

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: 26 FEBRUARY - 2 MARCH 2007

The Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM) for the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15) opened on Monday morning, 26 February, at United Nations headquarters in New York. The IPM's objective is to discuss policy options and possible actions relating to energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change – the thematic issues under consideration during the CSD-14/CSD-15 two-year “implementation cycle.” Building on CSD-14, which conducted a “review” of these issues, CSD-15 will be a “policy session” and will focus on expediting implementation of commitments in these four thematic areas. The IPM is expected to conduct broad-based discussions to help identify relevant policy options and actions. At the conclusion of the IPM, the Chair is expected to distribute a draft negotiating document for CSD-15.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

CSD-15 Chair Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry of Qatar, opened the IPM. He highlighted the urgency of the issues under consideration, noting that one-third of the world's population lacks access to modern energy services. He encouraged participants to use CSD-15 as a platform for launching specific initiatives and projects.

Parties then adopted the agenda and proposed programme of work (E/CN.17/IPM/2007/1). Regarding the CSD-15 Bureau, parties approved Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado (Brazil) as Vice-Chair for Latin America and the Caribbean. Vice-Chair Alain Edouard Traore (Burkina Faso) was named rapporteur for the IPM.

POLICY OPTIONS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO EXPEDITE IMPLEMENTATION

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORTS: JoAnne DiSano, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the Secretary-General's reports on the four thematic issues and on linkages and cross-cutting issues (E/CN.17/2007/2-6).

OPENING REMARKS BY PARTIES: Several parties stated that the Secretary-General's reports were a good basis for discussion.

Pakistan, for the G-77/CHINA, reaffirmed the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. He urged implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Capacity-building

and Technology Transfer, highlighted the huge challenge of indoor air pollution, and said CSD-15 should agree on action-based and development-oriented policy options with a follow-up mechanism.

Germany for the EU, stressed the EU's commitment to achieving an action-oriented outcome of CSD-15, to be complemented by voluntary actions and partnerships. On energy, he proposed a basket of voluntary commitments as a non-negotiated outcome of CSD-15. He suggested that the CSD devote time to follow up on energy issues during its 2010-2011 and 2014-2015 cycles. He said CSD-15 could consider additional policy recommendations that might complement UNFCCC policies; target indoor air pollution; and promote the Economic Commission for Europe's Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution as a model for others.

The US drew attention to the matrix, a web-based tool for sharing solutions and the development of partnerships, and supported the idea of a basket of voluntary commitments by parties and other stakeholders. Noting that there was already a considerable amount of agreed text on these topics that had been negotiated multilaterally, he cautioned against repeating earlier discussions.

ICELAND highlighted the results of the International Seminar on the Hydrogen Economy for Sustainable Development held in September 2006, in Reykjavik.

REGIONAL PRESENTATIONS: The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) recommended the need to value the externalities of fossil fuel sources to reveal the competitiveness of alternatives sources, and the importance of developing Strategic Environmental Impact Assessments for policies, plans and programmes to promote a broader vision of energy beyond the sector.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) reviewed its recommendations, including the development of cleaner technologies, promoting the use of natural gas, and compensating Arab nations for losses incurred as a consequence of measures adopted by industrialized countries to meet internationally-agreed commitments on climate change.

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) recommended actions to: increase energy access for the urban poor; develop more flexible financing mechanisms and more supportive industrial policies; and establish early warning systems and forums focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) recommended integrating energy issues into development planning, improving energy efficiency and security, and increasing the share of renewable energy.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) proposed: shifting the focus from economic efficiency to ecological efficiency; developing advanced,

renewable and cost-effective energy technologies, including fossil fuels; developing sustainable infrastructure; and addressing consumption patterns.

The G-77/China stated that some Regional Commissions' reports do not necessarily reflect the views of governments.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION WITH MAJOR GROUPS:

Interactive discussions with Major Groups took place in the morning, informed by a secretariat paper on major group priorities on the four current CSD themes (E/CN.17/2007/7).

WOMEN called for mainstreaming gender considerations in the energy area, especially regarding access to affordable energy services and highlighted the impact of indoor pollution on women, alternative energy sources, and enhancing the role of women as agents of change, with representation on CSD bodies and delegations.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH emphasized renewables as the key to a sustainable future, called for a clear definition of sustainable energy, and for phasing out nuclear energy. He doubted reliance on climate change partnerships alone, called for responsible industrial development, and for measurable targets and timelines, and recalled UN commitments to include youth in government delegations.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE highlighted the daily effects of climate change on traditional ways of life, and suggested that policy options prioritize social and ecological balance and respect for human rights. He called for sustainable energy development, phasing out nuclear energy and dissemination of clean and renewable energy technologies.

NGOs called for a new paradigm, including: equitable and full access to energy services; time bound targets and commitments integrated with poverty strategies; phasing out subsidies to fossil fuels and nuclear energy; a comprehensive strategy on financing; policies on indoor air pollution; agreement to restrict climate change to below 2°C; and Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects that meet "gold standards."

LOCAL AUTHORITIES outlined a wide range of activities being undertaken at the municipal level, supported strengthened early warning systems, and funding not only for pilot projects but for replication.

WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS noted the critical role of industrial policy, and said the CSD should emphasize industrial relations as a tool for implementation. He urged delegates to avoid any obsession with privatization, and described climate change as the "biggest market failure in history."

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY said market forces should be encouraged, with a focus on improving access, enabling investment, supporting research and technological innovation, and strengthening and building partnerships.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES said current technologies are not adequate to meet growing energy needs in an environmentally-friendly manner, and the level of investment is not sufficient. He highlighted national circumstances, energy efficiency, renewables, less polluting fossil fuel systems, and nuclear energy.

FARMERS stressed the need for increased support to farmers, particularly in developing countries, to mitigate and adapt to climate change. He urged governments to foster partnerships with research communities, mobilize support for farmers, and invite full farmer participation in shaping bioenergy policies.

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS): The afternoon session was chaired by CSD-15 Vice-Chairs Frances Lisson (Australia) and Alain Edouard Traore (Burkina Faso).

Leslie John Walling, Executive Director of the Caribbean Conservation Association, reviewed the participatory approaches used in the past decade to develop climate change capacities and projects to support adaptation efforts and increase resilience. He said the focus should now turn to the community level, and reviewed lessons learned from major projects in his region.

Paul Fairbairn, Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), noted the linkages between the four thematic issues and highlighted the overarching importance of energy security and access, especially in the

Pacific where 70 percent of people do not have access to modern energy supplies. He identified the need to: reduce reliance on fossil fuels and address supply and pricing issues; increase the percentage of new and renewable energy in the energy mix; and promote energy efficiency and conservation.

Tom Goreau, President of the Global Coral Reef Alliance, said SIDS are the first and worst casualties of global warming, adding that rising temperatures have been exceeding the predictions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). He focused on the plight of coral reefs. He also reviewed new technologies developed to utilize biofuels and tidal power, transform sewage into fuel, grow coral reefs to restore habitat and reduce vulnerabilities, and store carbon as charcoal in the soil.

Many SIDS noted the urgency of the climate change threat, and the need for substantial increases in financial and technical support. Cape Verde, speaking on behalf of AOSIS, cautioned against reliance on imported fossil fuels, and stressed the need to adapt energy efficiency to SIDS' special needs, and to develop renewable sources, like wind and solar energy. She stated that mitigation and adaptation to climate change are a major priority, and that assistance to SIDS should be increased to promote national strategies and regional initiatives. She called for completing post-Kyoto negotiations before the end of 2008.

BARBADOS noted the slow response from donors to assist vulnerable countries. **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** called for innovative renewable energy use, South-South cooperation, reviewing GEF activities, and SIDS' use of the Clean Development Mechanism.

The EU said all four thematic areas are key to reducing the vulnerability of SIDS to their greatest challenge, climate change, and that it is important for them to develop renewable energy resources to lessen reliance on fuels with unpredictable prices. He reaffirmed the EU's commitment to supporting SIDS in promoting mitigation and adaptation measures.

TUVALU said climate change has already caused destruction and relocation of communities, and proposed a SIDS climate change trust fund and various other financing options, and **FIJI** said CSD-15 should focus on financing to meet rural and poor women's energy needs.

NORWAY highlighted the vital importance of the Mauritius Strategy, and links between the Arctic and SIDS, for instance in terms of sea level rise. She also recalled proposals for an aviation levy to help address climate change adaptation. She added that Norway is ready to play its part in a more ambitious agreement on climate change beyond 2012.

The US supported a focus on implementation, noted that the CSD should not try to tackle issues under the UNFCCC mandate, and proposed dedicating time to identifying successful projects and solutions, and how to replicate these. **JAPAN** stressed the need for disaster management plans. Noting that 1300 small islands are part of its territory, **INDIA** outlined its programmes and financial support for SIDS.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Many participants were already speculating on what the Chair's negotiating draft, to be distributed towards the end of the week, might look like. Several seemed eager to see it sooner rather than later. Some delegates were also heard talking about possible areas of discord. There was speculation that differences might emerge on renewable energy. Some parties were eager to put this issue high on the agenda, while others preferred discussion on "new and renewable" energy sources, which would focus on other technologies, such as those that could "green" fossil fuels. Nuclear energy was referred to as another prickly problem where divergent views are likely to persist.

A handful of delegates were heard commenting on the interactive discussion with Major Groups. "It was neither interactive nor a discussion," said a participant. "There were no interventions from the floor to respond to the Major Groups – why didn't we take this opportunity to interact more?"