

CSD-13 Briefing

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The Chair of the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), gave a briefing on preparations for CSD-13 and its intergovernmental preparatory meeting at UN headquarters on Tuesday afternoon, 5 October 2004, at 1:15 pm.

Opening the meeting, Chair Ashe briefly informed delegates about the discussion held at the first meeting of the CSD-13 Bureau on 30 September 2004. He drew attention to the unfortunate scheduling conflict of the UN-Habitat Governing Council (11-15 April 2005) and CSD-13 (11-22 April 2005) meetings, stressing the fact that arrangements have been made for the Governing Council to report on the outcomes of its meeting as an input to discussions at CSD-13 and that the High-level Segment of CSD-13 is to take place from 20-22 April 2005. Further, he mentioned that the organization of work for the intergovernmental preparatory meeting would be further considered at the next Bureau meeting, and added that concerning the organization of work for the CSD-13, the Bureau had agreed that CSD-13 should focus on deliverables and on the mobilization of concrete and tangible actions to advance implementation. On the topic of documentation, he noted that the Secretary-General's reports are scheduled to be posted on the CSD-13 website, <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd13/csd13.htm>, before the end of December 2004. With regard to future Bureau meetings, he said that four additional meetings are to be held prior to the intergovernmental preparatory meeting, which starts on 28 February 2005.

Joanne DiSano, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, stressed that the UN-Habitat meeting's overlap with the first week of CSD-13 was deeply regrettable and that the CSD Secretariat will take the appropriate steps to assure that such thing does not happen again. After having discussed different options, however, she said that the Bureau decided to maintain the present dates of CSD-13 (11-22 April 2005).

In connection with the thirteenth session of CSD, the Chair emphasized that since this is a policy year, CSD-13 should not try to redefine challenges and constraints, but rather focus on mapping out action-oriented measures to expedite implementation. He outlined some preliminary ideas and new features that the Bureau has discussed, including how to engage the participation of Ministers of Finance in the policy discussions at CSD-13. Noting that CSD-13 will focus on policy implementation at all levels, he stated that it is imperative to bring Ministers of Finance on board, in order for them to understand the implications of the policies, and to reach a more integrated approach. The Chair expressed his hope that such participation would be attained at CSD-13. Further, he mentioned that the Bureau seeks to involve a broad range of civil society actors, as well as foundations and the private sector in the CSD-13 session.

Delegates were then given the opportunity to ask questions, to which Chair Ashe and DiSano replied. Regarding a question about the final documentation and outcomes of CSD-13, the Chair reiterated that, as the discussion on the final shape of CSD-13 is still ongoing, not the least awaiting inputs from the Secretary-General's reports and a set of practical policy actions that will

be formulated at the intergovernmental preparatory meeting, it is premature to speculate on the outcomes at this point.

With regard to bringing more clarity to the organization of work of the intergovernmental preparatory meeting, the Chair recalled that the objective of the preparatory meeting is to provide guidance on discussing policy options and on identifying a concrete set of actions to address the constraints in the process of implementation, which subsequently will be discussed and collectively agreed to at CSD-13.

On the subject of whether the regional meetings are expected be *ad hoc* meetings or organized especially for CSD-13, DiSano explained that governments have been invited to consider hosting intersessional meetings, and underlined that the CSD cannot, as of yet, provide funding for regional meetings. Starting at CSD-14, however, she noted that regional preparatory meetings will be supported financially. To shed light on regional meetings that are of relevance to CSD-13, she asserted that the CSD Secretariat will initiate a running count of pertinent meetings and forward this information to the Bureau, as well as post it on the CSD-13 website. She also drew attention to the fact that the Secretariat may be able to facilitate the attendance of Bureau members at the regional meetings. Noting that the regional meetings have become a vital part of the CSD, DiSano further stressed the importance of the inputs originating from the regional deliberations to the policy discussions at CSD-13.

Before concluding, Chair Ashe thanked everyone for their input, and he closed the briefing at 1:45 pm.