

UNCSD INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: 25 JANUARY 2012

The initial discussions on the “zero draft” of the outcome document for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) began on 25 January 2012, at UN Headquarters in New York, US. Following a brief special meeting of the UNCSD Preparatory Committee, which convened to elect a Vice-Chair for the Bureau, delegates proceeded to present opening comments on the zero draft. Representatives from eight country coalitions offered statements on behalf of their groups, followed by statements from over 50 member States and representatives from UN agencies and organizations and Major Groups.

PREPCOM

Co-Chair John Ashe opened the formal special meeting of the UNCSD Preparatory Committee for the purpose of electing Munawar Saeed Bhatti (Pakistan) to replace Asad Khan (Pakistan) as Vice-Chair of the Bureau for the Asian Group.

COMMENTS ON THE ZERO DRAFT

Immediately after adjourning the PrepCom meeting, Ashe told delegates that the intention of the zero draft is to be as concise and action-focused as possible, and he reviewed the substantive proposals contained in it. Sha Zukang, UNCSD Secretary-General, stressed an ambitious yet practical outcome that equals the magnitude of today’s challenges and reinvigorates political commitment. He suggested addressing, *inter alia*: how to develop sustainable development goals (SDGs), taking into account national circumstances; and using trade to advance, rather than hinder, green economy. On the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD), he said a proposed sustainable development council (SDC) should address the weaknesses of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and expedite implementation. On means of implementation, he emphasized: addressing the role of international financial institutions; exploring innovative financing sources; and South-South cooperation. He said Rio+20 must put us on an “unambiguous course toward sustainable development.” He noted the February 17 deadline for comments and proposals on sections 3, 4 and 5 of the document.

Algeria, for the G-77/CHINA, said: funds are insufficient to support developing country participation in all negotiating sessions; a compilation document with all proposals, not a revised co-chairs’ text, should be the outcome of this meeting;

and the February 17 deadline for proposals should be extended. He said the document lacks vision, balance and action-oriented language, and should, *inter alia*: address oceans and SIDS in two separate sections; assess why outcomes from Rio and Johannesburg were not fully realized; and give priority to the root causes of poverty, empowering the poor, and gender equality and empowerment of women. He called for, *inter alia*, reforming the global financial system, and developing a registry on available financial resources and technology transfer from developed countries. He also called for an international mechanism to implement actions focused on bridging the technological gap, and examining the impact of intellectual property rights on access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Noting lack of consensus on the definition of green economy, he stressed, *inter alia*, ensuring social inclusion and equity, and including tools to catalyze international cooperation. He said an effective IFSD should focus on implementing sustainable development and integrating the three pillars.

The European Union (EU) and its member States underlined the importance of public participation in decision-making and implementation, and called on member States to remain open to Major Groups. Nepal, for the least developed countries (LDCs) called for, *inter alia*, universal access to affordable and reliable energy, investment in water infrastructure, support for food and nutritional security, provision of high-yielding and climate resilient seed varieties, and help in combating desertification and land degradation. Nauru, for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), welcomed the call for The Third Global Conference for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in 2014, and said oceans and climate change need more attention.

Benin, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested clustering preparatory meetings to facilitate participation of developing countries. He said the draft lacks balance and should include issues such as sustainable land management, agriculture and food security. He said SDGs should not replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and supported adoption of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP on SCP). Libya, for the ARAB GROUP, stressed better coherence, as well as funding, capacity building and technology transfer to move towards a green economy, development and social justice, and addressing the difficulties faced by countries under occupation.

The Dominican Republic, on behalf of CARICOM, stressed the need for better integration of SIDS' special challenges throughout the document and maintaining the linkages between the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. Papua New Guinea, for PACIFIC SIDS, stressed the linkage between the blue and green economies, and welcomed the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. He called for language on, *inter alia*: a moratorium on driftnet fishing; and eliminating destructive fishing practices. He supported a formal SIDS category within the UN system. The Federated States of Micronesia, for the PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM, said building a blue economy would benefit all countries. She called for language related to: delivering on existing oceans-related commitments, such as establishing the global network of marine protected areas; and ensuring SIDS receive greater benefits from their ocean resources.

ARGENTINA lamented the lack of: balance among the three pillars, noting the text focuses on environment and trade; and differentiation between developing and developed countries. She emphasized sovereignty of states, particularly over their natural resources. CANADA supported a voluntary set of indicators reflecting differing national circumstances. He said the draft is too long and emphasizes old ideas, particularly regarding means of implementation, rather than promoting enabling local environments that will engage the private sector.

CHINA said: means of implementation should be emphasized; SDGs should not establish binding indicators; and the negotiation and implementation of the outcome document should be led by member States. MEXICO said: a SDC would not resolve the problems of the CSD; the environment pillar in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) should be strengthened; and SDGs would need to be consistent with the MDGs. The US stressed, *inter alia*: the role of education and scientific and technological research; and good governance and equal administration of justice.

KAZAKHSTAN noted relevant initiatives, including the one highlighted in "A Global Energy-Ecological Strategy for Sustainable Development," the Green Bridge Initiative, and a February roundtable on green economy in Astana. AUSTRALIA said the document should focus on the future and have a single, short, consolidated framework for action and follow up. She also said: a blue economy section should be linked to an achievable framework for action; there should be a programme of action for food security that complements the Convention on Biological Diversity; a section on sustainable mining practices should be included; the section on IFSD currently lacks detail on how it would improve on the existing framework; SGDs should be coherent with the MDG framework; and all Rio Principles should be kept in mind rather than quoting selected principles.

INDIA said the zero draft should: better link poverty eradication with the green economy and IFSD; put more emphasis on social and economic aspects; include a section on sustainable lifestyles; and embed the framework of action in the principle on common but differentiated responsibilities. She said the SGDs should not distract from efforts on the MDGs, and suggested holding an informal debate on the proposal to establish a High Commissioner for Future Generations.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said the green economy is not a set of rules and should not create trade barriers. He proposed: creating an intergovernmental panel modeled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to improve cooperation between

the scientific community and policy; reforming ECOSOC; strengthening UNEP through universal membership; and integrating SDGs as part of the MDGs.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA proposed: including a clear mandate for the SDGs in the preamble; outlining reasons that previous commitments have not been fully fulfilled; better justifying the need for a green economy in relation to the current multiple crises; and outlining new initiatives and not merely past commitments. He welcomed South-South and triangular cooperation.

CHILE urged adequate time for negotiations. INDONESIA stressed, *inter alia*: broader stakeholder involvement in policy making; a bottom-up approach regarding a green economy roadmap; and other viable IFSD options, such as expanding ECOSOC's mandate. PERU supported adopting a green economy roadmap and SDGs that add value to the MDGs, and emphasized cultural diversity and leveraging traditional knowledge.

BANGLADESH emphasized, *inter alia*: national sovereignty; customizing sustainable development to national circumstances; monitoring and evaluating financial needs; opening markets to all LDC products; and universal access to education. NORWAY said the SDGs could be a key instrument to focus commitment and galvanize action, and highlighted: full gender equality and empowerment of women; ensuring new innovative financing and unleashing private sector capacity; ensuring sustainable energy for all; valuing natural capital; and ensuring food and nutritional security.

UN WOMEN urged reflecting gender equality and women's empowerment issues throughout the text, and emphasized: women as beneficiaries of targeted programs and as powerful agents in advancing the three pillars; and gender sensitive indicators.

Co-Chair Kim Sook chaired the afternoon session. He noted that, in Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Wednesday morning presentation to UN Ambassadors on his five-year action plan, Ban titled his plan the same as the zero draft: "The future we want." Kim reminded delegates that one country's ambition could be perceived as a challenge to another, and said it is up to all members to lead the UNCSD process.

BELARUS said the document should: be succinct; address themes such as energy and science and technology; call for a global voluntary fund to facilitate the transfer of green technologies; and address the needs of middle-income countries. BOTSWANA called for text on desertification and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and investment in institutional frameworks that can make meaningful impacts at the country level.

KENYA supported developing SDGs and highlighted issues that affect the poor, including agriculture and food security, land degradation, and improving access to sustainable energy for all. JAPAN emphasized including the transition to the green economy in national development strategies, improving existing organizations rather than creating new ones, and including human security as a vision for Rio+20. JORDAN suggested incorporating elements such as linkages between health and sustainable development and the outcome of the 2009 UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. CUBA said the draft could be used as a basis for negotiation, but requires substantial improvement, and expressed concern with the amount of time allocated for

negotiations. She noted lack of definition on green economy, and called attention to Cuba's IFSD proposal on an inter-ministerial global forum on sustainable development.

FARMERS said: the section on food security and sustainable agriculture lacks urgency; the rights of farmers must be ensured, including access to land tenure; and artisanal and small-scale fishing communities play a critical role in strengthening the three pillars. The Food and Agriculture Organization, also speaking for the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Food Programme and Bioversity International, said sustainable growth in agriculture is critical for a green economy and lifting people out of poverty. She emphasized: sustainable "climate smart" agriculture; an inclusive green economy; and a change in mindset that puts us on a path to sustainable development where agriculture and food and nutrition security play a central role.

Denmark, speaking for the EU, expressed concern with the overall balance of the text. He emphasized, *inter alia*: transition to a green economy requires initiatives and action at all levels; establishing a fully-fledged environmental organization as a UN specialized agency based on UNEP and located in Nairobi; developing SDGs in coherence with the MDG review, thereby contributing to the post-2015 agenda; a multistakeholder approach, including further involving the private sector and catalyzing socially and environmentally responsible investments; gender equality as a driver of a green economy; reliance on all sources of financing, not only ODA; and reducing or eliminating trade barriers to facilitate trade in environmental goods, technologies and services.

ETHIOPIA said the African continent is the only one that has not industrialized and contributed to climate change. He also said the SDGs must not serve as a substitute for the MDGs. BHUTAN invited participants to attend the meeting it will organize on 2 April 2012, at UN Headquarters, on "Happiness and Wellbeing: Defining a New Economic Paradigm." SRI LANKA said the SDGs should be centered on human development, and political commitment to support graduation and maintain the achievements of these countries, as well as sustainable use of marine resources, with special reference to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and over exploitation, is needed. MOROCCO said the green economy should not be used for protectionist purposes and should be considered as a source of job creation. He noted the work of the working group on graduation and expressed hope that, by 2020, half of all LDCs will have graduated.

COLOMBIA discussed informal consultations on the proposal for SDGs, and said: they should be universal but need to be contextualized to national particularities; poverty eradication should be an absolute objective; and the number of SDGs should be limited. She emphasized the need to identify cross-cutting issues relevant to all SDGs, and said there was no convergence of views on the process to develop them, with possibilities including the identification of one or two that could be tested post-Rio. SOLOMON ISLANDS underscored, *inter alia*: including marine resources in the preamble/stage setting and renewing political commitment sections of the zero draft; strengthening multilateral cooperation, financing and transfer of technology; providing guidelines on the transitional process of the green economy; and allocating more time for the informal-informal meetings. ECUADOR: said the draft lacks balance; expressed concerns regarding green economy structural

adjustments that may involve additional costs; stressed SCP; and supported a new global economic order for moving towards SCP models.

The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY called for: reference to planetary boundaries; initiating new and unprecedented efforts to harness science and innovation; and launching an inclusive global mechanism for, *inter alia*, scientific coordination and capacity building in developing countries. UNESCO called for increased and sustained investment in science, education at all levels, a human-centered and rights-based approach to sustainable development, integrating the cultural dimension, and green societies. He noted the role of the media in enhancing public awareness. Also speaking for the INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION, he said ocean acidification requires urgent attention, and IFSD must address ocean governance in a comprehensive manner.

NEPAL underscored the particular challenges facing mountain countries, and said his country would host a mountain countries' conference in March 2012 in Kathmandu. Emphasizing limited capacity to deal with the financial, food and energy crises, he called for a mechanism to help mountain countries address these crises and increase resilience. GUYANA: called for greater ambition, clarity and consistency in the document; and lamented lack of attention in the text to the growing disparities within and across countries, underscoring greater equity as an urgent priority. On IFSD, he asked whether new or reformed institutions stand any greater chance of functioning more effectively in the absence of increased political will.

UGANDA said solutions must be tailored to suit the needs of countries at different levels of development, as well as vulnerability. He said issues absent from the document, of importance to Africa and with implications for sustainable development, are: urbanization; internal and international migration; and desertification, drought and land degradation, and the need for adaptation to climate change.

COMOROS said multiple crises negate previous gains and were caused by speculation in developed countries. He said commitments made at all levels should be implemented. IRAN said the ongoing economic and financial crises are a big issue, and the lack of regulation in the economic system and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in developed countries should be considered. He called for: reform of the global financial system; an assessment of why commitments have not been implemented and how to encourage political will; and attention to desertification and drought in Asia and Africa. MALAYSIA said green economy should not be used as protectionist tool, and top priority should be given to strengthening the social and economic pillars.

The HOLY SEE emphasized the need for States to promote true human development, including environmental, social, ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of development. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY stressed, *inter alia*, the need for clear policy and regulatory frameworks, accelerated efforts on water and sanitation, food security and energy, and protection regarding disclosure of private regulatory data and information.

The World Health Organization said: better health should be an indicator of sustainable development achievements; "The Future We Want" should be a healthy one; and reducing environmental risks to health leads to win-win situations.

GRENADA stressed: support mechanisms and structures such as South-South cooperation in sustainable fisheries, sustainable energy and agriculture; attracting additional financing; and the need for contributions to the CSD Trust Fund.

SOUTH AFRICA said the renewing political commitment section of the zero draft should be stronger on political commitments for action, and suggested adding a commitment for meaningful support to developing countries, particularly in Africa. PAKISTAN suggested, *inter alia*: informal consultations on the proposal for a sustainable development council; and further engaging with the international financial institutions. He said success hinges on implementation at the national level. Going forward, he said the bureau should consider an “options text” for the next phase of negotiations.

NEW ZEALAND said the March meeting should discuss the objectives underpinning proposals, and have a general exchange of views before beginning paragraph-by-paragraph negotiations. THAILAND said the document failed to address natural disaster, health and sustainable agriculture development, and should incorporate an enforcement mechanism and incentives for capacity building. She highlighted establishment of “centers of excellence” in partnership with countries or relevant regional institutes.

A representative of the UN REGIONAL COMMISSIONS called for greater attention to the institutional framework at the regional and national levels, including links with the global IFSD, and strengthening ECOSOC. He stressed inclusive and equitable sustainable development, highlighting the importance of women and youth in this regard. He said the Commissions are natural partners for implementing any envisaged knowledge-sharing platform, and the Regional Commission Mechanism should continue to act as a platform for collaboration.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates seemed to take to heart the words of UNCSO Secretary-General Sha Zukang, in his opening statement, that “the most intensive period of preparations for Rio+20 was now beginning.” Many remarked that the initial comments on the zero draft were very detailed and, others commended the Bureau and the Secretariat for condensing 6000 pages of submissions into a 19 page document. While all speakers said more work is needed on the draft, some noted with relief that delegates had more or less agreed to work with the existing text. The broad range of proposed additions to the draft brought many remarks in the halls, with some indicating that they were less than inspired by the discussions. While speakers said they hoped for a concise document, some speculated that the text will first balloon, given the wide range of topics and proposals discussed in the general debate, before being trimmed down.

Outside the main conference room, participants engaged in more interactive discussions at some well-attended side events. One provided a summary of a day-long workshop held on 19 January on the trade dimension of Rio+20, in particular the trade-related impacts of a green economy, convened by UNCTAD, ECLAC and DESA. Messages emerging from that day included the need to protect the so-called “losers” of trade shifts, and a request for UNCTAD to develop recommendations on “enriching” the draft. In response, UNCTAD representatives proposed calling for the establishment of a Forum on Green Economy and Trade, as well as an international agreement on green policy space. An evening side event on “Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication: Exploring national experiences,” sponsored by the Government of the Netherlands and organized by UNEP, DESA and UNDP, was standing room only.



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