The first meeting of the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) took place on Monday morning, 27 January 2003, at UN Headquarters in New York. The purpose of the meeting, chaired by Joanne DiSano, Director of the Division for Sustainable Development, was to elect the new CSD Bureau.

South African Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa, was elected CSD-11 Chair by acclamation. The representative of South Africa delivered a statement prepared by Minister Moosa. His statement focused on the challenges before the CSD in ensuring that is the high-level body in the UN system for promoting the three pillars of sustainable development. He said that the CSD should identify constraints to implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and make practical suggestions for overcoming these. Using the more than 30 targets and goals in the Plan of Implementation as its guide, the CSD should translate the WSSD outcomes into practice. He called for active participation of ministers, technical experts and stakeholders. He said that he will work with the Bureau and the Secretariat to set the agenda for the session and said that they may need to hold informal consultations prior to the CSD session in April. He closed by urging all ministers who have suggestions to contact him directly.

The following Vice Chairs were then elected by acclamation:
Mr. Hossein Moeini Meybodi (Iran)
Ms. Irena Zubčević (Croatia)
Amb. Bruno Stagno (Costa Rica)

The Commission then adjourned for nearly two hours to allow the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) to consult on their nomination to the Bureau.

When the Commission resumed at 12:30 pm, Switzerland, on behalf of WEOG, announced the nomination of Ms. Nadine Gouzée (Belgium), who was then elected by acclamation.

Joanne DiSano congratulated the new Bureau members and commented on the challenging task before the CSD. Although the main decisions of CSD-11 will be on the programme of work, it will have political importance in maintaining momentum and laying the groundwork for the future work on sustainable development. The Secretariat will work with the Bureau to set the programme and activities of CSD-11, including proposals for discussions during the high-level segment, engagement of international
organizations and UN agencies, contribution of major groups, follow-up on partnerships, and the future programme of work. The Secretary-General’s report will be available in mid-February. The Secretariat has received a lot of input on the future work of the CSD and both the number and quality of inputs is a hopeful sign.

Greece, on behalf of the EU, the acceding countries Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, and the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, recalled some concrete ideas that the EU has made on the future work of the CSD. These include: (1) active and more meaningful involvement of stakeholders; (2) the importance of the principles of flexibility and predictability in the drafting of the programme; (3) the non-negotiating sessions should be used in order to sharpen the political focus on specific issues and fill gaps in implementation. The negotiating ones, organized at the ministerial level, should be steered to short action-oriented decisions; and (4) partnerships should be encouraged and flexible, credible and publicly accessible reporting mechanisms should be established.

Morocco, on behalf of the G-77, noted that the challenge is the effective implementation of commitments of the WSSD and the other world conferences since Rio. He underlined the urgency of carrying on with Agenda 21 and the issues that have emerged since then. He called for adapting the CSD work plan to ensure action-oriented decisions. He said that there needs to be informal consultations before the CSD session to discuss proposals for the new programme of work.

The United States said that in order to ensure its continued relevance, the CSD can and must do more to facilitate implementation of sustainable development objectives. During the next 14 weeks, we must explore how the CSD can evolve into a truly innovative forum and attract more participation from a broader cross-section of government agencies as well as stronger participation from non-governmental actors. There is considerable agreement on the need for the CSD to focus on implementation. The US has prepared a paper outlining its initial thoughts on the future of the CSD. The US also called for convening two informal brainstorming meetings as soon as possible.

Indonesia called on the Secretariat and Bureau to inform delegates when and how informal consultations will be conducted as soon as possible.

DiSano said that the Secretariat would brief everyone once the Bureau has met. She adjourned the meeting at 1:00 pm.

Following the meeting, Ralph Chipman, Division of Sustainable Development, briefed delegates on the work in follow-up to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation on sustainable consumption and production patterns. Paragraph 15 in Chapter 3 calls for a ten-year “framework of programmes” at the national and regional level on sustainable consumption and production. The Secretariat has held consultations with various agencies and potential funders over the past few months.
There is now funding for an international expert meeting, which will take place in Marrakesh, Morocco from 31 March – 3 April 2003. Denmark, Sweden and Finland have provided funding to support developing country participation. The expert group meeting is open to all countries and UN agencies and selected other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. A report of this expert group meeting will be submitted to CSD-11. It is hoped that this will be the first in a series of expert and regional meetings. For more information, contact Ralph Chipman <chipman@un.org>.