

A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20)

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
in cooperation with the World Bank, the IFC and the EC

Online at <http://www.iisd.ca/uncsd/rio20/enbots/>



Issue #4 | UNCSD or Rio+20 | 13-22 June 2012 | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil | Sunday, 17 June 2012

Events convened on Saturday, 16 June 2012

The UN System Perspectives on Green Economy

Organized by the Environment Management Group (EMG), UNEP, UNDP and DESA



Olav Kjørven, UNDP, said if development is not sustainable, it is not development, it is anti-development.

This event, chaired by Sheng Fulai, UNEP, introduced and discussed findings of an interagency report by the EMG, "Working Towards Balanced and Inclusive Green Economies."

Fulai, in his introduction, underscored that poverty eradication and sustainable development remain the central goal, and that green economy is a vehicle to make it real.

Olav Kjørven, UNDP, recounted that work towards the green economy has grown in scope, size and significance since UNCED, but said it must be tailored to, and not imposed on, distinct national and local contexts.

Cudjoe Awudi, Ghana Forestry Commission, offered his country's perspective on the role of the UN system in supporting the green economy, which he insisted should support nationally-determined development plans through capacity building and information sharing.

Peter Poschen, ILO, stressed that the green economy should provide decent work opportunities and social inclusion for the benefit of the poor, pointing to the findings of the joint ILO-UNEP publication on "Working Towards Sustainable Development."

Joseluis Samaniego, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), underscored that inequality poses the biggest challenge to the Latin American and the Caribbean region, despite surging economic growth and falling inflation. He saw the UN system as a valuable resource for reversing inequality and eradicating poverty by sharing information, providing policy options, and building capacity in member countries.

Vesile Kulaçoğlu, World Trade Organization (WTO), cautioned that green economies must surmount brewing signs of protectionism that threaten to undermine the open markets and international trade needed to spur sustainable development.

Kang Seok-Woo, Korean Presidential Committee for Green Growth, supported the EMG's continued delivery of support to governments, recommending that it coordinates with related efforts such as the Green Growth Knowledge Platform and Korea's programme of action on the green economy.

Ludovico Alcorta, UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), presented an industry perspective on the green economy, noting that industrialization remains key to development, despite its environmental ills, and offers major pathways to sustainability through technological innovation, environmentally-friendly production, and green consumerism.

Christian Blondin, WMO, said a green economy should be based on scientific knowledge delivered to those who need it most, noting that initiatives like WMO's GFCS can facilitate the use of science in policies for disaster risk reduction and other critical areas.

Carlos Dora, WHO, said that green macro-economic policies must be made tangible to all, noting that linking green policies to positive health outcomes is an important way to accomplish this.

More information:

<http://www.unemg.org/IssueManagementGroups/GreenEconomy/GreenEconomyreport/tabid/79175/Default.aspx/>

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Feeding the World: Sustainable agriculture and innovation

Organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

In this side event, moderated by Christina Negra, Coordinator of the Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change, the panel addressed the contribution of sustainable agricultural intensification to agricultural productivity and resilience, and how this contribution can be estimated and tracked.

Claudia Ringler, IFPRI, stated that, worldwide, there are a billion people that lack food security due to rising or fluctuating food prices. On the drivers of food demand, she highlighted population growth, which will reach 9 billion by 2050, urbanization, income growth, and biofuels and bioenergy. Ringler stressed the need for investment in agricultural research and policy reforms, and called for improved management practices and governance.

On the agricultural challenges of Africa, Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), highlighted the relevance of technology tailored to diverse local conditions in Africa and women's role as the backbone of agriculture. Emphasizing the need to evaluate the role of women in the value chain, Sibanda urged political leadership that will change policies to create a level playing field for farmers worldwide.

Citing the Brazilian example of food production, Elisio Contini, Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa), elaborated on the important role of water availability, abundant land, tropical technologies, and farmers. Contini said Brazil possessed the ability to vastly contribute to the world's food needs, and introduced a new production system that alternates livestock, crops and forestry on individual farms.

Responding to a question on high-level and policy connectivity, Adrian Fernández, Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change (CCAFS), spoke of the challenges of integrating approaches across different policy sectors, and called for a safe, virtual operating space at the nexus of food and climate systems. He recommended an integration of food security and sustainable agriculture into national policies, and sustainable intensification of agricultural production while reducing GHG emissions and other negative impacts of agriculture.

Participants posed questions on the obstacles to increasing local research capacity, the need to establish a value-chain approach in agriculture, the need for visionary policy guidance, and reorientation of research institutions to ensure local knowledge addresses local agendas.



Claudia Ringler, IFPRI, emphasized the role of integrated fertility management in food production.



Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, FANRPAN, called for bold political leadership in Africa.

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L-R: Claudia Ringler, IFPRI; Elisio Contini, Embrapa; Christina Negra, Coordinator of the Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change; Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, FANRPAN; and Adrian Fernández, CCAFS

Regreening for Resilient Landscapes: Pastoralists and farmers stewarding ecosystems and economic returns in drylands

Organized by World Vision International (WVI), International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture (IPSA)/ Citizens Network for Sustainable Development, Savory Institute, UNCCD, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

This event focused on environmental rehabilitation, or the “regreening” of drylands, as an opportunity to achieve multiple SDGs due to the strong connection between land degradation, desertification and other issues, such as droughts, floods and poverty.

Christopher Shore, WVI, chairing the event, described the importance of drylands and emphasized the need to deal with ecosystem resilience in a holistic manner. Shore said that farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are applying inexpensive tools and approaches to land management in drylands, so as to bring affordable solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges in drylands areas.

Carlos Seré, IFAD, stressed the need for: connecting emergency relief resources and development investments; combining the science of drylands systems with wider social science; and linking traditional knowledge with science and the power of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to deliver knowledge sharing. Seré underscored the need for capacity building to empower governments, and said drylands hold potential for both adaptation and mitigation.

Panelists then presented success stories on methodologies to avoid, curb and reverse land degradation at the landscape level. Abdelhakim Mihoubi, Algeria, presented the experience of Algeria in regreening drylands.

Dennis Garrity, ICRAF, talked about EverGreen Agriculture as a solution to regenerate the land on small-scale farms, and to increase family food production and cash income. He explained that EverGreen Agriculture is a form of more intensive farming that integrates trees into crop and livestock production systems at the field, farm and livestock scales. ICRAF and WVI also announced the creation of The Global Network for EverGreen Agriculture.

Constance Neely, ICRAF, described holistic planned grazing that capitalizes on the positive impact that livestock can play in restoring degraded land, increasing soil organic matter and feed production, enhancing water capture, and increasing biodiversity.

Arthur Getz Escudero, Sustainable Places Research Institute, stressed the importance of rural-urban linkages in drylands combining desertification, biodiversity, climate resilience, and food, nutrition and livelihood security strategies.

The ensuing discussions focused on the possibility of capitalizing on emergencies such as drought for using scarce resources in revitalizing the economy. While some participants said that resilience equals seizing existing opportunities, others emphasized that governments and funding organizations need to stop reacting to crises and instead work on preventing them.



Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UNCCD, underlined the need for advocacy and awareness raising, and reiterated UNCCD’s proposal to make Zero-Net Land Degradation a broadly held measure of global land management.



Christopher Shore, WVI, described the concept of Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) in Niger, Ghana and Senegal, and emphasized that this approach uses only farmers’ self interest to transform the Sahel with reduced investment.

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L-R: Arthur Getz Escudero, Sustainable Places Research Institute; Christopher Shore, WVI; Abdelhakim Mihoubi, Algeria; Dennis Garrity, ICRAF; Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UNCCD; and Wagaki Mwangi, UNCCD

Sustainable Transport Contribution to Rio+20 and its Implementation

Organized by the Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport

This event, organized and moderated by Cornie Huizenga, Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport (SLoCat Partnership), addressed the contribution of the sustainable transport community to Rio+20. It also discussed the implementation of Rio+20's outcomes, including a roadmap for sustainable transport with targets and indicators, a voluntary commitment by a group of multilateral development banks and a proposed institutional framework for after Rio+20.

Tyrrell Duncan, Asian Development Bank (ADB), presented an overview of voluntary commitments on sustainable transport and discussed the financial, policy, capacity building and knowledge sharing ramifications of delivering on such commitments. On financing, Duncan said there is a significant level of financial support that will be available over the next 10 years from multilateral development banks to help develop sustainable transport and leverage domestic and private sector financing. Stressing the importance of ensuring synergy between the individual voluntary commitments, Duncan said their implementation must be linked to other transport initiatives, including the proposed UN Secretary General's high-level panel on sustainable transport.

Michael Repogle, Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), presented on indicators and targets of sustainable mobility. Presenting on the outreach and work of the Sustainable Transport Indicators Working Group, he said the sustainable transport indicators and targets were presented to Rio+20 delegates on 12 June 2012. He cautioned that indicators must be adapted to scale and local specificities. He said that the sustainable transport goal of providing universal access to safe, clean and affordable transportation should also be an SDG. Repogle concluded by saying these targets can be accomplished by the SLoCat Working Group and endorsed by the panel on sustainable transport to be convened by the UN Secretary-General as part of the post-2015 framework for sustainable development.

Ndey-Isatou Njie, DESA, said her organization will continue to support the initiative of the SLoCaT Partnership. Drawing attention to the targets on road safety and access to mobility for jobs and essential services, she said such targets should be a priority in developing countries. Njie stressed that sustainable transport targets need to have accountability and build capacity for integration with civil society and the private sector.

Robert Bradley, United Arab Emirates (UAE), drew attention to Masdar, an experimental city in Abu Dhabi, running exclusively on renewable energy. Bradley said that SDGs should support rather than derail the MDGs, saying that poverty should still be a priority. Noting that climate change-related targets are already negotiated in other fora such as the UNFCCC, he warned that timeous delivery of the sustainable transport targets relating to the decrease in GHGs emissions may be unrealistic.

Hilda Martinez Salgado, WRI, said Mexico's government already has a national policy on mass transit involving 40 projects. Salgado also underscored the importance of integrating national transportation policy with land-use planning.

In the ensuing discussion, participants debated the feasibility of implementing the sustainable transport targets, especially if the voluntary commitments are not delivered, as well as the need for an institutional framework to integrate all sectors dealing with transportation. One participant inquired what makes regional development banks fund sustainable transport projects as opposed to conventional transport projects. She also inquired about indicators to assess the success of sustainable transport projects such as the number of lives saved and GHG emissions avoided.



Cornie Huizenga, SLoCat Partnership, said a transport-related SDG would encourage governments and organizations involved in the implementation of the voluntary commitments on sustainable transport to take greater action.



Michael Repogle, ITDP, enumerated proposed sustainable transport targets such as cutting the fuel use of new light duty vehicle by 50% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels.

More information:

<http://www.slocat.net/rio-plus-20/>

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Sustainable Development in the Face of Rapid Climate Change: High Alpine and polar communities

Organized by the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI), ICIMOD, UNEP, Stockholm Environment Institute-York, the Government of Sweden and Mountain Institute

This side event's panel of representatives and experts from some of the most climate-impacted places on earth discussed sustainable development, air quality and the impacts of global warming in fragile communities.

Lena Ek, Swedish Minister for the Environment, emphasized the need for partnerships and cooperation, and applauded the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) that was formed to investigate snow and ice coverage, melting of glaciers and ice sheets, and the subsequent dangers to people's water supplies and natural species living within the Arctic and high Alpine regions. She called for an immediate reduction of climate change pollutants, which contribute more than 30% to global warming. On the ICCL initiative, Ek said all G8 countries agreed to join efforts in reducing emissions to protect the Arctic, and underlined that taking short-term actions on pollutants should not replace the long-term need to reduce pollution.

Terence Fenge, Arctic Athabaskan Council, elaborated on the challenges of melting ice to arctic indigenous communities, highlighting the importance of recent changes in geopolitics. Fenge applauded the participation of six indigenous nations on Arctic bodies, which altered the political debate dramatically, warning that the loss of access to traditional food will deleteriously affect the entire culture and economy of aboriginal people in the Arctic Circle.

Madhav Karki, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), introduced the negative impacts of black carbon, and warned that among the projected climate change impacts in Asia is an expected change in the hydrological cycle due to decreasing glacial runoff, increasing water stress, saying this will lead to an increase in water conflicts and extreme weather events.

Miguel Saravia, Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN), shared current climate change research by several organizations within the Andes mountain range, emphasizing the diversity of integrated ecosystems in conjunction with high-density urban areas and agricultural intensification. He warned of the direct impact due to the loss of densely forested areas as a result of reduced water availability, and the combined effects of climate change, population growth, mining activities and land degradation. Saravia urged specific local adaptive strategies, continued innovations that include traditional livelihood activities, and improved cooperation between local, national and international organizations.

Johan Kuylenstierna, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), presented on UNEP's recent research on the impact of short-lived climate pollutants in Alpine and Arctic regions and its implications for policy making. He identified a package of measures that will reduce emissions from incomplete combustion and methane, and discussed examples of initiatives from many regions across the globe, highlighting the benefits from implementing these measures.

In the ensuing discussion, Ek moderated a high-level panel debate to deliberate the path forward for sustained improvement of air quality and climate. Dan McDougall, Canada, called for international actions to reduce methane and carbon emissions, while Purushottam Ghimire, National Planning Commission, Nepal, applauded good examples of community forestry, and the development of green energy strategies in southern Asia.



Lena Ek, Swedish Minister for the Environment, said combating black carbon emissions can deliver short-term benefits to the climate.



Terence Fenge, Arctic Athabaskan Council, said moving from adaptation towards mitigation strategies will be a "game changer."

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Panelists discussed the dire consequences of global warming to the polar communities and and montane regions of Nepal and Peru.

Forests, Livelihoods and Green Economy

Organized by Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (EQPF), Red Cross Society Taiwan and the National Taiwan University

This event, chaired by Ying-Shih Hsieh, Chairman, EQPF, shared the opportunities and barriers to forest management for sustainable development at local, municipal, state and national levels.

Hsiu-Fen Lin, Deputy Secretary General, Red Cross Society, described Taiwan's rescue, relief and reconstruction in the wake of Typhoon Morakot in 2009, noting how community engagement, sensitivity to local contexts and other principles of sustainable development are critical for coping with natural disasters.

Shin-Cheng Yeh, Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Administration, Taiwan, spoke on the need for sustainable development through inter-agency cooperation, giving as an example Taiwan's future Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, which will apply integrated management to pollution control, climate change response, water basin management, disease prevention, and nature conservation.

Hung-Chin Yang, Deputy Director General, Forestry Bureau, Taiwan, presented on forest management and conservation in Taiwan, noting that successful management depends on cooperating with those who rely on forests for their livelihoods.

Ying-Shih Hsieh recounted the history of forest management in Taiwan, which moved from timber extraction to non-use over the last fifty years. He suggested that SFM could harness unused timber resources in Taiwan to create 14000 green jobs, but that to make this happen current levels of goodwill must be met with commensurate levels of cross-organizational coordination and experience.

Marco Jonathan Laínez Ordoñez, Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment, Honduras, described how the Honduran project, ECOSISTEMAS, demonstrates how investments in resource efficiency and sustainable consumption can deliver multiple benefits to biodiversity conservation and rural community development.

Paul Kelly, Minister Private Secretary to the President for National Policy, Nicaragua, said his country's national development plan is grounded in Christian values, socialist ideals and solidarity practices, which have resulted in improved equality, rising employment and the fastest economic growth in Central America. He said that with new investments in hydropower nearly all of Nicaragua's electricity will come from renewable sources by 2017, and noted the 2011 creation of a green army brigade to protect natural reserves.

Maria Fernanda Gebara Abifadel, Getúlio Vargas Foundation Rio de Janeiro Lau School, described the advances and challenges in implementing REDD+ in Brazil. She stated that NGOs, governments of Brazilian states and civil society are leading Brazilian REDD+ readiness activities, with demonstrated advancements in benefit-sharing and forest monitoring, but that land tenure, procedures, and vertical and horizontal coordination between government agencies must improve.

Héctor Velasco-Perroni, Colegio de Abogados por el Ambiente, Mexico, spoke on legal preparedness for REDD+ in Mexico, Vietnam, and Zambia, noting the enthusiasm for local and subnational governments, who are setting the groundwork for federal legislation through state laws, local carbon markets, and community development plans.



Shin-cheng Yeh, Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Administration, Taiwan, said that Taiwan's susceptibility to natural disasters makes cross-agency collaboration critical.



Marco Jonathan Laínez Ordoñez, Natural Resources and Environment, Honduras, highlighted micro-hydro power as an important tool for improving conditions for local communities.

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L-R: Maria Fernanda Gebara Abifadel, FGV-Direito Rio; Marco Jonathan Laínez Ordoñez, Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment, Honduras; Shin-cheng Yeh, Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Administration, Taiwan; Hung-Chin Yang, Deputy Director General, Forestry Bureau, Taiwan; Héctor Velasco-Perroni, President, Colegio de Abogados por el Ambiente, Mexico; Hsiu-Fen Lin, Deputy Secretary General, Red Cross Society; and Paul Kelly, Minister Private Secretary to the President for National Policy, Nicaragua

National Learning and Skills Strategies to Advance a Green Transition

Organized by the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Secretariat of the UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability (the GSP) and UN CC:Learn Partners

This event discussed good practices and lessons learned for developing and strengthening human resources and skills development in the transition to a green economy.

Veerle Vandeweerd, UNDP, highlighting the challenges of unsustainable consumption and production patterns and ineffective environmental management patterns, said that behaviour change through education is necessary to overcome these hurdles.

Amina Mohammed, UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, urging for education for sustainable development to be integrated into national development plans, outlined a number of obstacles to education for sustainable development, such as competing demands within the current education systems, the need for policy frameworks and plans and the lack of effective partnerships. Mohammed highlighted key messages relating to the importance of education for sustainable development from the Global Sustainability Panel’s report, “Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing,” underscoring the need to: improve the science-policy interface; set goals to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development; empower citizens through education and training, women’s empowerment and social safety nets; and improve institutions to integrate the dimensions of sustainability, engage all stakeholders and delivery in practice and implementation of policy.

Kees van der Ree, ILO, said that in the transition to a green economy, additional jobs will be created, although some will be substituted. Van der Ree noted that many existing jobs will be redefined and stressed that net employment gains are possible if the right policies are shaped and implemented. He said that upskilling of workers from carbon-intensive sectors may be required and urged for more local economic diversification. He underscored possible responses to a looming skills shortage, including adjusting existing training programmes, devising new training programmes, and establishing suitable degrees and apprenticeships.

Victor Viñas, Dominican Republic’s Ministry of Environment, on behalf of Omar Ramírez Tejada, Secretary of State and Executive Vice President of the Dominican Republic, underscored the success of the UN CC:Learn project in the Dominican Republic. He outlined activities that have taken place under the project, including fostering systematic and country-driven processes to strengthen human resources, learning and skills development to address climate change, and determine actions to enhance climate change learning and strengthening national education and training systems. He stressed that: financial and human resources are necessary for climate change projects and programmes to be successful; lifestyle, attitudes and behaviour changes need to be addressed; and sustainable development and climate change must be mainstreamed into all levels of education.

Kartikeya Sarabhai, Director, Centre for Environmental Education, India, noted that the necessary science exists, but new pathways for growth and sustainable development must be developed.



Veerle Vandeweerd, UNDP, said that the learning community should to seek out what needs to be done differently to trigger changes in behaviour.



Amina Mohammed, UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, said that to improve education for sustainable development, practitioners must strategically develop and implement investment plans, highlighting the need for metrics to measure the success of these investments.

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L-R: Kartikeya Sarabhai, Director, Centre for Environmental Education; Victor Viñas, Dominican Republic’s Ministry of Environment; Kees van der Ree, ILO; Amina Mohammed, UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning; and Veerle Vanderweed, UNDP