A Proposal to
Raise the Transparency of Follow-up Activities on the Outcome from the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20):

A Knowledge Management and Conference Reporting Services Project of IISD Reporting Services

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Proposal Summary

IISD Reporting Services’ work seeks to increase the transparency and accountability of intergovernmental sustainable development decision making. Our flagship publication – Earth Negotiations Bulletin – has assisted negotiators and representatives from governmental and nongovernmental organizations to follow multilateral environmental treaty negotiations. Our Knowledge Management projects complement this work, by enhancing the transparency and accountability of intergovernmental organizations’ work in implementing decisions that are taken at the international level.

Our Sustainable Development Policy & Practice knowledgebase (http://uncsd.iisd.org/) tracked the preparations for the June 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) in parallel with our Earth Negotiations Bulletin reporting from the preparatory meetings and Rio+20 itself. The current proposal seeks funding to ensure that the follow-up actions to the decisions taken at Rio+20 receive the same visibility and transparency as the process leading up to the meeting. The true legacy of UNCSD lies in the follow-up activities to the outcome; this project proposes to track these activities.

The proposed activities would take place during 2013-2014, and would include:

1. Tracking news and activities of UN and other intergovernmental actors related to the Rio+20 outcome document, The Future We Want, and integrating this information into Sustainable Development Policy & Practice, an online knowledgebase freely available at http://uncsd.iisd.org/;
2. Maintenance and moderation of UNCSD-L, an email listserv for members of the international sustainable development community following activities related to Rio+20;
3. Production of a newsletter on the most recent stories published in Sustainable Development Policy & Practice, to be distributed to the UNCSD-L listserv twice a week;
4. Regular updating of an online calendar (iCal) of sustainable development activities, compatible with Outlook, Google, etc.; and
5. Providing IISD RS Earth Negotiations Bulletin coverage of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leading up to and including the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) called for in the Rio+20 outcome document, to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Total funding required for the activities described in this proposal is USD 311,739.

Background

In December 2009, the UN General Assembly agreed to hold the “United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development” (UNCSD) in 2012. Under the terms of General Assembly resolution 64/236, the conference sought to secure renewed political commitment to sustainable development, evaluate progress and implementation gaps in meeting previously-agreed commitments, and address new and emerging challenges. Two themes for the event were identified: a green economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction; and an institutional framework for sustainable development. The agreement adopted in Rio addressed these issues, and much more.

The outcome document called on the UN General Assembly (UNGA), at its next session, to take decisions on, inter alia: designating a body to operationalize the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production; determining the modalities for the third international conference on small island developing states, which is to convene in 2014; identifying the format and organizational aspects of the high-level forum, which is to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development; strengthening the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); constituting an open working group (OWG) to develop global sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be agreed by UNGA; establishing an intergovernmental process under UNGA to prepare a report proposing options on an
effective sustainable development financing strategy; and considering a set of recommendations from the Secretary-General for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies.

In addition, the UNGA is called on to take a decision in two years on the development of an international instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regarding marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Furthermore, the UN Statistical Commission is called on to launch a programme of work on broader measures to complement gross domestic product, and the UN system is encouraged, as appropriate, to support industry, interested governments and relevant stakeholders in developing models for best practice and facilitate action for the integration of sustainability reporting.

The true legacy of UNCSD lies in how these further discussions play out; this project proposes to track these follow-up activities.

Tracking international processes and communicating their essence to the international policy community has been the key objective of IISD RS since 1992. Through the Linkages website (www.iisd.ca), and in publications like the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, Linkages Update and the MEA Bulletin, IISD has developed an expertise in providing neutral and timely information, assembling and synthesizing elements from various sources into easily accessible print and online publications. IISD has also developed a series of powerful communication tools through the establishment of policy-specific email listservs (CLIMATE-L, WATER-L, ENERGY-L, FORESTS-L, etc.), which serve more than 125,000 subscribers, and IISD RS has created a suite of knowledgebases to track activities related to these sustainable development issues. A September 2011 survey of the users of our knowledgebases found that close to 80% of respondents indicated that it contributes to greater transparency in multilateral environmental policy making. In the same survey, over 97% of respondents rated the overall service as good to excellent.

Proposal

Beginning in December 2010, IISD Reporting Services has developed and maintained a knowledgebase that tracked international activities leading up to the event in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. IISD RS now proposes to maintain and strengthen the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice knowledge management system to assist key stakeholders such as the UN Chief Executives Board Secretariat (CEB), other relevant intergovernmental bodies, governments and Major Groups in tracking the numerous and diverse activities following up on the outcome of Rio+20. The system is a publicly-accessible knowledgebase of international policy responses and builds an information dissemination mechanism useful to the international community in coordinating its activities related to sustainable development.

Using a team of thematic experts in the area of sustainable development policy, a Content Editor, Digital Editor and part-time web designer, IISD RS proposes to write and categorize short summaries of the activities (publications, meetings, statements or projects) of UN bodies and intergovernmental organizations and processes following up on the Rio+20 outcome, linking back from our knowledgebase at http://uncsd.iisd.org/ to original sources. IISD RS only relies on primary sources, and not on news reports. Our thematic experts use official press releases and original research and build on their contacts to gather information. Using Web 2.0 semantically-aware tagging tools, the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice site has its own searchable archive of activities and is arranged in sub-sections based on actors and categories.

The content on Sustainable Development Policy & Practice is available in an RSS feed and the content can be syndicated to other blogs and news sites. All content on the site is indexed as original content by Google News for easy searching and retrieval.

IISD RS also will promote the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice knowledgebase and the UNCSD-L listserv using traditional media and appropriate new media tools, such as Twitter and Facebook.
IISD RS will publish the *Sustainable Development Update* electronic newsletter two times per week. This newsletter contains a compilation of items recently added to the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice knowledgebase and a list of upcoming events, and is distributed through the UNCSD-L listserv.

The Content Editor will also invite Heads of UN and other intergovernmental bodies, as well as other key actors/stakeholders, to write guest articles on international activities undertaken related to UNCSD outcomes and follow up activities.

This proposal also would provide for *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* coverage of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leading up to and including the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) called for in the Rio+20 outcome document, to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development.

**Proposal Budget**

Budgets for the two components of the project are presented below. The first would cover IISD RS’ activities to maintain and update the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice knowledgebase through the end of December 2014. The second would cover IISD RS’ *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* reporting from the meetings for the OWG on SDGs and the HLPF. **Funding required for both components is USD311,739.**

**Sustainable Development Policy & Practice: April 2013-December 2014**

During this period, IISD RS will:

a) Publish bi-weekly issues of *Sustainable Development Update* and continuously update the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice knowledgebase;

b) Promote and moderate the UNCSD-L listserv and *Sustainable Development Update* through traditional and new media, as well as existing sustainable development networks and cooperating partners;

c) Staff Meeting to discuss project design and management;

d) Develop a feedback mechanism (on-line survey) to measure the impact of the website/newsletter mechanism for policy makers

Funding required for the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice component is USD 237,740.

**Earth Negotiations Bulletin Meeting Coverage**

This part of the project would fund meeting coverage of events of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leading up to and including the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) called for in the Rio+20 outcome document, to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Funding required for the Sustainable Development Policy & Practice component is USD 73,999

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