

UNCS D INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: MONDAY, 19 MARCH 2012

Delegates continued to negotiate the draft outcome document for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCS D, or Rio+20) on the first day of the 19-23 March 2012 “informal informal” consultations. Following opening statements by UNCS D PrepCom Co-Chair Kim Sook and UNCS D Secretary-General Sha Zukang, delegations discussed the first four paragraphs of the zero draft during the morning. During the afternoon and evening, delegates began a first reading of Section III of the zero draft, on Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication.

OPENING STATEMENTS

PrepCom Co-Chair Kim Sook opened the informal-informal consultations, and asked delegates to be flexible and remain focused. He told them to expect evening and weekend sessions in between the informal informal consultations and the Third Intersessional Meeting.

Sha Zukang, Secretary-General of Rio+20, emphasized that UNCS D is “a conference of implementation.” On green economy, he noted convergence on: addressing the social agenda; respecting country ownership, and avoiding protectionism and aid conditionalities. He highlighted questions on: terms of technology sharing, who should bear the incremental costs of transition, and how major investments can be financed. On the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD), he noted convergence on strengthening links between science and policymaking. He noted differences regarding enhancing the role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), agreement that the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) should not continue in its current format, and differences exist about the proposals for a sustainable development council and for transforming UNEP into a specialized agency. He said there is an emerging scope of aspirational goals or targets covering a range of issues, including food security, energy, water, land degradation, a social protection floor, decent work, disaster risk reduction, oceans and sustainable urban planning.

CONSULTATIONS ON THE ZERO DRAFT

TITLE OF THE ZERO DRAFT: On the title of the zero draft document, “The Future We Want,” SWITZERLAND and NEW ZEALAND agreed with the G-77/CHINA proposal to maintain the title. JAPAN proposed “Rio Commitment towards Green Economy” as the title, saying it would be more conference-specific.

SECTION I: PREAMBLE/STAGE SETTING: The G-77/CHINA requested that language on poverty eradication be placed before references to ecosystem protection, and that language on peace and security be deleted. He requested deletion of the reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), suggesting instead text on “the right to development and the right to food.” NORWAY, supported by the EU, cautioned against singling out certain Rio Principles, such as common but differentiated principles, suggesting affirmation of all the principles once, early in the document. The EU said the UDHR is a fundamental statement that should be acknowledged early in the draft. NEW ZEALAND supported the G-77/CHINA proposal to prioritize poverty eradication language, and also supported reference to human rights.

AUSTRALIA, CANADA and SWITZERLAND urged focusing on a particular message for each preambular paragraph, and expressing it briefly and concisely. SWITZERLAND suggested focusing on main messages in plenary, and then the Co-Chairs formulating briefer compromise texts based on the agreed messages.

On paragraph 1, on preamble/stage setting, the US proposed replacing a reference to “Heads of State and Government” with a reference to “representatives of the peoples of the world,” and said “equitable” should be bracketed in reference to an equitable future. SWITZERLAND supported referring to “representatives of the peoples of the world” instead of heads of state and government, but with the addition of references to business, civil society and academia. The HOLY SEE proposed a new paragraph on promoting sustainable development based on the centrality of the human person.

On paragraph 2, on eradicating all forms of poverty, the EU emphasized the “needs” related to future generations. SWITZERLAND proposed referring to “prosperity” rather than “growth.” The US, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, the HOLY SEE and SWITZERLAND said individual Rio Principles should not be singled out. The G-77/CHINA underscored that, if the text refers to responsibilities in any way, it must refer to common but differentiated responsibilities. The HOLY SEE supported the G-77/CHINA proposal to emphasize poverty eradication as an overriding priority. CANADA questioned the reference to freeing humanity from want.

On paragraph 3, on accelerating progress in achieving internationally agreed development goals, the G-77/CHINA and the HOLY SEE supported the EU proposal to refer to “reaffirm our commitment” rather than to indicate that participants are “committed to make every effort to accelerate progress.” The G-77/CHINA, EU and others suggested deleting text proposed by the REPUBLIC OF KOREA on the global challenge requiring a global partnership.

On paragraph 4, on cooperation and addressing the ongoing challenges, in addition to a reference to “human development,” the G-77/CHINA proposed referring to “human dignity” instead of JAPAN’s proposed reference to “human security.” The EU proposed referring to “human rights and gender equality.” The G-77/CHINA said discussion of human security was unlikely to reach consensus. JAPAN referred to the General Assembly’s adoption of previous resolutions on human security and related this point to the first Rio Principle of a human-centered approach. The US proposed text affirming that environmental conservation, protection and sustainable use are a fundamental basis for poverty eradication. The EU objected to the G-77/CHINA’s proposed reference to the “particular challenges” for developing countries, saying the challenges are for all countries. The HOLY SEE supported the focus on developing countries. Regarding MEXICO’s proposal for specific text on the unsustainability of carbon-intensive economic development, the EU suggested moving this later in the document. MEXICO asserted the preamble should signal what would be addressed later. The US proposed alternative text to “take into account the value of natural resources, particularly non-renewable resources.”

III. GREEN ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION:

Algeria noted that Ethiopia and Singapore would also be speaking for the G-77/CHINA on this section.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed the importance of having the green economy defined by each country based on, *inter alia*, data, objectives and national experiences. The US highlighted the need to ensure that the text is appropriate for a high-level audience, is clear and is non-repetitive.

The EU, supported by NEW ZEALAND, said Section III needs a more positive lead-in that does not just focus on tools. CANADA supported text calling for green economy policies to be developed in accordance with the Rio Principles. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA highlighted the importance of the green economy for achieving sustainable development, and the importance of green growth strategies to make sustainable development socially equitable and to provide opportunities such as creating new markets and jobs.

In response to proposed paragraphs by the G-77/CHINA on the failings of market-based growth strategies and the international financial system, and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in developed countries, JAPAN, supported by SWITZERLAND, expressed concern at the negative tone. He preferred deleting references to “common but differentiated responsibilities,” citing concerns about singling out specific Rio Principles. The G-77/CHINA said the context of a green economy transition should be indicated, and agreed to review the paragraphs. The EU supported the G-77/CHINA’s framing of the green economy as a tool for sustainable development, and cautioned against juxtaposing reference to “green growth” with the green economy, in order to avoid “a circular definition.” The US proposed substituting a shorter section title, “Overview of the Green Economy,” using the term “inclusive” rather than “equitable,” and deleting references to sustainable production and consumption, climate change, and other planetary boundaries, because not all issues can be listed.

On paragraph 25, on the contribution of the green economy to meeting key goals, NORWAY proposed replacing “management of oceans” with “sustainable management of oceans” and highlighted the importance of the role of women. ISRAEL highlighted the importance of nutrition and sustainable agriculture. The HOLY SEE supported, *inter alia*, Turkey’s proposal on environmental protection and Mexico’s proposal on decent jobs. The US requested removal of proposed text covering a wide range of interests and concerns, calling instead for a shorter and simpler approach reiterating the key message that a green economy offers “win-win” opportunities to all countries.

During the evening, the G-77/CHINA offered a new section to paragraph 25 on reflecting the different realities of countries and their sovereign right to exploit their own resources according to their own priorities, while underscoring their responsibility for not causing damage to the environment of other states or areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

LICHTENSTEIN proposed new text highlighting scientific research and design, innovation, and entrepreneurship in a green economy. CANADA supported the US suggestion to “enhance our ability to manage natural resources transparently and sustainably.” She also requested removing references to “planetary boundaries.” AUSTRALIA affirmed the need to go beyond disaster preparedness to address the range of causal factors through disaster risk reduction especially in relation to climate vulnerability, and was supported by JAPAN. ICELAND proposed including reference to the role of sustainable land management in improving food production and mitigation of climate change. He also proposed including access to reproductive health in this section. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA supported JAPAN’s mention of “low-carbon development,” and also proposed adding references to human security and social equity, to ensure a balanced approach.

The G-77/CHINA defended proposed language related to support from developed countries to developing countries in terms of technology transfer, capacity building and financial resources.

On paragraph 27, on green economy as a decision-making framework, the EU suggested combining its proposal regarding an enabling environment for green economy with a G-77/CHINA proposal and Norway’s proposals regarding product standards, market-based mechanisms and fiscal and credit incentives. The G-77/CHINA and NEW ZEALAND questioned the need for the number of parameters included in the EU proposal. NEW ZEALAND inquired about the possible costs of Norway’s proposals.

SWITZERLAND and the US proposed deleting a proposal by Bangladesh that the green economy should not create negative externalities impacting other countries. The US stressed the importance of seeing the green economy not as a rigid set of rules. SWITZERLAND supported the EU proposal to replace reference to “pillars” with “dimensions” of sustainable development. The EU emphasized the importance of establishing an enabling regulatory framework, creating strong incentives for green markets, and the proper recognition of the social and economic values of natural capital.

On paragraph 28, on country responsibility for adopting green economy policies, JAPAN suggested replacing “will make appropriate choices” with “should choose an appropriate path to green economy.” The EU, CANADA and NEW ZEALAND supported Japan’s proposed language on a “common undertaking of all countries.” The G-77/CHINA stressed that the green economy must build on the MDGs. CANADA suggested alternative language encouraging the private sector to make sustainable choices more easily available, affordable and attractive to consumers by encouraging efforts to develop, together with other stakeholders, sustainable product standards in accordance with best available technology.

The US supported a proposal by Japan on the transition to a green economy as a driver for growth and that should be a common undertaking for all countries. JAPAN agreed with a proposed addition from Norway on integration of social and environmental costs in how the world prices and measures economic activities. He requested clarification on a proposal by Norway to refer to innovative market-based mechanisms.

On paragraph 29, on green economy policies and measures that can offer win-win opportunities to improve the integration of economic development with environmental sustainability to all countries, the G-77/CHINA said bringing the green economy to developing countries requires an enabling environment and that

it had proposed text with this in mind. In related text, CANADA suggested changing the reference to the “critical” role of the State to a “leading” role.

SWITZERLAND supported a separate paragraph proposed by the G-77/CHINA on enabling environment at all levels for managing green economy policies and suggested merging it with the core text of paragraph 29. The HOLY SEE proposed replacing a reference to green economy policies and measures with a reference to green economy policies and measures governed and structured within a human-centered ethic.

On paragraph 30, on developing countries facing great challenges in eradicating poverty and sustaining growth, the G-77/CHINA proposed additional text on, *inter alia*: adequate financial support, capacity building and transfer of technology; respect for the existence of different approaches, visions, models, policies, tools and sovereignty decided by each country; and on a better understanding of the social, environmental and economic implications and impacts of green economy.

The EU suggested deleting text proposed by the G-77/CHINA on adoption of green economy policies that can result in risks, challenges and additional costs to the economies of developing countries. He supported a proposal by the REPUBLIC OF KOREA to support the costs from structural adjustments for the transition to a green economy, but said the text would need to be refocused. He questioned a reference from Serbia to special challenges faced by middle income countries and need to extend international assistance and support.

In the G-77/CHINA text on the green economy, the EU supported its references to traditional knowledge, and the importance of advancing the role of women, children and youth. Supported by CANADA, he objected to text that the green economy should not represent “a pretext for developed countries to renege on past commitments.”

The HOLY SEE highlighted that some green economy programs, such as ethanol production, could create food insecurities, and should be mentioned in that context. CANADA suggested replacing text recommending that developed countries “should help developing countries build capacities for technology assessment” with a call for developed and developing countries “to work to build capacities for technology assessment.”

On paragraph 30, on acknowledging challenges to eradicating poverty and sustaining growth, the US offered alternative text on structural adjustments. SWITZERLAND supported the EU proposal to refer to “many” countries facing challenges, instead of the G-77/China-proposed reference to “developing” countries, and asked the US to clarify its proposed language on the role of natural capital.

On text regarding possible risks, challenges and additional costs of the green economy, the US, SWITZERLAND, EU and JAPAN proposed deletion. The US, SWITZERLAND and JAPAN supported deleting text on international actions on environment and development addressing the interests and needs of all developing countries. The US and SWITZERLAND recommended deleting text on middle-income countries.

In text on corporate social responsibility (CSR), the US suggested recognizing the role of the private sector “through” CSR than “in” it, and proposed deleting references to technology diffusion and transfer. SWITZERLAND proposed deleting the entire text. The G-77/CHINA suggested strengthening it rather than deleting it.

NEW ZEALAND proposed deleting text suggested by the G-77/China on international action in the field of environment and development that should address the interests and needs of all developing countries, as well as text proposed by Serbia on the need for extended international assistance and support to middle-income countries.

On paragraph 32, on countries in early stages of building green economies, the G-77/CHINA proposed text on the need to consider environmental, social and economic benefits of, *inter*

alia, indigenous peoples and small-scale farmers of developing countries in green economy policies. The US supported a G-77/China proposal on experience sharing to promote sustainable development and poverty eradication.

On paragraph 33, on the creation of an international knowledge-sharing platform, the EU highlighted the importance of a capacity development scheme to facilitate the transition to a green economy. The US requested replacing reference to a single platform with reference to multiple platforms. She opposed reference to green economy targets and measures, as proposed by the EU.

On text supporting creation of a new knowledge platform on the green economy, CANADA expressed concern over duplication, the US suggested the UN support existing platforms, and AUSTRALIA asked what role a new platform would play. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted prior support of countries for such a platform, and suggested working with others to develop appropriate text.

In relation to the value of differentiated strategies for green economy, CANADA requested deletion of a reference to common but differentiated responsibilities.

The EU objected to the G77’s text on “the rational use of nature,” saying this is not usual terminology.

On text calling for the establishment of a global green economy roadmap, in the section on a framework for action, NEW ZEALAND asked the EU who would establish the roadmap and whether it is part of the toolkit. CANADA said this text was too prescriptive and said she could not support it. The G-77/CHINA said the framework for action should be in Section V of the zero draft, on Framework for Action and Follow-up. NORWAY said the UNCSD is on the green economy and the framework for action should remain in this section. The EU, REPUBLIC OF KOREA and JAPAN also preferred to keep the framework for action in this section. In paragraph 39, on support to developing countries, the EU and US did not support the list of categories of countries.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates at the March UNCSD meetings at UN Headquarters in New York were informed that the latest version of the zero draft, with the compilation of all submitted amendments, was approximately ten times as long as the 17-page zero draft that they had received on 10 January. Cognizant of the number of negotiating days left before Rio and the challenge they faced in narrowing down these proposals, delegates wasted no time diving into negotiation mode, with night sessions anticipated all week along with a weekend session. A number of discussions in the corridors recalled how other UN negotiating bodies have reached agreement in the face of similar challenges, leading one participant to comment, “At this rate, we are going to need a savior to come in with a compromise, because it will be impossible to reach consensus in this way.” Leadership roles that have or have not been played to date by various organizations and delegations also were discussed, with some wondering what might have been, while others held out hope for a newer generation that might be able to strike an agreement on a new approach to sustainable development. Delegations were pleased to have focused on the substance of one of the UNCSD’s themes, although one delegate expressed concern that spending too much time and energy on trying to define a green economy would distract from the “more important issues,” such as assessing progress since the first Rio Conference in 1992 and identifying what more should be done.



Sustainable Development Policy & Practice

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A knowledge management project carried out by the International Institute for Sustainable Development Reporting Services (IISD RS) in collaboration with the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)

This knowledgebase tracks international activities preparing for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20).

It features:

- News on UN and intergovernmental activities (publications, meetings, statements, projects) related to the UNCSD. The posts are researched and produced by IISD's team of thematic experts, resulting in all original content, and they are searchable by several categories.
- A clickable world map, enabling searches of the latest sustainable development news by region.
- A calendar of upcoming UNCSD-related events, along with an automatically updating iCal application, through which the event data can be downloaded to your own calendar.

New posts to the knowledgebase are circulated via the *UNCSD Update*, which is distributed exclusively through the UNCSD-L listserve. UNCSD-L is a companion project managed by IISD RS. This community listserve offers participants an opportunity to post announcements regarding publications and meetings.

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