

UNCSD INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: WEDNESDAY, 2 MAY 2012

On Wednesday, delegates continued informal negotiations on the draft outcome document for the UNCSD. Working Group 1 focused on Section V (Framework for Action and Follow-Up), while Working Group 2 considered Sections II (Renewing Political Commitment) and IV (IFSD).

WORKING GROUP 1

SECTION V: FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP: The Working Group took up several subsections under the section originally entitled, "Priority/key/thematic/cross-sectoral issues and areas."

Sustainable agriculture and food security: Delegates resumed discussions on a paragraph addressing, *inter alia*, agricultural production, rural development, and land and water management (NCST 64 quat). ICELAND and NORWAY sought to include reference to fisheries and the EU suggested a new paragraph setting out various targets and timelines. The G-77/CHINA reserved its position on this proposal.

On empowering rural populations, including women (NCST 64 quint), NORWAY, with SWITZERLAND, suggested text focused exclusively on empowering women. The G-77/CHINA preferred the original formulation. On areas in which women's equal access could be ensured, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, supported by ISRAEL, suggested education.

On enhancing sustainable livestock production (NCST 64 sext), the G-77/CHINA, with the EU and REPUBLIC OF KOREA, suggested reference to sustainable water management systems. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA preferred moving text on marine ecosystems to the oceans subsection. ICELAND, supported by AUSTRALIA, proposed a separate paragraph emphasizing the importance of fisheries for food security.

On establishing sustainable agricultural systems and management practices (NCST 64 sept), the G-77/CHINA proposed deleting reference to "conservation agriculture and integrated pest management," while the EU, NORWAY and ISRAEL preferred retaining this language. The US added language on science-based regulatory systems, which the EU opposed. NORWAY suggested adding "ecosystem-based" regulatory systems. The US proposed, and the EU and NORWAY opposed, replacing text on the challenges of climate change with "ecosystem resilience" in reference to the sustainable use of genetic resources.

On Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (NCST 64 non), the G-77/CHINA sought deletion. JAPAN, supported by the EU, proposed adding text supporting pilot use of the Principles of Responsible Agricultural Investment.

The US, supported by SWITZERLAND, proposed text on field testing and operationalizing these Principles, and advocating their implementation.

On food price volatility and responding to the global food crisis (NCST 64 undec bis), SWITZERLAND, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA and HOLY SEE supported the paragraph, with SWITZERLAND adding language on initiatives to improve market efficiencies, including accurate and timely market information.

On promoting trade policies that would further trade in agricultural products (NCST 64 undec ter), NEW ZEALAND, with the G-77/CHINA and AUSTRALIA, added language on eliminating barriers and policies that distort production and trade in agriculture products, which the EU, REPUBLIC OF KOREA and NORWAY opposed. The G-77/CHINA added language on implementing the Doha Agriculture Mandate, which NORWAY and others opposed.

Sustainable Tourism: On the importance of sustainable tourism (NCST 71 bis), the EU added a reference to protecting ecosystems. The G-77/CHINA, with the EU and REPUBLIC OF KOREA, added text calling for enhanced support to sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity building in developing countries. The paragraph was agreed *ad referendum*, but with a note that CANADA may revert.

On investments in and rules on sustainable tourism (NCST 71 quat), the US queried text on adopting appropriate guidelines and regulations and calling on States to invest in sustainable tourism, pointing out that the private sector has a role. A compromise was agreed *ad referendum* that would "encourage the promotion of investments in sustainable tourism" without referring to the source and "underline the importance of establishing, where necessary" appropriate guidelines and regulations "in accordance with national priorities and legislation."

Sustainable Transportation: On transportation as central to sustainable development (NCST 71 oct), the RUSSIAN FEDERATION added the concept of road safety as part of efforts to achieve sustainable development, which the US, EU, the G-77/CHINA, BELARUS and KAZAKHSTAN supported. The US, supported by BELARUS, added language on the efficient movement of people and goods.

Harmony with Nature: On the importance to sustainable development of harmony with nature (NCST 71 dec), the US, with NEW ZEALAND and CANADA, suggested referencing poverty eradication as a "central" challenge rather than the "most important." The US, with NEW ZEALAND, suggested changing text on ecosystem "conservation," "regeneration" and "adaptation," to "preservation," "restoration" and "resilience," respectively. The G-77/CHINA, with AUSTRALIA, suggested referring to both ecosystem regeneration and restoration.

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The EU, with support from the G-77/CHINA and CANADA, suggested moving the text for this subsection to Section I (Preamble/Stage Setting).

Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements: On urban development and human settlements (NCST pre 72), the REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested replacing “slum upgrading” with “urban regeneration,” the EU and the US supported retaining both concepts, and the G-77/CHINA preferred “slum upgrading.” The EU added language on sustainable behavior and sustainable lifestyles, which the US did not support in this context. The EU also added language on the conservation and valorization of natural and cultural heritages, revitalization of historic districts and rehabilitation of city centers, which the G-77/CHINA did not support.

MAJOR GROUPS: WOMEN called for strengthening language on sustainable agriculture and food security to focus on rural women, and on health to emphasize sexual and reproductive rights. **FARMERS** stressed the right to adequate food through adopting new instruments, such as on the rights of peasants. **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES** urged recognizing the rights of Mother Earth and, on green economy, promoting different approaches, such as community economies. **LOCAL AUTHORITIES** stressed land planning, the role of sustainable cities in urban biodiversity and agriculture, and networks at the grassroots level to make cities sustainable.

WORKING GROUP 2

RENEWING POLITICAL COMMITMENT: Engaging Major Groups: The subtitle “Engaging major groups and other stakeholders” was agreed *ad referendum*.

On national governments and legislative bodies (NCST pre 17), the EU, opposed by the G-77/CHINA, proposed referring to “all levels of governments” rather than “national governments.”

On public participation, access to information and judicial and administrative proceedings (NCST 17), the G-77/CHINA reiterated its proposal to refer to Rio Principle 10, and to take appropriate steps to give further effect to this Principle. The US opposed this insertion.

On the role of civil society (NCST 18), the G-77/CHINA, with CANADA, proposed deleting sentences relating to strengthening the right to access to information and improved access to information and communication technologies (ICT), noting that those elements are captured elsewhere in the text. MEXICO, the EU, HOLY SEE, NORWAY and SWITZERLAND opposed, preferring to keep the paragraph in its entirety.

On the US-proposed paragraph (CST pre 18 bis) on ICT, the EU queried its placement in the Major Groups section. The G-77/CHINA highlighted the need to address the digital gap. The US said ICT is valuable for engaging stakeholders.

On women (NCST 18 bis), the HOLY SEE preferred referring to “equality between men and women,” while the G-77/CHINA, EU, US, SWITZERLAND, NORWAY, LIECHTENSTEIN, AUSTRALIA and CANADA preferred “gender equality” as the recognized term. The G-77/CHINA proposed text “recognizing” rather than “promoting” women’s leadership role, observing that leadership is based on merit. Delegates agreed to the revised paragraph *ad referendum*, incorporating “gender equality” and the G-77/China’s amendment.

On children and youth (NCST 21 bis), NORWAY asked to mention “both girls and boys.” The G-77/CHINA expressed concern at the inclusion of issues not relating to the theme of the conference.

On workers and trade unions (NCST 21 ter), the G-77/CHINA asked to refer to sustainable development in general rather specifying its “social dimension” and “socially and environmentally responsible economic development, social equity and decent work.” The EU preferred retaining these elements.

On contributions of farmers (NCST 21 quat), the G-77/CHINA reiterated its proposal to delete reference to “reduce land degradation and desertification.”

On NGOs (NCST 21 quint), the G-77/CHINA proposed deleting reference to “information providers, practitioners, monitors of progress, and partners.” The EU proposed compromise language recognizing the valuable contributions of NGOs in promoting sustainable development “through their well-established and diverse experience, expertise and capacity, especially in the area of information sharing and the support of implementation of sustainable development.”

On the UN’s role (NCST 21 sext), the G-77/CHINA preferred referring to IFIs instead of multilateral development banks. The US noted that the IMF does not have a development mandate. The EU, with the G-77/CHINA, said the IMF could still play a role. The G-77/CHINA requested, but the US and SWITZERLAND opposed, deleting text on cooperation with stakeholders, arguing that this is addressed elsewhere. The paragraph was agreed *ad referendum* and mentions IFIs, the “contributions” of other relevant international organizations, and cooperation among States and “other stakeholders.”

On a global partnership for sustainable development (NCST 23), the G-77/CHINA requested reinstating text on finance, technology and capacity building.

On sustainability reporting (CST 24 and 24 bis), NORWAY, supported by MEXICO, the EU and SWITZERLAND, proposed considering text containing proposed amendments referring to national sustainability accounting (CST 24), together with proposals on measurements and indicators (CST 111). The Co-Chair confirmed this arrangement.

On company reporting (CST 24 bis), the G-77/CHINA expressed concerns about language on the public and private sectors, and requested deleting the paragraph.

MAJOR GROUPS: NGOs requested, *inter alia*, reinstating text on information providers, practitioners, monitors of progress, and partners (NCST 21 quint). CHILDREN AND YOUTH expressed disappointment about the current state of the section on engaging Major Groups (Section ILC) and highlighted the need for action throughout the text. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS welcomed reference to their group in paragraph NCST 21 ter, and highlighted the need to recognize their inputs and their role as drivers of change. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY called for clear establishment of a science-policy interface, and innovative and creative approaches to address the complexity of sustainable development.

SECTION IV: IFSD: On Wednesday evening, Co-Chair Kim introduced a proposed Co-Chairs’ introductory paragraph underscoring the importance of a strengthened IFSD (NCST pre 44). Discussions on IFSD continued into the evening.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The mood lifted considerably on Wednesday as delegates seemed more open to compromise in the Working Groups, even sharing a few jokes and laughter at times. The result was soon apparent, with a slow but steady trickle of paragraphs starting to be agreed *ad referendum* during the day.

Several explanations were offered in the corridors for such a development. “We’ve finally realized the clock is ticking,” was one participant’s interpretation of the alteration. “We’ve succeeded in building some trust and goodwill in the group,” suggested another.

Nevertheless, most observers weren’t getting too excited just yet, pointing out that most of the text remains bracketed, with many issues still the subject of significant differences. In this respect, at least one senior official was extolling the virtues of patience, noting that key issues cannot be resolved until Rio anyway. “Some topics won’t be resolved until the last minute. It’s just how these things usually work out,” he suggested. Others were questioning whether the text could be cleaned up enough to allow senior officials in Rio to really focus on the key outstanding issues. “The question is, how much will be left to clean up on 20 June?” asked one uncertain delegate.