

CSD-17 IPM HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2009

The Intersessional Preparatory Meeting (IPM) for the 17th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17) opened on Monday morning, 23 February 2009, at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates offered opening statements, heard presentations from major groups, and discussed small island developing states' (SIDS) situation with regard to the CSD-17 thematic cluster: Africa, agriculture, desertification, drought, land and rural development.

OPENING PLENARY

Opening the meeting, Gerda Verburg, CSD-17 Chair and Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Netherlands, highlighted the continued relevance of the food and energy crises for CSD-17. She stressed resolving these crises through a sustainable green revolution by: investing in more sustainable agriculture; creating an enabling environment for farmers; developing sustainable production chains; improving market access; and providing food aid and social safety nets for the most vulnerable. She proposed that CSD-17 develop a voluntary set of criteria for the sustainable production of biofuels.

Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, stressed the relevance of sustainable development in addressing current global challenges and crises and called for integrated solutions and addressing climate change.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Chair Verburg introduced the agenda and organization of work for the IPM (E/CN.17/IPM/2009/1). Delegates adopted both without comment.

Chair Verburg noted that the CSD had not yet elected Vice-Chairs from three regional groups. Delegates agreed to allow the following candidates to act in the capacity of Vice-Chairs during the IPM: Kaire Mbuende (Namibia), Tania Raguz (Croatia) and Ana Bianchi (Argentina). They also agreed that Tania Raguz would serve as Rapporteur of the IPM.

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORTS AND

INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS: Tariq Banuri, Director of the Division for Sustainable Development, introduced the reports of the Secretary-General on the six thematic issues (E/CN.17/2009/3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9).

Vice-Chair Mbuende presented the outcome of the intersessional meeting on African Agriculture in the 21st Century (E/CN.17/2009/14), which convened in Windhoek, Namibia, in

February 2009. Vice-Chair Javad Mansour (Iran) presented the report of the intersessional workshop on capacity building held in Bangkok, Thailand, in January 2009 (E/CN.17/2009/13).

On behalf of the five UN Regional Commissions, Ousmane Laye highlighted each region's challenges and priorities. He stressed agriculture as an emerging priority on the international agenda and the centrality of land in addressing the socio-economic and political crises.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Sudan, for the G-77/CHINA, said the thematic cluster's interlinkages call for equally interlinked policies and measures, and welcomed Brazil's offer to host a Summit in 2012 to review progress made from the Johannesburg, Rio and Stockholm Summits.

The Czech Republic, on behalf of the EU, emphasized: food security; Africa as a global theme, with attention to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), capacity building for civil society and other components of good governance, and development of the Doha Development Agenda; and cooperation between governments and stakeholders active in implementation.

Bangladesh, on behalf of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), underscored, *inter alia*: fulfilling official development assistance (ODA) commitments; cancelling all LDC external debts; and ensuring that the intellectual property regime provides access to appropriate technologies at affordable costs for climate-resilient crops. Grenada, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), emphasized intergenerational equity and said land and rural development strategies should be "bottom up" and integrate local consultation as well as traditional, cultural knowledge with the achievement of global sustainable development goals. Tonga, for the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), highlighted challenges to the region's sustainable development and called for solutions that include community participation and taking account of traditional land tenure systems.

Oman, for the ARAB GROUP, drew attention to the region's ministerial resolutions of 2007 and 2009 and the impact of conflicts on its sustainable development, and supported the call for a meeting to address the current financial crisis. Senegal, for the AFRICAN GROUP, recalled past commitments to support Africa and stressed agriculture's enormous potential to reduce poverty. CANADA emphasized the CSD's power as an inclusive convening forum and a focus on the existing CSD programme of work. The US said: food security and sustainable development are top priorities for the newly-elected US Administration; current information and available communication technology

should be employed; capacity for land planning and management should be developed based on ecological conditions; and the CSD should support innovation at the local level.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION highlighted participatory approaches and food security, and said it is building its donor capacity. AUSTRALIA highlighted food security as a priority and stressed: improving market efficiency and agricultural productivity; providing new investments in rural development in developing countries; and addressing climate change.

DIALOGUE WITH MAJOR GROUPS

The afternoon session opened with statements from the Major Groups identified in the Major Groups' Priorities for Action (E/CN.17/2009/10). WOMEN called for partnerships linking women leaders and women farmers. CHILDREN and YOUTH underscored the importance of pastoralism and indigenous knowledge. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES highlighted participatory processes and the need to integrate traditional knowledge into rural development policies.

NGOs emphasized, *inter alia*, the: needs of small-holder farmers; use of agro-ecological strategies; women's central role in agriculture; and attention to customary land-use practices. LOCAL AUTHORITIES said local-level officials are rising to the challenges under discussion, but need help. WORKERS and TRADE UNIONS stressed green growth and the role of green jobs, the regulation of commodity markets, and the need to shift from informal to formal work in the agricultural sector and to foster protection of workers in the sector.

BUSINESS and INDUSTRY stressed the importance of private/public partnerships. SCIENTIFIC and TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES highlighted the need to target knowledge and technology to the needs of small farmers. FARMERS identified five key areas for action: agriculture, policies to attract investments, women farmers, rural strategies to promote land tenure and policy focus on desertification.

The EU said CSD-17's policy decisions should reflect the roles of major groups, including in: fostering women's and girls' access to education, protecting indigenous land and traditional livelihoods, improving land tenure systems and land rights, supporting local community food systems, and promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns.

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

The G-77/CHINA expressed concern with the state of implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI). AOSIS looked forward to the General Assembly's High-Level Review of MSI in 2010. PSIDS highlighted the importance of direct financing to communities and urged donor partners to continue assistance through training, capacity building and development projects.

Three panelists then presented comments on SIDS' concerns. Djaheezah Subratty, Ministry of Environment and National Development, Mauritius, discussed policy responses to climate change. She described the vulnerability of SIDS in the face of climate change and how livelihoods, land uses and biodiversity are impacted. Donovan Stanberry, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Jamaica, highlighted the role of: high-quality extension services; crop insurance; research and extension services for adaptation on the small level; appropriate technologies to increase productivity; and land tenure reform. Amb. Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia (Samoa), on behalf of the SIDS of the Pacific Islands Forum Group, suggested identifying which development project pathways are truly cost-effective, and asked if there will be credible statistical data to determine whether progress has been made during the 2010 review of MSI.

The EU recognized the CSD's fundamental role in reviewing challenges of SIDS, and highlighted its Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA). The US underscored the importance of investments in education and science, communication, technologies and extension services in assisting SIDS. JAPAN said adaptation is as important as mitigation, underscored the importance for LDCs and SIDS to take short-term measures to respond to disasters, and discussed Japan's role in strengthening human resources and capacity through assistance programs to PSIDS.

AUSTRALIA discussed its projects with SIDS, including in climate change adaptation efforts. CHINA said special and targeted support should be provided to countries with specific problems, and highlighted the need to prevent a surge of protectionism. SWITZERLAND noted that tourism is a productive sector in SIDS and suggested exploiting ecotourism opportunities.

NIGERIA said he had not heard much new in the presentations, and emphasized the lack of access to funding. JAMAICA underscored how agriculture is key to achieving food security and highlighted the importance of scientific and technological innovation as well as partnerships for capacity building and transfer. He underscored the importance of sustainable agriculture insurance schemes to mitigate natural disasters. MICRONESIA asked what strategies can address the problem of saltwater contamination of groundwater and whether high food prices could become a stimulus for production.

ANTIGUA and BARBUDA welcomed the discussion on practical measures, such as insurance schemes, and their inclusion in the CSD-17 negotiating document.

ARGENTINA emphasized the need to facilitate market access for SIDS. FIJI highlighted the model partnership developed with Italy, Austria and the city of Milan. GUATEMALA said environmental issues should be dealt with in a systemic manner, and that development models must be environmentally and socially sustainable.

INDIA called for SIDS-driven support, said SIDS are affected by the financial crisis and need attention, and highlighted India's financial support to SIDS. NORWAY called for mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in national development plans and sectoral policies, and linking them to MDGs. CHILE expressed hope that "Copenhagen will favor adaptation and give priority to SIDS and to developing countries."

IN THE CORRIDORS

At the close of the IPM's first day, some highlighted that they had not heard any surprises in country positions and others expressed disappointment with the afternoon's "interactive dialogue that never was," lamenting that discussion with major groups was restricted due to time constraints. Nonetheless, many said they were optimistic that the moment for sustainable development may have finally arrived. Participants argued that the calls for systemic and institutional changes in environmental and financial governance and institutions require an integrated approach and coherent framework, which sustainable development is disposed to provide. As such, some said the proposed 2012 meeting could provide an opportunity to synthesize these aspects and to deliver what the CSD should have delivered two decades ago.