

2013 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL INTEGRATION MEETING: MONDAY, 13 MAY 2013

The 2013 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Integration Meeting convened on Monday, 13 May 2013 at UN Headquarters in New York. This one day session on “Achieving sustainable development: Integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions” brought together policy makers and key stakeholders, including Major Groups’ representatives and UN agencies, to examine how science, technology and innovation (STI) can contribute to the strengthening of the science-policy interface and the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development so as to implement triple-win solutions, with a specific focus on the themes of sustainable energy and agriculture. The outcome of the event will be a summary by the ECOSOC President, which will be presented at the 2013 session of the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, in Geneva in July 2013.

OPENING PLENARY

Amb. Nestor Osorio, ECOSOC President (Colombia), opened the meeting by emphasizing the importance of achieving sustainable development in its economic, social, and environmental dimensions. He said the meeting would serve as a platform for discussing policy implementation and sharing experiences in an open manner. Osorio stressed the relationship between STI and sustainable development, and the need to develop new ideas for integrated policy actions.

Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said sustainable development is at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. He noted ECOSOC’s role in recognizing the balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development. With regard to STI, he highlighted the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative and the Zero Hunger Challenge in Asia and the Pacific. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) had stressed the need to improve system-wide coherence, and “we need to work closely together to avoid duplication, assure synergies and increase the impact of UN efforts,” he said.

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo said that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda. He stressed the instrumental role of ECOSOC in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and in strengthening the global partnership for development. Introducing the two themes of discussion of the meeting, agriculture and energy, Wu looked to STI to find solutions for broader acceptance and affordability of improved technologies in these sectors.

SESSION 1: POLICY CONVERGENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Adnan Amin, Director-General, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), served as the moderator for the

morning session. He said there needs to be a clear institutional design in how the UN will focus on the science-policy interface. He said the role of ECOSOC is important in moving from “institutional proliferation” to institutional effectiveness. The old development cooperation model of a donor-led poverty alleviation agenda, he added, is too limited to deal with current challenges.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS: Michael Anderson, Special Envoy for UN Development Goals, UK, and member of the UN High-level Panel (HLP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, noted that the HLP has had thousands of hours of consultations with civil society and community groups around the world. He also expressed support for a single post-2015 development agenda. By the end of 2014, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) will have received a large number of inputs, from: the Open Working Group (OWG) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the expert committee on financing for sustainable development; the Secretary-General’s annual report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and advancing the development agenda beyond 2015; the consultations facilitated by the UN Development Group; and the HLP. The post-2015 development agenda will have to be a Member-State negotiated framework, he said, but we need to avoid a fog, a long list, business as usual, and utopia—an unworkable, idealistic framework.

Amin asked Anderson to elaborate on the UK’s experience. Anderson responded that successive British governments have been serious about integrating sustainability and have developed policy tools, strategies and action plans. The UK has a cabinet committee at the highest level to work on sustainable development, as well as a green food project and a natural capital committee.

Sus Ulbaek, Ambassador, Global Challenges and Green Growth, Global Green Growth Forum, Denmark, focused on how Public-Private Partnerships can work to achieve international goals. She stressed the involvement of the private sector to help bring about technical solutions and financial investments. Remarking on Denmark’s successes in energy efficiency and renewable energy nationwide, Ulbaek emphasized the need for policy-makers to set clear goals to enable investors to make long-term choices.

Ian Noble, Lead Scientist, Global Adaptation Institute, focused on the science-policy interface. While active scientific research is taking place everywhere, the critical issue is to share results more effectively. Most scientists accept the three pillars of sustainability, but very few are comfortable working in all three. Scientific reports have to be accessible to the policy community and the rest of the scientific community, he said, strongly encouraging the free exchange of scientific information.

Jose Graziano da Silva, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), gave the keynote presentation via video and focused on the global effort to eradicate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition. Stressing the need for bold international goals, he recognized that problems of hunger and food insecurity are multidimensional challenges



to be addressed in an integrated manner. He also remarked on the livelihoods of small scale subsistence farmers who require support and strengthened social protection programmes in order to feed themselves. By working together through a diverse, multi-stakeholder approach, he stressed that the global community can transition to more sustainable agriculture.

José Antonio Ocampo, Chairperson, UN Committee for Development Policy, said in order to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, economics can no longer dominate the debate. Under the current approach, triple wins (economic, social and environmental) are not common. While the scientific interface is important, Ocampo argued, it is the political interface that matters. He also discussed the financing of STI, which he said relies on exclusive intellectual property rights (IPRs). We need a new way that uses public funds to buy technologies and make them freely available to every citizen. The granting of monopoly rights to innovators may stop the dissemination of knowledge, especially in medicine, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and agriculture. He also called for rethinking the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement.

Amin commented on triple wins and tradeoffs, noting that hydroelectricity provides inexpensive energy but has environmental and social costs, and asked about reducing carbon dioxide emissions without tradeoffs. In response to Amin's question about the role of ECOSOC, Ocampo said ECOSOC brings different actors into the debate but needs stronger follow-up mechanisms.

Amin then asked the panelists how to harness the potential of STI. Noble responded that scientists need to have a modicum of knowledge about scientific, economic and social issues and this is the best way forward. Ocampo said central banks need to make public the impact of their policies on unemployment. Ulbaek said we need to get renewable energy prices right, and the biggest obstacle to technology transfer is the lack of funds. Amin expanded on the issue of sub-optimal policy frameworks, including fossil fuel subsidies and the opportunity cost incurred through these subsidies.

DISCUSSANT: Jan McAlpine, Director, UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), served as the discussant and highlighted a concern that scientists and academics may not be interested in the policy instruments developed from their research. She said ECOSOC should take on scientific and technical matters, and create a strategic agenda around the integration and discussion of cross-cutting issues. Referring to her role at UNFF, McAlpine stressed that issues do not exist in isolation, and should not be discussed in silos of UN institutions. She ultimately posed the question to panelists, "What do you see as a powerful role for ECOSOC in taking on the role of integration and cross-cutting issues, in such a way as to catalyze change—not only in the UN system, but for countries and people worldwide?"

DISCUSSION: Launching the discussion, Amin shared comments received on Twitter and Facebook: "How can we bridge the gap between Africa and the rest of the world?" "Retrofitting buildings stops energy waste and strengthens economies." "On renewable energy, we must remember many people use wood and charcoal and this process aggravates deforestation." Osorio tweeted "ECOSOC to play a key role in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development."

Tanzania commented that the TRIPS agreement is lopsided and outdated, and the agreements of the past do not address the challenges for the future. Mexico stressed the importance of involving various stakeholders because the UN is not the only organization addressing these issues. The EU noted the need

to build stronger links between science, policy, and decision-making, and to increase reliable statistical data under the three dimensions of sustainable development for enhanced coherence.

Sri Lanka asked about methods for creating and sustaining entrepreneurs to appropriately accommodate the notion of sustainability. Morocco inquired about the competitiveness of different renewable energy options, specifically in regard to cell- and thermal-based solar energy. The US emphasized the need for international mechanisms to incentivize changes at the national level, and asked about the interplay between goals and targets at these two levels of governance.

Pakistan stressed the importance of building a common agenda between the various international institutions and ECOSOC. Nicaragua said there is no way to understand sustainable development without thinking about eradicating poverty, and mentioned the need for equitable investment in renewable energy and the importance of rural electrification. Nigeria asked about financing options for the transition from the use of fossil fuels to a green economy. An NGO representative commented that economic growth has been creating greater inequity.

In response, Ulbaek stressed that the integration of policy frameworks with the establishment of clear and realistic goals would ensure UN relevance. Ocampo said the division of labor between ECOSOC and the UNGA should be more clearly defined. Noble stressed that the international community should "move briskly to a set of goals and an agenda that moves to action," in order to attract the best financing. In his summary, Amin called for an ECOSOC that can adequately fulfill its mandate for coordination, and reiterated that the creation of too many intergovernmental fora and processes complicates integration. He urged ECOSOC to be relevant and produce action on the key issues of the day.

SESSION 2: SCALING UP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Amb. Masood Khan, ECOSOC Vice-President (Pakistan), moderated the afternoon session. He highlighted the global call for a renewed global partnership for the development agenda between businesses, governments and civil society. He introduced an intergovernmental proposal to strengthen ECOSOC to become the "hub" of these partnerships for sustainable development.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS: Florence Chenoweth, Minister of Agriculture, Liberia, spoke about the improvement of food security that her country has witnessed since emerging from conflict in 2006. Although it has made great progress at being able to feed itself, she stressed that scaling up is still necessary. Chenoweth spoke of the importance of the private sector for investing resources that the Liberian government does not have, particularly in the areas of alternative energy and infrastructure.

Hunter Lovins, President, National Capitalism Solutions, cited the "overwhelming business case" for sustainable development, based on over 45 studies finding that the companies leading in sustainability outperform their competitors. She highlighted Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan, which shows that profits can double with sustainable policies, and the Alliance for Sustainability and Prosperity, which is conducting crowd-sourcing to build a new development paradigm. Civil society, business and governments must all have a seat at the table, if ECOSOC is to be relevant.

Gary Lawrence, Corporate Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer, AECOM, called for an "honest broker" to host open conversations between governments, civil society,

and businesses, and highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability. Outlining the business incentives for sustainability in the areas of cost reduction, supply chain, and talent recruitment, Lawrence said becoming sustainable must be seen as an act of liberty, rather than a prevention of one's freedom.

Philip Dobie, Senior Fellow, World Agroforestry Centre, said environmentalists have to show Ministers of Finance that the environment is not the problem but the solution to achieving economic and social development targets. Our sustainable future relies on how we manage productive landscapes: geography, people, communities, water, trees, fish, crops and more. This requires the participation of many sectors. He explained that with increased tree cover, farms can provide access to renewable energy. Dobie described Malawi's Agroforestry Food Security Programme, a partnership between the government, UN agencies, donors and communities that provides training, tree nurseries, technical support, and marketing. In an added benefit of the project, the fruit from the trees was found to improve vitamin A levels in women, which in turn reduced the transmission of HIV/AIDS to babies from 70% to 7%.

In response to questions from Khan, Lovins discussed the innovative forms of education and support that can be given to entrepreneurs through technology. Chenoweth also discussed education, specifically for female small-share farmers, and stressed the need for development within peacebuilding. Lawrence raised the subject of urban farming and the need for a clarity of purpose in UN activities. Dobie discussed the ongoing challenge of operationalizing "zero net land degradation," and urged ECOSOC to hire more scientists.

DISCUSSANT: Felix Dodds, former Executive Director of the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, said the challenge is to address science and technology needs both of today and tomorrow. Matching the new development goals with realistic funding will help integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, which has not been accomplished since 1992. We need one development agenda and a constituency that can argue not just for sectors but across sectors, he said, adding that ECOSOC has a role to play in developing that narrative. He called for: a global framework on sustainability reporting; promoting successful partnerships; and addressing "disruptions" that will result in job losses (e.g. 3D printers, driverless cars, downloadable school lessons). The UN needs to: address sectoralization; possibly establish an intergovernmental panel on sustainable development; and create mechanisms for all stakeholders to address the challenges in front of us.

DISCUSSION: India inquired about how championing the private sector can impose limitations on local entrepreneurs, and how issues of food waste are important to the discussion of food security. Tenure and Ecology LLC discussed the need to generate technology and knowledge in emerging countries through internet education programs.

Lovins highlighted the need for diffusion of technology and innovation in the developing world. Lawrence said that urban, peri-urban and rural communities have to come together in a systems approach to solve sustainability problems. Dobie thanked India for bringing up the issue of food waste, which he said is intolerable, especially in developed countries.

The International Trade Center said the key message that has emerged from the day's discussions is that much of the new knowledge and knowledge for innovation are embedded in the private sector. A representative of the NGOs Commons

Cluster raised the issue of planetary boundaries, asking the panelists what to use as indicators of stress on the world's natural resources.

In response, Lawrence noted the ongoing conversation on investment and value in the business community, as well as the need to communicate scientific information through "heartfelt stories" to the public. Lovins referenced the success of local communities in implementing sustainability through their own regulations and indicators, suggesting that this approach could be expanded internationally.

Honduras said Agenda 21 is still relevant and should not be put aside. She asked why poor countries with land resources are not able to achieve sustainable development. The Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative spoke about Sustainable Yogic Agriculture in India which involves meditation and organic farming. She asked how she could bring an initiative like this to the UN system so it can have the greatest impact.

Bolivia stressed the importance of recognizing ancestral knowledge of indigenous populations who are connected with nature and agriculture, and know how to take advantage of the land.

Lovins responded that indigenous wisdom is important in solving an array of sustainability issues, but we have to beware of biopiracy. Chenoweth said Honduras raised an important issue: why are farmers not taking advantage of all that land? She explained that addressing land tenure issues is important to resolve this problem, and described how they did this in Liberia. Lawrence said the world has abandoned 1,500-2,000 years of beta testing on how to live in a particular climate, substituting energy for experience. If we can support local cultures in the urban context, the ideas of urban agriculture and community will be stronger than if western companies try to solve problems in cities in developing countries. Dobie said we need to reflect on rural-urban migration, because rural people do not have the education to compete in cities. Ministries of Agriculture must provide social services and education in rural areas as part of agricultural support services, he said, and he stressed the importance of indigenous knowledge to the scientific community. Lovins suggested that ECOSOC convene a meeting of financiers who are looking at the collapse of the global economy and ecological economists to look at the way forward.

CLOSING PLENARY

In his closing remarks, Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo said: sustainable development depends on the integration of the three dimensions; policy makers need STI to achieve development goals; high-level political engagement is a key to ensuring integration; there is an overwhelming business case for sustainable development; we must invest in sustainable agriculture; peacebuilding must be mainstreamed in UN sustainable development efforts; and ECOSOC can serve as a platform for dialogue among all stakeholders.

Osorio said the discussion has tremendous significance. He called for a commitment from the public and private sector in redesigning the development model so it will be more sustainable and integrative, and for conscious follow-up to meetings such as this one. The Rio+20 mandate for ECOSOC is to make significant progress in having a balance among the three pillars, he recalled, and expressed hope that strengthening ECOSOC will reorient this integration.

Osorio adjourned the meeting at 5:45 pm.