CSD-13 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 12 APRIL 2005

Delegates met in two parallel sessions to engage in interactive discussions on water, sanitation, and human settlements. One group dealt with water and sanitation issues, including Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), access to basic water services, access to basic sanitation and hygiene, and wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse. The other group considered human settlements, focusing on access to housing and public services, job creation and enterprise promotion. The discussions on each topic were led by a panel of representatives from UN agencies and other organizations.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

ACCESS TO HOUSING AND PUBLIC SERVICES: This session, which took place on Tuesday morning, was chaired by CSD-13 Vice-Chair Husniyya Mammadova (Azerbaijan), who asked participants to focus on practical measures requiring concerted global and national action.

Presentations: Dinesh Mehta, UN-HABITAT, highlighted the urban poor’s lack of access to domestic capital markets. He explained that experiences with UN-HABITAT’s Slum Upgrading Facility suggest that modest amounts of international financing can leverage much larger amounts of domestic capital. He also identified issues related to building technologies, public finance, land tenure, decentralization and strengthening local authorities.

Nefise Bazoglu, UN-HABITAT, explained that the international target of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers was established when there were no accurate assessments of slum dwellers’ population and trends, adding that their numbers were now estimated at one billion. She concluded that slums can be transformed into improved human settlements.

Discussion: In the ensuing discussion, participants raised a variety of issues, including the benefits of a rights-based approach and the importance of adequate, appropriate and innovative financing. A number of speakers also questioned whether the target of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers was adequate, highlighted the need for better disaster preparedness and planning, and stressed the need for an integrated and participatory approach. The importance of UN-HABITAT’s work was strongly emphasized.

On financing, several developing country speakers urged attention to research into companies’ employment practices and the need for stronger multi-stakeholder initiatives. TRADE UNIONS drew attention to the need for improved working conditions and the development of an entrepreneurial culture.

Discussion: In the ensuing discussion, the EU elaborated on policy options for financing, and CHILDREN AND YOUTH highlighted the vulnerability of youth to slum problems.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES stressed the need for capacity building, and WOMEN recommended a gender rights approach to job creation. UN-HABITAT underscored the importance of preventing future slums from forming.

IRAN raised issues relating to refugees, as well as job creation for slum dwellers and those affected by natural disasters. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY identified “gaps” in the Chair’s text relating to governance, enabling frameworks for sustainable job and enterprise creation, capacity building, technologies and innovation. The US highlighted the needs of young people and women, citing examples of successful and replicable multi-stakeholder initiatives. TRADE UNIONS drew attention to research into companies’ employment practices.
WATER AND SANITATION
INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCESS TO BASIC WATER SERVICES: On Tuesday morning, participants discussed water issues, focusing on IWRM and access to basic water services. The session was chaired by CSD-13 Vice-Chair Dagmara Berbalk (Germany).

Presentations on IWRM: Roberto Lenton, Global Water Partnership, reflected on IWRM’s importance in attaining the MDGs. He noted the catalyzing role of the 2005 target for IWRM plans, as well as declining resources allocated to water issues. Joachim Harlin, UNDP, emphasized the need to improve the knowledge base, empower local actors, create incentives to support decentralization, and link IWRM and infrastructure development. He suggested developing a practitioners’ guide to operationalize agreed policy options.

Presentations on Access to Basic Water Services: Jamal Saghir, World Bank, focused on sanitation issues, including charges for water services and subsidizing the poor. He also noted the challenge of decentralization and governance, and emphasized the increasing role of the local private sector.

Ravi Narayanan, WaterAid, stressed the importance of more and better water and sanitation financing, effective governance, community participation, accountability, and authentic and accessible information in attaining the MDGs.

Discussion: On IWRM, the INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT called for a greater rural focus. UNEP identified economic development, social equity, and environmental sustainability as central to IWRM. The G-77/CHINA underscored the need to apply IWRM in a country-specific manner, a view supported by NORWAY, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and others. The EU suggested linking IWRM with broader development plans, decentralizing to the lowest appropriate level and coordinating monitoring of the MDGs and IWRM implementation. SWITZERLAND suggested involving representatives of related international environmental agreements (MEAs), while AUSTRALIA voiced reservations about extending MEAs’ mandates. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY supported IWRM as a framework to reduce water supply risks.

On access to basic water services, IRAN, BANGLADESH, SOUTH AFRICA, and TRADE UNIONS endorsed a rights-based approach, while several others supported a market-based approach.

Many speakers reported on national implementation activities, and a considerable number welcomed the ecosystem approach. CANADA emphasized science and information sharing. SWITZERLAND encouraged debt-for-nature swaps. NGOs suggested that CSD-13 produce a country-specific table of commitments. The US underscored the importance of partnerships. INDIGENOUS PEOPLE called for integrating indigenous knowledge. The PHILIPPINES encouraged South-South and “triangular” cooperation, while FRANCE noted the need for affordable wastewater treatment, and the problems associated with HIV/AIDS. The US called for a web-based mechanism to support exchange of experiences, noting that means of implementation issues should not be reopened. TRADE UNIONS proposed scaling-up sanitation as a public good and a right of citizens. COLOMBIA supported public-private partnerships, MEXICO supported awareness raising programmes in schools, and IRAN highlighted wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse in arid and semi-arid areas.

Summarizing the discussion, Veerle Vanderwende noted the positive exchange of ideas and said the challenge now was to select a few key issues and practical mechanisms that could be decided on by CSD-13. Jamie Bartram highlighted comments on technology innovation, information sharing, UN-Water’s role, and links to health issues.

IN THE CORRIDORS
As CSD-13’s first full day of interactive discussions on water, sanitation and human settlements drew to a close late Tuesday afternoon, some participants who had complained in the morning about the quality of interactions seemed to have had a change of heart. Earlier in the day, there were suggestions that too much time was being spent on domestic measures and that too much time was being spent on domestic measures that were hard to translate into practical policies. However, as the day progressed, the sentiment changed, with several delegates pointing to more focused and relevant interventions. A number of participants expressed the need for a greater sense of the overall nature of the discussions and the steps taken to integrate Major Groups. A few observers were also heard praising the G-77/ China for its efforts to develop a conference room paper on an implementation review procedure for the CSD and matrices for CSD-13 outcomes.