



CSD-13 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 20 APRIL 2005

CSD-13's high-level segment began on Wednesday morning with opening statements from keynote speakers. This was followed by interactive discussions and statements on turning political commitments into action, meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to water, sanitation and human settlements, and the impact of natural disasters on water, sanitation and human settlements. Delegates also continued to negotiate the Chair's revised outcome document, holding informal parallel meetings in the evening.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

CSD-13's high-level segment began on Wednesday morning with opening remarks from keynote speakers. UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette noted that the three thematic issues addressed by CSD-13 are among the most fundamental, adding that the pillars of sustainable development converge in the Commission's work to a greater degree than in any other international body.

Delegates viewed a video recording of Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai addressing CSD-13. She urged action to make the environment central to the management of society, noted that humans cannot survive without other species, and called for a rethinking of our place on the planet.

CSD-13 Chair Ashe reviewed progress achieved in the work of CSD-13 to date, highlighting reports received from intergovernmental meetings and the panel discussions held. He emphasized his objective of arriving at a concise outcome document, which would concentrate on deliverables and actions, without redefining agreed concepts or principles.

TURNING POLITICAL COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION: On Wednesday morning and afternoon, ministers and other high-level officials engaged in interactive discussions on the issue of "Turning political commitments into action." Chair Ashe opened the discussion by noting that CSD-13's task was to take policy decisions on practical measures and options to expedite implementation in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. CSD-12 Chair Børge Brende, Norway's Minister of Trade and Industry, also addressed the session, highlighting significant problems in the areas of water, sanitation, and housing. Stressing that 2005 is a critical year for the MDGs, he proposed scaling up efforts, and said CSD-13 should strive to operationalize international commitments.

Participants highlighted a wide range of relevant issues, including: suggestions on CSD-13's specific outputs; the UN General Assembly's High-level Plenary Meeting (Millennium Review Session) in September 2005; national policies,

achievements and challenges; the MDGs and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI); financing, official development assistance (ODA), and financial resource issues; and the respective roles of governments, UN agencies, local authorities and other key stakeholders.

The EU highlighted CSD-13's responsibility to set a strong precedent for future CSD cycles, and discussed the importance of the current themes for all MDGs. The G-77/CHINA focused on the need for financial resources, calling for debt cancellation, increased ODA, market access and resources for UN-HABITAT and UNHCR. REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted governments' role in creating an enabling environment and the importance of an institutional foundation to facilitate and mobilize financial resources.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA highlighted the vulnerability of small island states to hurricanes, and supported a UN disaster relief fund. GERMANY called for a strong and clear message to be sent to the General Assembly's High-level Plenary Meeting. The NETHERLANDS urged major increases in investment in water, sanitation, sustainable energy, shelter, transport and sustainable natural resource management.

Noting that it has almost doubled its ODA since 2000, the US recalled the Monterrey Consensus and Millennium Challenge Account, and praised CSD-13's policy-oriented work. ITALY highlighted the EU Water Initiative, partnerships, the JPOI and the role of UN agencies. EGYPT underscored the needs of the poor, the value of regional planning, and the importance of financial and technical assistance. LESOTHO emphasized micro-financing, the role of local authorities, LDCs' needs, and UN-HABITAT.

POLAND stressed the importance of IWRM and, with KENYA, highlighted that CSD-13 provides an opportunity to turn political commitments into action. DENMARK highlighted the importance of monitoring and follow-up to ensure implementation. BANGLADESH said the JPOI is feasible but not easily reachable and, with AZERBAIJAN, underscored transboundary water resource issues. SLOVAKIA noted little progress to date on an integrated approach to water.

ICELAND spoke about women's education and empowerment, and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). KENYA and SENEGAL said donor agencies should harmonize and simplify procedures.

SOUTH AFRICA urged greater action on finance, market access, investment, technology, and good governance, and called for halving the number of slum dwellers by 2020. VENEZUELA shared experiences on empowering slum dwellers, and SWEDEN drew attention to its recent creation of a Ministry of Sustainable Development and its decision to raise ODA levels



to 1% of gross national income in 2006. JAMAICA called for a large increase in multilateral financial resources and private capital. GHANA urged increased ODA, technology transfer, and capacity building, and NAMIBIA underscored the need for long-term donor and private sector investment.

The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION (WMO) said development funds were often diverted to cope with natural disasters, and noted that early warning systems would support the MDGs. The HOLY SEE supported mobilizing financial resources, involving the local population, and monitoring implementation, and FRANCE suggested using existing monitoring mechanisms. PAKISTAN encouraged the CSD to forward a small number of “solid” recommendations to the GA High-level Plenary Meeting, underlining financial issues’ importance and recommending adoption of transboundary water resource treaties. SIERRA LEONE urged support for post-conflict societies, while CHILE encouraged citizen participation.

MEETING MDGS RELATED TO WATER, SANITATION AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS TARGETS:

Late on Wednesday morning, Chair Ashe opened an hour-long interactive discussion on meeting the MDGs. In a video presentation, Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the UN Millennium Project, noted that 2005 is a crucial year in determining the fate of the MDGs. He urged governments, in particular the US, to live up to their ODA commitments, in accordance with the Monterrey Consensus.

UN Assistant Secretary-General Robert Orr said sustainable development is at the heart of the GA High-level Plenary Meeting in September 2005, adding that efforts to defeat poverty will be in vain if resource depletion continues unabated. Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for the Environment, discussed water-related initiatives, noting that flexibility and innovation are essential. Explaining that the EU is well on its way to meeting its ODA and Monterrey targets, he said it could be timely for the EU to consider new commitments.

Chair Ashe then opened the floor for comments from delegations. A number of countries spoke about financing issues, while several also discussed domestic measures or made specific suggestions on CSD-13’s outputs.

On financing, the G-77/CHINA highlighted problems caused by fiscal and other policy constraints and the debt burden, while the EU supported a comprehensive approach addressing problems such as poverty, unsustainable consumption and production, and climate change. SOUTH AFRICA highlighted Africa’s serious development problems and the need to honor the Monterrey Consensus. Noting that investments in water and sanitation can produce good financial returns, the UK said problems with delivery mechanisms, funding and resources need to be addressed. ZAMBIA called for targets and a timeframe for new financial resources, and LIBYA highlighted increased financial support and good governance. KENYA called for comprehensive policies coupled with sustained and predictable means of support.

On CSD-13’s outputs, IRELAND urged CSD-13 to make a significant contribution to the GA High-level Plenary Meeting. AUSTRALIA highlighted the importance of success in the Doha round of trade talks and supported a higher profile for practical partnerships in the CSD process. FINLAND suggested that CSD-13 address issues of interlinkages, effective follow-up and monitoring systems.

TANZANIA stressed the need for multi-stakeholder involvement and the need to consider human security and the impacts of conflict. SAUDI ARABIA, EL SALVADOR and others outlined domestic actions, and CROATIA highlighted the burden placed on local authorities in providing water and sanitation. SWITZERLAND referred to linkages between MDG Goal Seven (ensuring environmental sustainability) and the other MDGs.

IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTERS ON WATER, SANITATION AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS—

PREVENTION AND RESPONSE: Delegates held a session on natural disasters and their impact on water, sanitation and human settlements late on Wednesday afternoon. Michel Jarraud, WMO, noted that most natural disasters are meteorological and particularly impact LDCs, referencing both drought and climate change, and urging increased preparedness, awareness and adaptive measures. Salvano Briceño, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), highlighted the effects of the tsunami, drew attention to the Hyogo Framework for Action, and noted that disaster reduction should be considered as a cross-cutting issue.

JAPAN stressed the importance of disaster-resilient infrastructure and, with SWEDEN, emphasized the role of local communities in disaster response. LUXEMBOURG underscored the vulnerability of the poor, risk reduction, prevention and preparedness and, with others, the importance of IWRM. CAMBODIA drew attention to its water resource challenges, and BANGLADESH and others said natural disasters are an impediment to development.

Many ministers spoke about the recent tsunami and the importance of early warning systems, and INDONESIA expressed its gratitude, noting that the main infrastructure systems hit by the tsunami were its water and sanitation facilities and human shelters. PAKISTAN and BANGLADESH highlighted the role of appropriate technology and technology transfer. The EC underscored sustainable development as the best prevention against the effects of disasters. SWEDEN highlighted the role of coastal management in disaster prevention and, with SWITZERLAND, said reconstruction must have sustainable development among its objectives. HUNGARY, SWITZERLAND and PORTUGAL noted that natural disasters are often linked to human activities and unsustainable practices. SENEGAL, SWITZERLAND, PORTUGAL and others highlighted the adverse effects of climate change.

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE CHAIR’S REVISED TEXT

Informal small-group negotiations on the Chair’s revised text resumed on Wednesday evening, with delegates using an updated version of the text. Two groups met—one dealing with the preamble and non-thematic sections, the other with CSD-13’s thematic issues. Some progress was reported, but no final resolution had been reached as of 9:30 pm Wednesday night.

PREAMBLE AND NON-THEMATIC SECTIONS: In the parallel session on the preamble and non-thematic sections, delegates concluded the first read through of the text, and agreed to several paragraphs, but experienced some initial difficulties on others, such as language on SIDS follow-up.

THEMATIC ISSUES: In the parallel session on the thematic issues, delegates began working their way through the section on water, agreeing on a number of paragraphs.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the first day of CSD-13’s high-level segment drew to a close on Wednesday evening, many speakers were reflecting on the value of bringing together so many ministers and other high-level representatives. Some observers seemed unenthusiastic about Wednesday’s formal discussions and statements, and a few fretted about the state of the CSD process in general, suggesting that the session lacked “momentum.” Others were more upbeat, arguing that ministers’ exchange of experiences and lessons learned had proved useful. Several delegates also drew attention to the considerable benefits resulting from bilateral and small group discussions taking place in the corridors between country officials and other stakeholders.

In the negotiations, the sense by 9:00 pm Wednesday evening was that “slow but steady” progress was being made, although some feared that a number of sticking points, particularly in the non-thematic sections, could delay a final agreement.