

UNCSD PREPCOM III: WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE 2012

The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) began its work on Wednesday, 13 June 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Seven “splinter” groups continued negotiations on the draft outcome document to be considered for adoption by the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, Rio+20), which is set to open on 20 June. Many consultations also convened during the day, along with approximately 20 side events, and numerous other events that took place throughout the city of Rio de Janeiro.

PLENARY

PrepCom Co-Chair Kim stressed that negotiators had only three days to finalize the text, and urged them to work with a sense of urgency and spirit of compromise. He said Working Group I will continue handling Sections V and VI, and Working Group II would handle Sections I, II, III and IV of the draft outcome document. He explained that splinter groups would be used, with only five meeting at any one time. Working Group I would have splinter groups on: means of implementation (MOI) and sustainable development goals (SDGs), facilitated by Selwin Hart (Barbados); sustainable consumption and production (SCP), water and climate change, facilitated by Jimena Leiva (Guatemala); oceans, facilitated by Chris Schweizer (Australia); gender, education, health, cities, transport and mining, co-facilitated by Heidi Kvalsoren (Norway) and Franz Jacovalla (Canada); and chemicals and desertification, co-facilitated by Damaso Luna Corona (Mexico) and Chris Cannon (Australia). Working Group II would have splinter groups on green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, facilitated by Patrick Wittmann (Canada), and institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD), facilitated by Marianne Loe (Norway).

Sha Zukang, UNCSD Secretary-General, said the intensive third round of informal consultations in New York had shown real progress, not just in terms of the numbers of paragraphs agreed, but also in the way in which negotiators discussed the issues and shared commitment to a successful outcome to Rio+20. He said the three days of PrepCom were “make or break” and underscored that “the whole world is watching what we do here.” He urged negotiators to focus on key deliverables such as: SDGs; IFSD; sharing experiences and knowledge about pilot efforts in green economy; action-oriented

outcomes in thematic areas such as energy, water, cities and education; and a framework for action that “does not just look good on paper.”

SPLINTER GROUPS

SDGs AND MOI: On SDG measurement (SDG 7), delegates discussed whether to retain language on targets and indicators and whether to include language on differentiation by national circumstances. On SDG reporting (SDG 8), delegates addressed the extent to which this process should be prescribed and the linkages between reporting at the regional and global levels. Many delegates wanted to retain and move reference to the limitations of GDP as a measure of well-being and sustainable development (SDG 9) to another chapter, while others wanted to delete this paragraph. Discussion also addressed whether the UN Statistical Commission or the UN Secretary-General is the appropriate place for this work. On the process of SDG development (SDG 6), delegates discussed, *inter alia*: the extent to which this process should be intergovernmental; the model which should be used to develop and define the SDGs; the role of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in endorsing the outcomes of this process; a structure that provides the necessary technical backstopping; and the need for strong and active stakeholder involvement. Hart said he would formulate alternative text after consulting informally with main negotiators of interested groups.

On MOI, on finance, some delegates requested addressing text on corruption, innovative financing mechanisms and the role of the private sector as part of a “package of issues” that would be addressed later.

On technology, some delegates could not accept the facilitator’s proposed title of “Technology, Development and Transfer,” preferring to focus on the content before the title. Delegates did not agree on language related to the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, with some supporting reference to “diffusion” of technologies and others to “innovation.” Consensus could not be reached on including: the need for enabling environments for “dissemination” versus “transfer of” environmentally sound technologies; the role of patent protection and intellectual property rights; and options to facilitate clean technology dissemination to developing countries.

Delegates were close to agreeing to text on exploring the possibility to establish a global fund for voluntary contributions by States. Text on recognizing the need to facilitate informed policy decision-making on sustainable development issues was agreed *ad referendum*.

On capacity building, delegates discussed language on supporting developing countries in capacity building “and development” for developing resource efficient and inclusive economies and agreed language on North-South cooperation. Reference to urging all countries to increase capacity-building support to developing countries was deleted.

OCEANS: The splinter group on oceans discussed possible problems involving references to ecosystem and precautionary approaches in the main paragraph, and concerned delegations agreed to work directly on compromise language. Two delegations agreed to work on language regarding references to international instruments. Small side groups were tasked with handling paragraphs on ocean fertilization and fish stocks. After a group discussion about the relationship of a subsidies reference in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing paragraph to the standalone subsidies paragraph, all delegations were asked to submit proposed revisions to the Secretariat for discussion. All parties were asked to have their work submitted for discussion on Thursday.

GENDER, EDUCATION, HEALTH, CITIES, TRANSPORT AND MINING: A reformulated paragraph on urging educational institutions to adopt good practices (Education 4) was proposed by the facilitator, which included language on encouraging educational institutions to be examples of sustainable management on their campuses and in their communities and on the active participation of all.

In text on resolving to ensure full and equal rights and access of women (Gender 5), many countries supported replacing the existing text on access to productive resources through the rights to own property, inheritance, credit and to financial and extension services with paragraph 60f of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action. In a paragraph inviting donors, international organizations and others to mainstream gender in their decision-making (Gender 7), new language was proposed to reflect, *inter alia*, the need to support developing countries efforts to integrate fully gender equality considerations and commitments. In a paragraph on non-communicable diseases as one of the major challenges for sustainable development (Health 4), a group of countries asked for deletion of the proposal linking reductions in air, water and chemical pollution to positive effects on health, while other countries opposed.

Several modifications were brought to paragraphs on implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Health 8) and on reducing maternal and child mortality and improving the health of women, adolescents and children (Health 9).

In a paragraph on supporting development of sustainable transport systems (Transport 2), it was agreed to replace “sustainable transport system for transit” with “sustainable transit transport system” in reference to UNGA resolution 66/214.

In text on cities for promoting economically productive, socially cohesive, and environmentally sustainable societies (Cities 1) it was proposed to replace “access to basic services” with “access to basic goods and services” in order to capture reference to the access to food. Various amendments were brought to a paragraph on promoting an integrated approach to

planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements (Cities 2), including adding reference to raising awareness, and deleting previous proposal from Japan on “low carbon” (in reference to infrastructure and technology). On partnerships among cities and communities (Cities 4) discussions mostly focused on reformulating part of the paragraph related to involving the relevant UN entities including UN-HABITAT. Discussions were held but no agreement was reached, on using either “managed effectively and properly” or “properly managed and effectively regulated” on text on mining as an opportunity to, *inter alia*, meeting internationally agreed development goals (Mining 1).

SCP, WATER, CLIMATE CHANGE: On SCP, delegates discussed what entity could or should adopt the 10-year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) for SCP, with one delegation questioning whether the Conference could instruct another institution to do something and others calling for flexibility, noting that the same debate has taken place before, and supporting agreement on the paragraph on the adoption of the 10YFP.

On water, delegates agreed to wait to address the paragraphs on rights at the end. On text recognizing the importance of water infrastructure (Water 5), one group proposed replacing it with text from the JPOI on supporting capacity building for sanitation infrastructure. Another group called for measures to address water scarcity, droughts and floods. On Water 6 (adopt measures), one delegation supported retaining the concepts addressed in the paragraph – pollution, wastewater treatment, water efficiency – in the text. Delegates also discussed whether to reference transboundary water issues in the text.

On climate, delegates discussed whether to use text proposed by a previous facilitator or by the Co-Chairs as the basis for Climate 1 (protect the climate system), and debated how to reference common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), with one proposal to follow the reference with “and respective capabilities reflecting current and future realities.” One speaker stressed that this process should focus on areas where it can bring new commitments.

GREEN ECONOMY: This splinter group began discussion on the section title, and the option of including a subtitle on framing the context and other approaches, visions, and models of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Discussion was deferred pending the resolution of the first paragraph. On the introductory paragraph (paragraph 50), delegates agreed to a number of amendments qualifying references to the green economy, and on natural resources. On whether green economy policies should be guided by international law, including human rights law, in addition to the Rio Principles (paragraph 51), the facilitator signaled that references to the Rio Principles would have to be streamlined across the text. There was an extended discussion on common but differentiated responsibilities. The facilitator suggested incorporating text into sections on what the green economy should do (paragraph 52). However, delegates could not agree.

On what the green economy should do (paragraph 52), text with some brackets was streamlined on respect for each country’s national sovereignty and national circumstances in relation to the three dimensions of sustainable development. References to fulfilment of human rights (52 *a bis*) and rights to development (from paragraph 52a) were incorporated into a subparagraph on promoting sustained and inclusive economic

growth (52c). On closing technology gaps between developed and developing countries (52f), one group complained that he could see no willingness to move forward on fundamental issues. Delegates reserved on the subparagraph, pending discussion of related paragraphs. Delegates agreed to refer on proposals by the facilitator to their groups, underlining developing countries, in subparagraphs on the vulnerable (53 h) and non-market approaches (53 k).

DESERTIFICATION AND CHEMICALS: The splinter group on desertification deleted a phrase on a coordinated global approach to ensure land is used, managed and restored in a sustainable manner, and a reference to contributing to food security and improving the livelihoods of the vulnerable, while adding reference to poverty eradication. The group agreed in principle to express deep concern over cyclical drought and famine in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, but disagreed over referencing action by the international community. Delegations disagreed over references to: soil; a land degradation neutral world or zero net rate of land degradation; specific Initiatives; and an intergovernmental panel on science.

The chemicals splinter group agreed *ad referendum* on a paragraph on continued enhanced coordination and cooperation among the chemicals and waste conventions and with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). The group could not reach compromises on issues including references to long-term funding for SAICM; reducing landfilling significantly by 2030; the decision by the tenth Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Ban Amendment; cooperation on transboundary air pollution; phasing out hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs); and a decision following up the UNEP Consultative Process on Financing Options for Chemicals and Waste.

IFSD: On sustainability management (paragraph 91) in UN facilities and operations, delegates continued working on text to reflect cost-effectiveness, along with accountability. On regional frameworks (paragraph 92), delegates agreed to replace “global policies” with “sustainable development policies.” On sustainable development strategies at all levels (paragraph 93), delegates added text on “effective analysis and assessment of information,” and deleted a reference to “effective national monitoring and assessment capacity at the appropriate levels.” The paragraph was agreed *ad referendum*.

On paragraph 93 *ter*, about access to information, public participation and justice, some delegates suggested the text should refer to issues more broadly than “environmental matters.” The facilitator requested that those with different views to consult informally, and to consider this text in relation to paragraph 37, which has similar language relating to Major Groups and stakeholders.

A group of developing countries proposed text (paragraph 97 *bis*) on establishing an international mechanism under the UNGA to promote, implement and monitor concrete actions for bridging the technology gap. Delegates expressed concern about possible overlaps with the work of existing organizations, including UNIDO and UNCTAD. Delegates agreed *ad referendum* to paragraph 71 on strengthening UN system-wide coherence and coordination, with the addition of text on “enhancing reporting coherence.”

WORKING GROUP I

During an evening meeting of Working Group I, delegates heard reports from the splinter group facilitators. In the group on gender, health, education, mining, transport and cities, the co-facilitators reported little progress. On chemicals, the facilitator reported plans to undertake bilateral discussions with delegations to address outstanding issues. On desertification, the facilitator reported four outstanding issues: whether targets such as a “land degradation-neutral world” or zero net land degradation, are useful; whether to mention the Global Soil Partnership and Changwon Initiative; consideration of an intergovernmental panel; and ways to refer to soil degradation.

On SCP, water and climate change, the facilitator reported streamlined text has been prepared on SCP and water, awaiting delegates’ consultations. On climate change, she highlighted the need to find a balance between sending a strong message from Rio+20, without disturbing other negotiation tracks.

On SDGs and means of implementation, the facilitator said negotiations had been productive and that more direct and simple formulations of text were needed. He reported that a proposal for a process to develop the SDGs is being prepared, a section on finance has been finalized, and one paragraph has been agreed *ad referendum* in the technology section.

Co-Chair Ashe expressed concern on the pace of discussions and the quantity of text still not agreed.

WORKING GROUP II

Co-Chair Kim opened the meeting of the evening Working Group and stated that, while the splinter groups have not made good progress, the mood has been positive. He urged delegates to move faster. The facilitator on green economy reported that one paragraph was ready to be agreed *ad referendum*. The facilitator on IFSD reported that four paragraphs were ready to be agreed *ad referendum*, while others are part of a compromise package and are not yet cleared.

Nikhil Seth, DSD, announced that the following splinter groups would meet on Thursday: green economy; Sections I and II; IFSD; SDGs and MOI; SCP, water and climate; disaster risk reduction and jobs; small island developing States and regions; oceans; gender, education, health, cities, transport and mining; and poverty, food security, mountains, biodiversity and forests.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Some ended the first day of Rio+20 suggesting that the future we want may be a long time coming if the pace of negotiations doesn’t pick up at the final PrepCom. During a meeting with the conference organizers, NGOs were reported to have been vocal in their expression of concern about slow progress, given the lackluster performance of negotiators at the informal negotiations. With prompts to complete their work by Friday sounding increasingly hollow, some participants have indicated they have already begun to bracket their weekend plans to hit the beaches.

While delegations and NGOs mentioned that, for the most part, they are impressed by the RioCentro facilities, there has been some puzzlement to find that a commitment to make the conference paperless has not been matched by the provision of sufficient numbers of power outlets for laptops and tablets along with reliable internet coverage on the “Rio+20 wifi” network.