

UNCSD THIRD INTERSESSIONAL MEETING: MONDAY, 26 MARCH 2012

Delegates convened on Monday, 26 March, for the UNCSD's third Interessional Meeting, resuming their discussions under the "informal informal" consultations held the previous week. The group spent the entire day and evening exchanging further views and input on the zero draft.

OPENING OF THE INTERSESSIONAL MEETING

Co-Chair Kim opened the third Interessional Meeting and asked delegates to return to their informal informal consultations on the text. PALESTINE urged a discussion on the rules of procedure. However, Co-Chair Kim said that since this would be an informal consultation, the Bureau had decided to dedicate the next two days to discussing the zero draft. The EU called for a streamlining exercise to reduce the size of the text.

CONSULTATIONS ON THE ZERO DRAFT

Co-Chair Kim invited the G-77/CHINA to comment on sections III to V of the zero draft, including other parties' proposals, as it had not yet done so.

III. GREEN ECONOMY: The G-77/CHINA opposed a suggestion from the US to delete text on green economy opportunities, challenges, risks, and "means of implementation." The G-77/CHINA also highlighted the need for "sustained growth" and suggested text on capacity building for workers. She requested clarification of text on the "proper recognition of social and natural capital," "sustainable choices" and "planetary boundaries."

The G-77/CHINA opposed Norway's proposals on sustainable choices, integrating social and environmental costs in how the world prices and measures economic activities, and reform of national fiscal and credit systems.

On international efforts to help countries build a green economy, the G-77/CHINA stressed it was more important to stress what such efforts should *not* do, rather than what they should.

On the creation of an international knowledge-sharing platform, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA said a global green economy partnership involving developing and developed countries is needed to develop a common understanding of the green economy and to learn from each other.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (IFSD): Strengthening/reforming/integrating the three pillars: The G-77/CHINA highlighted elements of their proposed text, including: common but differentiated responsibilities; effective participation in the governance structure of international financial institutions (IFIs); and follow-up of Agenda 21 implementation. The EU supported text on strengthening the interface between policymaking and science.

General Assembly, ECOSOC, CSD and Sustainable Development Council: The G-77/CHINA supported text on an "inclusive, transparent, reformed and effective multilateral system." She reserved her position on several paragraphs dealing with ECOSOC and CSD, pending further internal consultation. In response to a G-77/CHINA query, the EU explained that it opposed reference to UN funds and programmes in the ECOSOC paragraph because those are not currently supervised by ECOSOC.

UNEP, specialized agency on environment proposal, IFIs, and UN operational activities at the country level: The G-77/CHINA underscored the importance of its proposed amendment on IMF/World Bank quota realignments and voting power parity. The G-77/CHINA opposed references to a UN Ombudsman or High Commissioner for Future Generations.

Regional, national, local: The G-77/CHINA supported Mexico's text on the importance of implementing overarching sustainable development strategies incorporated in national development plans as key instruments for the implementation of sustainable development commitments.

SERBIA supported Norway and the EU's proposal "to promote enhanced access to information, public participation in decision making and access to judicial and administrative procedures in environmental matters." KAZAKHSTAN highlighted the "Green Bridge" as a mechanism for supporting efforts towards a green economy, proposing this be supported as a contribution of the Asia region. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA highlighted the importance of "effective operation of regional and sub-regional mechanisms."

V. FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP: The G-77/CHINA emphasized lack of implementation of previous commitments, as set out in a preambular paragraph.

The EU highlighted the importance of goals, targets and milestones, including in relation to a green economy, expressing hope for a strong and action-oriented agenda. The G-77/CHINA sought clarification as to what a green economy roadmap would entail, adding that poverty eradication is the core issue. SWITZERLAND proposed text affirming that poverty eradication is a fundamental area of sustainable development, and a cross-cutting issue.

Food security: The G-77/CHINA sought to keep its proposal for an introductory paragraph on the right to development and right to food, as it felt this to be essential to any discussion of food security. The G-77/CHINA also said it wished to retain its proposed additions on enhancing agricultural production, productivity and sustainability, increasing investment in agriculture and rural development, and promoting access to land and secure land tenure. He indicated interest in working with Turkey on its proposal on supporting traditional farming methods.

The G-77/CHINA sought to retain its own proposed paragraphs on unsustainable consumption patterns and on eliminating barriers and policies that distort production and trade in agricultural products.

Trading systems: The G-77/CHINA responded to a request for clarification on its text referring to the “need to change the unsustainable consumption patterns in the lifestyles in developed countries.” He said this text would remind developed countries of their commitments to take the lead on sustainable consumption and production (SCP), as stated in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI).

On a Norwegian proposal on good governance of land use and land-use planning as fundamental to achieve food security, the G-77/CHINA stressed that the reference to promoting use and conservation of genetic resources in this proposal calls for inclusion of “access and benefit sharing.”

Water: The G-77/CHINA queried the meaning of “encourage payments for ecosystem services”; “to conserve”, in relation to the sustainable use of ecosystems; and “more efficient management of water resources and water environment”, in relation to the green economy. The US highlighted the role of natural ecosystems in maintaining freshwater quantity and quality.

Energy: ICELAND introduced its proposal encouraging financial institutions to develop a risk mitigation mechanism to finance renewable energy exploration. She suggested many African countries had the potential for geothermal energy.

Sustainable tourism and harmony with nature: The G-77/CHINA introduced its proposal encouraging measures to promote sustainable tourism, and requested addition of a reference to “cultural tourism,” in addition to eco-tourism.

The US suggested using alternative text that would “recognize the importance of sustainable tourism activities” that conserve the environment, respect cultural diversity and improve the welfare of local people.

Sustainable transportation: The G-77/CHINA preferred to keep this sub-section separate from the “Cities” section, arguing that sustainable transportation also involves shipping, airlines and the entirety of human mobility.

Harmony with nature: The G-77/CHINA preferred to retain this as a separate sub-section.

Cities: The G-77/CHINA indicated its willingness to work with the US on text regarding the importance of universal access and a sustainable approach to safe, clean and affordable transportation.

Population and health: The G-77/CHINA opposed deleting a passage on strengthening the leading role of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Green jobs-social inclusion: The G-77/CHINA proposed moving all references to green jobs to Section III on Green Economy, retaining all G-77/China proposals, and reserving for later consideration amendments proposed by others. He said the G-77/CHINA could not accept a US proposed deletion of a reference to crisis conditions, but could work with a Mexican proposal on country actions to generate green jobs. The G-77/CHINA also proposed deleting a paragraph on taking measures in relation to green jobs.

Oceans and seas, SIDS: In reference to a proposal by the EU on the importance of achieving the goals of the green economy in the maritime context of the blue economy, the G-77/CHINA said it could not accept framing the green economy in that context considering that the green economy needs a better understanding first.

The G-77/CHINA supported inclusion of “socioeconomic aspects” in global reporting and assessment on the state of the marine environment, suggested by the EU and New Zealand; and EU text on enhancing the resilience of ocean ecosystems. The G-77/CHINA also requested deletion of: specific references to Marine Protected Areas; the Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water; and Mexico’s reference linking freshwater to ocean issues. Additionally, he

sought clarification regarding: Australia’s references to IMO “standards”, and “transboundary environmental concern”; Monaco’s reference to “improved management of agricultural fertilization and wastes”; and the US’ proposed deletion of text recommending not to carry out ocean fertilization activities, pending assessment of associated risks. MONACO explained the intention of recovering anthropogenic nutrients from land-based activities. AUSTRALIA said IMO standards are implemented through regulations agreed by member States, for example regarding marine fuel composition, and agreed to further discussion on text, as needed.

The G-77/CHINA called for deleting paragraphs on climate change impacts and ocean acidification. On illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the G-77/CHINA joined the EU and Norway in bracketing an Australian proposal on working together on enforcement.

On a paragraph on the contributions of coral reefs, the G-77/CHINA indicated willingness to work with Australia on several amendments it proposed, such as on the vulnerability of reefs and support for international cooperation.

On LDCs, the G-77/CHINA sought to retain this text as a separate section, and proposed a new paragraph on land-locked developing countries.

Climate change: The G-77/CHINA called for states to immediately and fully implement the provisions of the UNFCCC.

Forests and biodiversity: The G-77/CHINA called for urgent implementation of the Ministerial declaration from the ninth session of the UN Forum on Forests.

Land degradation and desertification: The G-77/CHINA emphasized the linkage with food security, and proposed deleting insertions on gender equality and women’s empowerment, noting these could be reflected in the relevant parts of the document.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The corridors at UNHQ on Monday morning were abuzz with gossip from the weekend’s events. With no official negotiations on Saturday or Sunday, some delegates had taken a well-earned break to recover from grueling late-night negotiating sessions the previous week. However, others had spent time at various informal weekend gatherings or parallel meetings. Many NGO representatives were talking about their Sunday meeting arranged by the WRI and others to discuss governance in the zero draft. Discussions focused on initial proposals in the zero draft, including a compendium of commitments, an ombudsperson for future generations, and sustainable development goals. Other meetings over the weekend included the US/Canada Citizens’ Summit for Sustainable Development, organized by Yale University, and a Major Groups Expert Meeting on the Rio+20 Zero Draft and Compendium of Commitments.

However, by Monday evening, the conversation had turned towards reflections on progress—or lack thereof—in the negotiations. Many delegates remained deeply concerned at the ever-burgeoning text and the considerable amount of work that would be required to negotiate it down to a reasonable size. “I hope the Chair has something up his sleeve,” said one. “The meeting next month could be brutal,” predicted another.

Major Groups’ frustrations were especially evident. As the hour grew late on Monday evening, some participants were discussing plans by a number of organizations to issue a strong statement of concern, not only over lack of progress but also on the bracketing of many references in the text to equity and rights, including rights to development, water and food. Some organizations are also apparently concerned at what they consider to be a lack of inclusiveness in the negotiations. An open letter to the Secretary-General and other high-level UN and government officials has been drafted, and a press conference is planned for late Tuesday morning.