.

Ministers reiterated the need for a clear definition of “green economy,” and not a prescriptive “one-size-fits-all” approach. They also called for the establishment of measurable indicators to monitor the implementation of the green economy, also taking into account individual country specificities.

Some delegates further highlighted the need for the green economy to take into account oceans and fisheries, and the importance of safeguarding the health of indigenous peoples.

IFSD: Erik Solheim, Minister of the Environment and International Development, Norway, moderated the session and introduced the background paper (UNEP/GCSS.XII/13/Add.2). Keynote speaker Zakri Abdul Hamid, scientific advisor to the Malaysian Prime Minister and co-chair of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, noted a “rare convergence” of conditions for a consensus on global reform for sustainable development. He indicated that about 120 countries have endorsed establishing UNEP as a specialized agency, emphasizing that its focus should be on helping member states meet their environment commitments, and affirming that governance reform would nurture a robust, green economy.

Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Minister of Environment, Peru, supported the call to transform UNEP into a specialized agency, noting that the current system of governance includes many binding agreements, but without the systems to monitor and enforce implementation.

Henri Djombo, Minister of Sustainable Development, Forest Economy and the Environment, Republic of Congo, called for a specialized agency on environment that would provide financial, technical and scientific support to developing countries. He stressed that “this kind of architecture” would best coordinate all MEAs, stating that UNEP’s current mandate is not broad enough to fulfill this function.

Doris Leuthard, Minister for Environment, Switzerland, noted that a combination of assessed contributions, voluntary contributions and private sector funding are imperative to the running of a new “anchor institution” that would enhance oversight and coordination of MEAs. Calling for a move towards a programmatic approach to “system-wide synergies” among environment convention secretariats, John Scanlon, Secretary-General, CITES, supported a larger agency coordinating efforts among MEAs. He also called for a reform of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), that would see it focus on national level implementation of international agreements as well as provide support to all MEAs, including CITES.



MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS:

Some delegates favored establishing UNEP as a specialized agency, calling for: an institution with a strong mandate, political visibility and universal membership; effective use of resources; strengthening the scientific basis for decision making; and improving the science-policy interface. Others dissented, calling instead for “strengthening” UNEP, with one delegate emphasizing that UNEP should remain the “voice of the environment” and should thus not broaden its scope into sustainable development as a whole.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Secretariat introduced four progress reports on UNEP’s work on chemicals and waste management, (UNEP/GCSS.XII/5); (UNEP/GCSS.XII/6); UNEP’s water policy and strategy (UNEP/GCSS.XII/12); and the Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) (UNEP/GCSS.XII/12/INF10).

In the ensuing discussion, TURKEY noted that transboundary water management falls outside the remit of UNEP and, supported by the US, asked for a copy of the draft mid-term strategy document to be sent to member states for their input. The EU and Croatia emphasized the need to include water resources in an ecosystem approach.

The US welcomed the joint proposal by UNEP and several UN agencies to co-host the IPBES Secretariat. ARGENTINA stressed the need for IPBES decision-making processes to be non-prescriptive and based on consensus. On chemicals, JAPAN highlighted the need for a multi-stakeholder mid-term review of the SAICM quick start programme and called for the approach to be further elaborated at ICCM3.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SCP): Following an introduction by the Secretariat, the COW embarked on a first reading of a draft decision (UNEP/GCSS.XII/7). A Major Groups’ representative emphasized that scaling up the SCP 10-Year Framework Programmes requires linkages to regional and national initiatives, and called for explicit reference to cooperation with civil society and other stakeholders. The EU and Croatia requested a reference to agreed language in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Marrakesh process on SCP. A number of countries cautioned against re-opening language agreed in the UNCSD’s Fourth Implementation Cycle to facilitate adoption at Rio+20. INDIA, opposed by JAPAN, called for the removal of references to resource efficiency in several preambular and operative paragraphs. Several delegates also called for removal of references to “in particular developed countries,” stressing that SCP is a responsibility of all countries. ARGENTINA supported by INDIA and EGYPT proposed new text calling on governments to support the adoption of the SCP 10-Year Framework Programmes.

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT: Introducing the item (UNEP/GCSS.XII/5, 6,12, and INF/10), the Secretariat highlighted the UNEP Yearbook Findings for 2012 and presented the GEO 5 summary for policy makers and UNEP Live, which focuses on creating and sharing knowledge for environmental assessment.

Renate Christ, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), provided a progress report on recent IPCC activities and decisions taken regarding reforms and the governing structure. She outlined two special reports on: renewable energy sources and climate change mitigation; and managing risks of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation.

Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, Abu Dhabi Environment Agency, provided an overview of the Eye on Earth Summit and requested GCSS-12 to endorse the Eye on Earth Declaration, which had been the main outcome.

The EU expressed appreciation for improvements to the GEO report and encouraged UNEP to strengthen the GEO process and ensure that findings are based on official sources. Noting

that environmental data-based monitoring is a continuous, long-term process, the US said national governments need to improve science-based systems that generate this data.

In the afternoon, Sudan on behalf of the LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES introduced a draft decision in support of the outcome of the Eye on Earth Summit in Abu Dhabi in December 2011 (UNEP/GCSS.XII/INF/6).

BUDGET, FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS: The Secretariat introduced the draft decision on the budget and programme of work including financial and administrative arrangements between UNEP and MEAs (UNEP/GCSS.12/9, 9/Add.1 and INF/4). Supporting the draft decision, JAPAN emphasized enhanced efficiency through information sharing and programme collaboration, particularly at the regional level. The US noted that the Secretariat’s report did not fully adhere to the GC26 decision on this issue and that additional efficiency gains can be made in MEA back office delivery. With support from the EU and Croatia, NORWAY and SWITZERLAND, the US favored undertaking a systematic review of each MEA to solicit more detailed analysis.

The Secretariat then introduced the draft decision on enhanced coordination across the UN system, including the Environment Management Group (EMG) (UNEP/GCSS.XII/10). The US noted that this is a good example of UN system-wide collaboration. Underlining the need for adequate staffing of the EMG, the EU and Croatia, opposed by BRAZIL, proposed new language inviting the UNEP Executive Director to allocate additional resources from the environment fund to enhance EMG staff capacity in the 2014-2015 programme period.

The G-77/CHINA, supported by INDIA, ARGENTINA, VENEZUELA, BOLIVIA, and ECUADOR opposed referring to the green economy, noting that it is an undefined concept that is under negotiation in the UNCSD. The EU and Croatia with SWITZERLAND objected, noting the intention is to encourage discussions to gain a better understanding of the concept.

The Secretariat introduced two additional progress reports on: the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between UNEP and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) (UNEP/GCSS.XII/10/Add.1); and on resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 66th session of relevance to UNEP (UNEP/GCSS.XII/INF/3).

During the afternoon, negotiations continued in a subcommittee considering IEG-related decisions. An open-ended drafting group co-chaired by Amb Domingo Lucenario (Philippines) and Kerstin Stendhal (Finland) also began work on two chemicals and waste cluster decisions.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

Ministerial consultations and informal discussions held on the second day revealed interest – and some important caveats – to a transition process to a green economy. Now that most parties acknowledge the necessity of fully costing in environmental externalities, it is the social costs of transition that raise concern, especially among developing countries and NGOs. However, the objections to any formal reference to the green economy during negotiations on the draft decision on UN system-wide cooperation, seem to herald an uphill battle to win hearts and minds in coming months.

Elsewhere, delegates’ calls for a common definition, as well as progress indicators, sat uneasily with warnings to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. The term “inclusive” as a prefix to the green economy came up often, along with calls to clarify what parameters are important to measure. With one day to go, the pressure was on for delegates to contribute some clarity of direction to preparations for Rio+20.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of GCSS-12/GMEF will be available on Saturday, 25 February 2012 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/unepps/unepps12/>