



A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the  
Second Round of 'Informal-Informal' Negotiations on the zero draft of  
outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development  
(UNCSD or Rio+20)

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)  
in cooperation with the European Commission (EC)

Online at <http://www.iisd.ca/uncsd/iinzod2/enbots/>



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

Issue #7 | April - May 2012 UNCSD Meeting | 23 April - 4 May 2012 | Wednesday, 2 May 2012

Events convened on Tuesday, 1 May 2012

## Scientific Policy Messages on the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

Organized by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, the South African Department of Environmental Affairs, the Danish Ministry for the Environment and UNEP



Prof. Ernst von Weizsäcker, Co-Chair

Ernst von Weizsäcker, Co-Chair, IRP, lamented that resource efficiency is consistently eaten up by more consumption.

This side event discussed the policy relevance of scientific work and how to bridge the gap between science and policy-making.

Minister Plenipotentiary Peter Silberberg, Permanent Mission of Germany, commended the International Resource Panel (IRP) for their work on research innovation, technology transfer and informing policy makers.

Henrik Hagen Olesen, Danish Ministry for the Environment, underlined the importance of natural resource use and resource efficiency to sustainable development. Ashok Khosla, Co-Chair, IRP, moderating the event, called on negotiators to look at resource use as a major component of environmental side effects.

Ernst von Weizsäcker, Co-Chair, IRP, called for decoupling well-being from Gross Domestic Product (GDP), GDP from resource use, and resource use from environmental impacts, and remarked that there has been no absolute decoupling from domestic material consumption.

Thomas Graedel, Yale University, explained the challenges posed by metals' recycling, including complexity of multiple uses, and few end-of-life recycling rates for many metals.

Sangwon Suh, University of California, Santa Barbara, stressed that efforts should be made to translate and operationalize "life-cycle thinking" towards supporting sustainable policy imperatives. He also urged for the science behind life-cycle assessment to be further improved.

Participants discussed, *inter alia*: the possibilities of substituting different metals; trade-offs between different technologies; and hazardous waste management by developing countries on behalf of developed countries.

Joseph Alcamo, UNEP Chief Scientist, commented on the huge potential for recycling, consumption reduction, life-cycle analysis and resource use improvements aimed at informing policy makers, which should be built into sustainability agreements.

### More information:

<http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/>

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# People and the Planet: The priorities for Rio+20

Organized by the Royal Society of the UK, and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

This event discussed the recently released report from the Royal Society of the UK, titled "People and the Planet: Priorities for Rio+20."

John Sulston, University of Manchester and Royal Society Fellow, outlined the process undertaken to produce the report, saying that wide-ranging consultations were held over 21 months. Using case studies from Niger, Ghana and the UK, he outlined key recommendations from the report including that: there is an urgent need to bring people out of extreme poverty; material consumption needs to be stabilized then reduced in both developed and emerging economies; population and environment must not be treated as separate issues; governments must realize the potential of urbanization; and primary and secondary education should be made universally accessible. He emphasized the need for further collaboration between governments to develop socio-economic systems that are neither dependent on, nor drive, material consumption. He also urged governments to accelerate the development of comprehensive wealth measures that take human well-being and natural capital into account.

Ambassador Philip Parham, Deputy Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN, noted that the issues highlighted by the report are of crucial importance to the world's population and its environment. He underscored the recommendations for "joined-up" policy approaches, addressing the specific challenges facing women and girls and the call for new forms of wealth accounting. He said the range of issues dealt with by the report are "striking," but stressed the key message is that the close linkages between the issues are complex and said that how these are addressed will be vital to sustainable development.

Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA, underscored that people are at the centre of sustainable development. He provided an overview of the plight that many of the world's poor face, specifically lacking access to water and energy, and suffering from food and income insecurity. He urged the empowerment of women and youth to assist in overcoming these plights. He stressed equitable consumption as key to ensuring the future sustainable development of the human population.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: political will; linking aid to sustainability; advocacy of the issues discussed in the report; equal opportunities for boys and girls; and the issue of production in conjunction with consumption.



L-R: John Sulston, University of Manchester and Royal Society Fellow; Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA; Amb. Philip Parham, Deputy Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN.



Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA, noted that when addressing population issues, aging populations and migrations should also be considered.



John Sulston, University of Manchester and Royal Society Fellow, noted the importance of science in a social context to address the sustainability challenges being faced.



Amb. Philip Parham, Deputy Permanent Representative of the UK to the UN, underscored the importance the British government places on the recommendations from the report.

#### More information:

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/>  
<http://royalsociety.org/policy/projects/people-planet/report/>

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