



A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the
Second Round of 'Informal-Informal' Negotiations on the zero draft of
outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development
(UNCSD or Rio+20)

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
in cooperation with the European Commission (EC)

Online at <http://www.iisd.ca/uncsd/iinzod2/enbots/>



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Issue #5 | April - May 2012 UNCSD Meeting | 23 April - 4 May 2012 | Monday, 30 April 2012

Events convened on Friday, 27 April 2012

Briefing to Member States on “The Sustainable Development Dialogues”

Co-organized by the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN, the Rio+20 Secretariat, the UN Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) and DESA



Julio Bitelli, Minister-Counselor, Brazil, explained his government's initiative to solicit recommendations on sustainable development from civil society.

This side event considered the Sustainable Development Dialogues, which will be hosted by Brazil during the Rio+20 Conference.

Julio Bitelli, Minister-Counselor, Brazil, noted the large interest in the proposed sustainable development goals. He explained the Brazilian government's effort to provide a space for civil society to discuss the major issues on the sustainable development agenda, including: sustainable development, as an answer to the current economic and financial crises; poverty alleviation; water; oceans; forests; sustainable energy for all; food and nutrition security; the economics of sustainable development; sustainable cities and innovation; and unemployment, decent work and migration.

Together with Brice Lalonde, Rio+20 Executive Coordinator, they outlined some of the logistics and responded to questions regarding the proposed facilitation process. Bitelli said that a ten-member team will be assigned to each topic, the members of which will be selected by the Brazilian government, assisted by the Rio+20 Executive Coordinators and the UN. He pledged equal gender and geographic representation in these teams, saying that the major organizations at the UN will send proposals of candidates to the Brazilian Government. On the outcome of the civil society discussions, he said a set of recommendations will be submitted to the High-Level Round Table sessions to be held at Rio+20.

More information:

<http://www.riodialogues.org/>
<http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

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Mitchell Toomey, UNDP, presented the practicalities of the platform, which will take the form of a virtual dialogue on the internet whereby civil society can participate in voicing recommendations and vote for preferences on each of the ten topics.

During the discussions, participants addressed: the physical arrangements of the venue; how to ensure representation from each country; audience composition; selection of participants and topics; possible overlaps with other side events; and other logistical concerns.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin on the side (ENBOTS)* © <enb@iisd.org> is a special publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in cooperation with the European Commission (EC). This issue has been written by Kate Louw and Suzi Malan. The Digital Editor is Mike Muzurakis. The Editor is Tomilola Akanle Eni-ibukun, Ph.D. <tomilola@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James “Kimo” Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. Support for the publication of ENBOTS at the Second Round of ‘Informal-Informal’ Negotiations on the zero draft of outcome document of the UNCSD has been provided by the European Commission (EC). The opinions expressed in ENBOTS are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and funders. Excerpts from ENBOTS may be used in non-commercial publications only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>. Electronic versions of issues of ENBOTS from the Second Round of ‘Informal-Informal’ Negotiations on the zero draft of outcome document of the UNCSD can be found on the Linkages website at <http://www.iisd.ca/uncsd/iinzod2/enbots/>. The ENBOTS Team at the Second Round of ‘Informal-Informal’ Negotiations on the zero draft of outcome document of the UNCSD can be contacted by e-mail at <Kate@iisd.org>.



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Key Findings of the Fifth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5) Assessment Report and Recommendations from the GEO-5 Summary for Policy Makers (SPM)

Organized by the Permanent Missions of the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Switzerland and the US to the UN, and UNEP

This side event deliberated on the outcomes of GEO-5, which provided an analysis of the successes and failures of the world's implementation of the internationally agreed environmental goals.

John Matuszak, US Department of State, reflected on the differences between GEO-5 and previous reports, noting that there was engagement from both the political and scientific community when drafting the SPM. He outlined the report, which focuses on the status and trends of the global environment in terms of key goals, policies undertaken by governments to implement these goals, and additional actions and drivers that might influence the ability to meet these goals.

Jorge Laguna-Celis, Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN, spoke on the key messages of the GEO-5 report, *inter alia*, that: internationally agreed goals have only been partially met; there is continued deterioration of the global environment, noting that some critical thresholds have already been exceeded; lack of data remains a major barrier; there is a need to shift the policy focus; and solving environmental problems with environmental policies remains a fallacy.

Marc Levy, Columbia University, lamented: the 36% rise in global emissions, with 80% of emissions being emitted by only 19 countries; the steady decline of Arctic sea ice as well as forests; and the major long-term environmental impacts of persistent pollution.

Daniel Ziegerer, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, highlighted some innovations, including the formally negotiated SPM, which strengthened the science-policy interface, and the addition of important new themes to the GEO process.

Jose Almonte, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Dominican Republic, underscored the relationship between poverty and environmental crises, with poverty as a driver of environmental change.

John Matuszak, emphasizing that policymaking requires more reliable data, said for 14 goals no data existed, and insufficient data existed for approximately 80% of the remaining goals.

Participants deliberated on: shifting the policy focus to include non-environmental issues; integrating the many different sustainable development policies and programmes; incorporating solutions such as resilience to climate and disaster; and data integration of existing information and indicators, combined in novel ways.



L-R: Jose Almonte, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Dominican Republic; Jorge Laguna-Celis, Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN; Daniel Ziegerer, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment; Marc Levy, Columbia University; John Matuszak, US Department of State.



John Matuszak, US Department of State, stressed data collection as a critical element that is currently lacking.



Jorge Laguna-Celis, Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN, said UNEP's environmental assessment capacities need to be strengthened.



Marc Levy, Columbia University, emphasized that humanity is living in unprecedented times of rapid change.

More information:
<http://www.unep.org/>

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Planet Under Pressure

Organized by the International Council for Science (ICSU), UNESCO, and International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP)

Moderated by Bedřich Moldan, UNCSD Bureau Member for the Eastern European States Group, this event discussed the State of the Planet Declaration that was adopted at the Planet Under Pressure conference, held from March 26-29 2012, in London, England.

Sybil Seitzinger, Executive Director, IGBP, in her keynote address, saying that the first State of the Planet Declaration had sober findings, noted that due to increasing urbanization, future choices and policies will be central to sustainable development success. She highlighted that humanity is living in an era of anthropocene and urged for collaboration and synergistic solutions, as well as a strengthened science-policy interface to solve the sustainability crisis that is currently being faced.

Elizabeth Thompson, Rio+20 Executive Coordinator, noting that many themes discussed at the Planet Under Pressure conference were similar to those mooted for possible sustainable development goals. She said that it is critical for a dialogue between social and political dimensions to take place. She called for credible solutions at Rio+20 that are underpinned by scientific data.

Gretchen Kalonji, UNESCO, noted that solutions for sustainability should involve the engineering community. She hoped that the final outcomes from Rio+20 would include text on the need for observations. She called for further support for capacity, education and science, and said that while the zero draft of the outcome document for Rio+20 has an increasing emphasis on science-based approaches, this must be further emphasized.

Gisbert Glaser, ICSU and Coordinator of Science and Technological Major Group, observed that the problems facing the environment, economics, equity and social justice are intrinsically linked. He advocated for: a greater understanding of interconnectedness of natural and socio-economic systems; and policy integration and coherence from the Rio+20 outcomes.

Amb. Jean-Francis Zinsou, Permanent Representative of Benin to the UN, highlighted the need for globalized research, which is results-driven and focuses on the urgent problems that humanity currently faces. He reiterated the call for increased collaboration and suggested that the use of indigenous knowledge be “revitalized” and encouraged its use at the international level. He noted that the current situation requires all of humanity to “adjust and adapt.”



L-R: Gisbert Glaser, ICSU and Coordinator of Science and Technological Major Group; Amb. Jean-François Zinsou, Permanent Representative of Benin to the UN; Sybil Seitzinger, Executive Director, IGBP; Bedřich Moldan, UNCSD Bureau Member for the Eastern European States Group; Gretchen Kalonji, UNESCO; Elizabeth Thompson, Rio+20 Executive Coordinator.



Gisbert Glaser, ICSU and Coordinator of Science and Technological Major Group, underscored the importance of capacity building for developing countries.



Elizabeth Thompson, Rio+20 Executive Coordinator, underscored the role of scientists at Rio+20.



Gretchen Kalonji, UNESCO, noted the need for increased capacity building in the science, technology and innovation sectors worldwide.

More information:

<http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net/>

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International Institute for Sustainable Development Reporting Services (IISD RS) Knowledge Management Resources

IISD RS, publisher of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, also maintains online knowledgebases that are updated daily with information regarding meetings, publications and other activities related to international sustainable development policy and its implementation.

Each knowledgebase project consists of several integrated resources, to help the sustainable development policy and practice communities assess trends and activities at the international level. These resources are:

- Daily news reports researched and written by our own experts and organized in a **freely accessible, searchable on-line knowledgebase**;
- A **comprehensive calendar of upcoming events** related to international sustainable development policy, which can be downloaded to your own online calendar;
- And a **community listserve**, which exclusively delivers email updates of the most recent additions to our knowledgebases, as well as announcements by listserve members regarding their organizations' sustainable development activities.

Each knowledgebase focuses on a specific environmental challenge or region, as noted below:



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<http://africasd.iisd.org/>