

UNCSD INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: THURSDAY, 26 APRIL 2012

On Thursday, 26 April, delegates continued informal negotiations on the draft outcome document for the UNCSD. WG1 completed its first reading on the thematic areas under Section V (Framework for Action) in morning and afternoon sessions. In the evening, WG1 discussed sustainable development goals (SDGs). WG2 continued discussions on Section IV (IFSD). A number of side events were also convened.

WORKING GROUP 1

SECTION V: FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP: A. Priority/key/thematic/cross-sectoral issues and areas: Biodiversity: The EU and the US supported changing the subsection title to “Biodiversity and ecosystem services.” The G-77/CHINA asked to delete all references to ecosystem services and valuations in the forests and biodiversity subsections.

On the value of biological diversity (CST pre 91), the US wished to retain language on ecosystem services.

On access and benefit sharing (CST 91 bis), the US proposed amendments to make this a stand alone paragraph on the Nagoya Protocol. On biodiversity conservation (CST 91 ter), NORWAY added reference to “disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change.”

On the origins of genetic resources (91 quint), the US and NEW ZEALAND called for the paragraph’s deletion. On the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (CST 91 undec), the US reserved and NORWAY and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA supported the EU and Swiss proposal to “welcome the establishment of” rather than “take note of” the Platform.

Land and Desertification: AUSTRALIA presented two new paragraphs on sustainable development challenges of land degradation, desertification and drought. The EU, with ICELAND, sought to insert “and soil” after all references to land throughout this subsection. The G-77/CHINA opposed this.

On a coordinated global approach (CST 92), the EU, supported by the G-77/CHINA, added text on effective implementation of the UN Conference to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). MYANMAR added text on soil contamination

and on fallow land management. The G-77/CHINA sought to replace reference to the “zero net land degradation” goal with text on committing to a “land degradation neutral world.” SWITZERLAND sought to add “other forms of land degradation” to text on setting intermediate operational goals.

On monitoring and assessment (CST 92 ter), JAPAN, with the US, the EU and NORWAY, asked to delete a call for discussing a possible intergovernmental science panel for the UNCCD.

On partnerships and initiatives (CST 93), the EU added specific reference to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and IPBES to a passage on strengthening the link with existing science-policy interface bodies. The US, supported by the G-77/CHINA and SWITZERLAND, but opposed by ICELAND and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, sought to delete references to specific initiatives on soil and land degradation.

Mountains: On the vulnerability of mountains (CST 94), the G-77/CHINA, *inter alia*, added reference to mountain regions. On sustainable management of mountain ecosystems (CST 94 bis), the EU added language on sharing experiences from existing mountain regional agreements with other mountain regions. AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND reserved on reference to compensation for communities in mountain areas.

On the conservation of mountain ecosystems (CST 94 quat), the US amended language to include stakeholders beyond States. The G-77/CHINA reserved on reference to cooperation and collaborative partnerships.

Chemicals and waste: On chemicals and waste management (CST 95), the REPUBLIC OF KOREA said that funding was an “important” not “key” element to assist developing countries. The EU proposed “predictable” as opposed to “adequate” long-term funding. JAPAN, with NEW ZEALAND, proposed moving reference to long-term funding to the section on MOI.

On public-private partnerships (CST 96 bis), SWITZERLAND added text to “commend existing and call for continued and new” public-private partnerships. The US proposed deleting the paragraph on illegal dumping in developing countries (CST 96 quat).

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On a multilateral instrument on mercury (CST 96 quint), the G-77/CHINA requested, and JAPAN and CANADA opposed, deleting reference to “legally binding.” SWITZERLAND added language on concluding work by 2013.

MEXICO reserved its position on the chemicals and waste subsection, expressing concern that proposals from the floor have moved the importance away from mobilization of resources.

Sustainable Consumption and Production: On integrating social and environmental costs (CST 97), the EU, with NORWAY, said such costs should be integrated into the valuation of ecosystem services. The G-77/CHINA sought to delete the paragraph.

On social and environmental responsibility (CST 97 ter), CANADA, with the US, sought deletion of a reference singling out ISO 26000. The EU, with NORWAY, added text on transparency and reporting.

On adopting the 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) (CST 97 quint), the EU suggested changing “based on” the CSD 19 text to “as elaborated in.” The G-77/CHINA sought amendment to adopt the 10YFP without referencing the CSD 19 text. The US proposed text pledging to begin implementation of the 10YFP.

Mining: On mining (CST 97 sext), AUSTRALIA, supported by CANADA and the US, called for deleting reference to large-scale commercial mining. The US, supported by the EU and NORWAY, added text on revenue and contract transparency and new mechanisms on conflict minerals. The G-77/CHINA said the paragraph was “unbalanced” and asked for it to be reworked to reflect benefits for upstream and downstream activities.

Education: On quality education (CST pre 98), the EU added reference to “the right of everyone to education.” The HOLY SEE added reference to the right to decent work, and removed references to gender equality, family planning, and sexual and reproductive health.

On investing in education (CST 98), SWITZERLAND added reference to “the need to strengthen human rights education and learning.”

On promoting universal access to primary education (CST 100), AUSTRALIA added text on strengthening partnerships with the private sector. The US with CANADA amended “commit to” to “emphasize the importance of.”

On promoting education for sustainable development (CST 100 bis), SWITZERLAND added reference to working with “the private sector, civil society and relevant international development partners.”

Gender Equality: NORWAY asked to change references to “empowerment of women” to “women’s empowerment.” On the role of women in sustainable development (CST 102), NORWAY, supported by the G-77/CHINA, the EU, the US and LIECHTENSTEIN, added text on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

On gender equality (CST 102 bis), NORWAY, with LIECHTENSTEIN, NEW ZEALAND and the EU, added text on putting women on equal footing with men on sustainable

development decision-making roles. ICELAND added text committing to increase the number of women in leadership positions to at least 40%.

On an enabling environment for improving the situation of rural women and girls (CST 103 pre bis), LIECHTENSTEIN added text on ensuring access to justice and legal support.

On monitoring frameworks (CST 103 bis), NORWAY, with the EU, changed “recognize” to “commit” to use gender-sensitive indicators. On access to and control over productive resources (CST 103 ter), NORWAY added text on equal right to inherit.

B. Accelerating and Measuring Progress: On changing the subsection title to SDGs, the EU proposed retaining the original title or moving CST 111 on measuring progress to Section V-A. CANADA supported the title SDGs.

The G-77/CHINA stated that its approach on the SDGs “must be guided by certain principles, be inclusive, intergovernmental, and must be towards launching a process that leads to a more concrete result.” COLOMBIA highlighted that “everyone in the room shares” the importance of the MDGs, and that the trust and shared concern for them “can help us learn to work together.”

On the MDGs (CST 105), the G-77/CHINA amended text to reflect that the MDG’s objectives have not been sufficiently fulfilled.

On principles for SDGs to respect (CST 105 ter), LIECHTENSTEIN added text on international law, including human rights law, democracy, good governance, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the rule of law. The US highlighted the need to define a universal sustainable development agenda.

On overarching objectives and the relationship between the MDGs and SDGs (CST 105 quat), JAPAN added text reflecting that SDGs play “a critical factor in the formation of a post-2015 development agenda.” NEW ZEALAND supported the EU amendment about a post-MDG framework.

On cross-cutting issues (CST 105 sext), NORWAY made the text more specific by adding reference to, *inter alia*, poverty eradication.

On developing the SDGs through an international process (CST 106), the G-77/CHINA stressed the need for it to remain intergovernmental and under the UNGA. CANADA proposed merging this text with text on elaborating the SDGs by 2015 (CST 106 bis) and the EU proposed new language to this effect.

On priority areas for SDGs (CST 107), NORWAY proposed identifying the Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for All initiative. AUSTRALIA supported exploring a short indicative list of areas the SDGs should address.

On developing methods of accounting for natural capital and social wellbeing (CST 111), the EU proposed moving this paragraph to the end of Section V-A, with some amendments on the development of indicators. The US suggested alternative text recognizing the need for development methods and indicators to measure sustainability and social wellbeing. SWITZERLAND proposed “a set of harmonized, generally applicable and easy

indicators.” The G-77/CHINA called for its deletion. NORWAY supported a process on sustainability accounting, and reserved opinion on who should do it.

MEXICO said a meaningful Rio+20 outcome on SDGs depended on four critical elements: principles guiding their elaboration; process; thematic areas; and reporting system. He endorsed the G-77/CHINA proposal on principles from the compilation text. On process, he proposed: establishing a group of experts, supported by the UN Secretary-General, and integrated by governments, relevant stakeholders and specialized agencies; creating a Sustainable Development Outlook for assessment that reports to ECOSOC; and mandating the UN Statistical Commission to identify appropriate indicators.

WORKING GROUP 2

SECTION IV: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A. Strengthening/reforming/integrating the three pillars: On a systematic approach to interlinked issues and full and effective participation (CST 44b), the G-77/CHINA called for an “increased voice of all developing countries in the UN system” and reference to “financial mechanisms” of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). The US, the EU, JAPAN, CANADA and NEW ZEALAND expressed reservations.

On providing scientific advice for policy guidance (CST 44c), the EU, supported by JAPAN and NORWAY, proposed a reference to voluntary peer review. The G-77/CHINA cited concerns, including disproportionate attention to the environmental pillar. The HOLY SEE asked to acknowledge the ethical dimension. The G-77/CHINA reserved its position on the whole paragraph and proposed to consider elements of its proposal (44e duodec) that mentions, *inter alia*, the “full and effective participation and representation of scientists from developing countries in processes related to global environment assessments.” The EU requested a paragraph on the science-policy interface, and AUSTRALIA offered text suggesting: data access; assessments; scientific panels; and information networks.

On participation and effective involvement of all relevant stakeholders (CST 44d), KAZAKHSTAN proposed considering “supporting” participation, clarifying that this support can take different forms, not necessarily financial. The EU stressed the importance of partnerships, as well as their review and follow-up.

On monitoring progress, reporting and follow-up on the implementation of Agenda 21 and other relevant outcomes and agreements (CST 44e), the G-77/CHINA proposed amendments to reflect, *inter alia*, the need to monitor and review progress related to the implementation of sustainable development commitments, including provision of financial resources and transfer of technology by developed countries. The EU and CANADA said they could not support that proposal.

On acknowledging the vital importance of an inclusive, transparent, reformed and effective multilateral system (CST pre 45), the G-77-CHINA requested inserting “in accordance with

Rio Principles” after language on better addressing the urgent global challenges of sustainable development. SWITZERLAND supported this insertion, while the US and the EU opposed.

On reforming and strengthening the IFSD (CST pre 45 ter), the G-77/CHINA said it could not support reference to “legal” and “budgetary” implications.

On reaffirming the role of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) (CST 45) the G-77/CHINA requested stronger language calling on it to “adequately address” sustainable development.

On reviewing the state of the planet (CST 52), SWITZERLAND, supported by the EU and the US, requested deleting reference to “continuation” of a regular global sustainable development assessment, saying no such process is in place. The G-77/CHINA reserved, and noted a need to highlight initiatives addressing all pillars of sustainable development. Co-Chair Ashe drew attention to assessments of the World Bank, IMF and UN-DESA, commenting that the three pillars are covered though not all in one place. Discussions on IFSD continued into the evening.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Highly anticipated by some, discussions on SDGs finally began in WG1’s evening session. Many delegates remain optimistic that SDGs offer hope for a positive outcome in Rio – a point not lost on civil society representatives as they converged in a packed room mid-week for a discussion attended by both delegates and Major Groups. Talk of “Rio+20+1” – a one-year post-Rio, science-based process for development of specific goals – raised both interest and fears.

Some developing country participants have expressed concern that SDGs would be “all about the environment,” instead of what they believe should be the main focus – poverty alleviation. Not so, say others. “You don’t do poverty alleviation in the abstract, but through water, food and other sectors,” said one of the main proponents of the SDG proposal. Meanwhile, the lobbying efforts towards specific goals are now “officially in full swing,” in the words of one, with side events – some hosted by official delegations – putting forward water, oceans and soil health among the areas to be considered. Nevertheless, even the most enthusiastic supporters of goals concede that the era of win-win is over. “We are now facing a world of trade-offs, and there will be some hard decisions ahead,” expressed one delegate.

Meanwhile, discussions on IFSD continued inching forward, with groups of countries still not ready to engage in the working group on IFSD reform options. Informal consultations among some parties have been taking place in attempts to try and advance progress on the issue. “We hope that by early next week, we will be able to come back to the working group with a more solidified position on this issue,” said one optimistic negotiator. “Whether it is called a commission, a council or a forum is not the important point; we are looking at ways to build a functional common space for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development and promoting an integrated development agenda.”



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