

CSD 17 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY 2009

The High-Level Segment opened on Wednesday morning, followed by roundtable discussions on “Responding to the food crisis through sustainable development” in the afternoon. CSD 17 delegates also negotiated draft recommendations in multiple Working Groups and informal consultations throughout the day and into the night.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

Chair Verburg opened the CSD 17 High-Level Segment in the General Assembly Hall. She said the objective of the High-Level Segment is to develop a shared vision. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted that sustainable agriculture can contribute to climate change mitigation. He urged CSD 17 to succeed and inspire the world to address its multiple, daunting challenges. Bharrat Jagdeo, President, Guyana, called for reforming multilateral institutions in a way that meaningfully integrates sustainable development into global decision-making and taking bold action on climate change at the Copenhagen meeting. Guyana offered itself as a model on REDD. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Namibia, said all CSD policy options will amount to nothing if means of implementation are not agreed upon. Sylvie Lucas, President of the Economic and Social Council, highlighted sustainable agricultural policies and land management. She said CSD 17 should produce clear deliverables and concrete actions. Homero Bibiloni, Secretary of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Argentina, said that, rather than mere statements or declarations, there is a need to implement measures to overcome existing crises. He stressed that agricultural subsidies and tariffs create an unequal playfield. Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director-General, IUCN, stressed the concept of investing in nature, a prime example of which is REDD. Shoaib Sultan Khan, Chairman, National Rural Support Programme, Pakistan, highlighted rural support programmes as experiences in empowering communities to take charge of their own development.

Sudan, for the G-77/CHINA, said the means of implementation are of the utmost importance. The Czech Republic, for the EU, stressed that sustainable use of ecosystem services is a message that has to come out of CSD 17. The US said sustainable agriculture is a lofty goal all must strive for. Jamaica, for AOSIS, called for CSD 17 to give priority to SIDS. Nauru, for PSIDS, highlighted the integration of climate adaptation strategies in development policies. The United Arab

Emirates, for the ARAB GROUP, emphasized the importance of addressing food security, strengthening investment in rural areas, providing the UNCCD with resources, and concerns regarding occupied territories. Bangladesh, for the LDCs, listed LDC priorities, including greater ODA, cancellation of LDC external debt, duty-free and quota-free market access for all LDC products before concluding the Doha Round, and support in building climate resilient development and disaster preparedness. JAPAN highlighted its cooperation with developing countries on climate change, its biomass initiatives, the “Satoyama Initiative” on biodiversity, and its stress on early formulation of rules on forest management and revegetation in the post-2012 climate regime. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed the need for the CSD to develop recommendations that address the food crisis and high food prices. ITALY reported the outcomes of recent G-8 meetings on environment and agriculture.

MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLES

CSD 17 Chair Verburg invited delegates to “take the plows into our hands and make the soil ready for sustainable agriculture,” and introduced the speakers for the roundtable on “Responding to the Food Crisis through Sustainable Development.” UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner highlighted that the climate change agenda offers the prospect for the rural economy to be part of the solution. Axumite Gebre-Egziabher, Director of UN-HABITAT’s New York office, on behalf of Executive Director Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, emphasized recognition of a range of land rights and a more holistic view of urban and rural issues, and strengthening intermediate forms of tenure and women’s land and property rights. Alexander Mueller, Assistant Director-General, Natural Resource Management and Environment Department, FAO, emphasized improved agricultural productivity and enhanced livelihoods in food security, expanded rural infrastructure and broadened market access. Rajul Pandya-Lorch, Head, International Food Policy Research Institute’s 2020 Vision Initiative, said: the food crisis is not over; the food and financial crises are intertwined; agricultural infrastructure investments should be promoted; market volatility should be reduced; and reliable and timely data and information and monitoring tools are needed.

Delegates then divided into two groups to discuss the roundtable theme. Kathleen Merrigan, US Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, and Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Namibian Minister of Environment and Tourism, co-chaired one roundtable. Speakers stressed: international cooperation; innovative technologies; good nutrition for

empowering individuals; efforts to help farmers develop their own organizations and cooperatives; building capacity for the production of value-added, branded produce; the need for more trade; the importance of access to markets and fair rules of the game, particularly in the WTO; addressing subsidy policies; creating a package of instruments to deal with speculation in the commodity markets; and the needs of small holder farmers, including those related to livestock. One speaker said a systematic approach to land redistribution is crucial for agricultural production. Others emphasized fair access and women's access to land tenure. On biofuels, one speaker said biofuels and food production should not be viewed as competing objectives. Others suggested exploring second generation options, and one suggested a moratorium on biofuel production for five years. YOUTH suggested treating food and water as basic human needs and ensuring that farmers have access to the information they need. One panelist stressed finding mechanisms and incentives to sustain investment in agriculture. Co-Chair Nandi-Ndaitwah said African governments are ready to invest in agriculture in accordance with the Maputo Declaration.

Manfred Bötsch, Secretary of Agriculture, Switzerland, and Oliver Dulic, Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, Serbia, co-chaired the other parallel roundtable. Some countries said eradicating poverty must be at the heart of sustainable development and genuine multilateral cooperation is needed. Others stressed adaptation to climate change and the right environment for investment. Some countries noted the importance of rural development and ecosystem-based farming practices. On food security, some speakers emphasized affordability of food and increasing food production. They also highlighted the need for both income-generating and food-producing agriculture. A speaker questioned how preservation of forests and agricultural development could be reconciled. The development of international guidelines on biofuels was also discussed, as was the value of micro-credit systems.

The panelists highlighted the role of formal and informal systems of production, sustainable land-use patterns, and the potential of agriculture to sequester carbon and its role in the production of bio-energy. One delegate stressed that biofuel production should not usurp food production. Another noted negative impacts of low agricultural prices and stressed the importance of reducing post-harvest losses. One country highlighted social safety nets and women's land tenure, while another supported the creation of a multilateral fund to finance climate adaptation for agriculture. FARMERS called for a holistic approach to agriculture, a re-engagement with farmers and recognition of agriculture's value in carbon sequestration.

WORKING GROUP 1

PREAMBLE: Working Group 1, under Co-Chair Mbuende, continued negotiations in the afternoon, by taking up trade issues in the Preamble, including references to the Doha Declaration, a trading system supportive of agriculture, and trade distortions. This followed the inability of the contact group on trade to negotiate compromise language. After discussing these issues, the Working Group again referred relevant paragraphs to the contact group.

Under Co-Chair Raguz, the Working Group took up language on food security in the Preamble. The US suggested combining several proposed paragraphs on this point, as well as referencing inadequate attention to agriculture and the urgent need to increase efforts at all levels to address food security and agricultural development. The G-77/CHINA said it was not against consolidation, but insisted on reference to "international support" in this context.

In a lengthy discussion of language on ODA, CANADA said it could not accept the level of detail suggested by the G-77/CHINA, and could not agree to new commitments, except recalling those already made in the Preamble. The Co-Chair asked the G-77/China, Canada, and the US to try to resolve language on this issue.

WORKING GROUP 2

Working Group 2 continued its negotiations in the afternoon in two sub-groups. Co-Chair Amin-Mansour facilitated negotiations on drought and desertification, and Co-Chair Bianchi facilitated negotiations on land.

DROUGHT: The G-77/CHINA could not accept reference to "at basin level, including transboundary level" in text on IWRM proposed by the EU. The EU objected to the mention of Article 5 and 6 of UNCCD in text on financial resources, and the G-77/CHINA opposed the EU's addition of "including" proceeding "in accordance with UNCCD."

A subparagraph on drought and desertification-related indicators was approved with the US addition of "bearing in mind the set of indicators within UNCCD regarding the Ten-year Strategic Plan and Framework." The G-77/CHINA and the US could not agree on text referencing funding and supporting research and development on underlying causes and effects of drought because the latter proposed "promote" instead of "increase" funding. Delegates agreed to the text on access to climate-related data relevant to mitigating the effects of drought after the G-77/CHINA accepted the US proposal of "facilitate" instead of "provide" access to data originally proposed by the former.

DESERTIFICATION: In the evening, delegates reached agreement on eight paragraphs.

LAND: Text was agreed on: encouraging voluntary domestic land policy indicators; using best available, useful and cost-effective technologies for the implementation of sustainable land management; improving existing and developing new risk management tools that build landscape resilience and systematically integrating them into land use and spatial planning strategies; ensuring that policy measures to reduce land degradation also promote poverty eradication and employment opportunities in developing countries; conserving and protecting land and soil resources through land use and spatial planning that promotes sustainable development in rural and urban areas; implementing policies that address the direct and indirect drivers of land degradation; implementing policies that lead to the recovery of the soil's physical integrity; promoting integrated land and water resources management in addressing land degradation and water scarcity and adapting to impacts of climate change; strengthening the coordination and cooperation among authorities responsible for managing water and land resources; and promoting equitable access to land and clear and secure land tenure, in particular for women, indigenous people and other vulnerable groups.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While CSD 17 grinds through its substantive agenda, a fairly large number of participants found themselves in a side event sponsored by Brazil, addressing the question of a Rio+20 event. The issue that seemed to evoke the most interest was the shape of a new institution to address sustainable development. After all, UNEP emerged from Stockholm in 1972 and the CSD emerged from Rio in 1992. So what is on delegates' minds for 2012? The idea of a possible umbrella structure was mentioned, to oversee both the CSD and UNEP. Initial reactions were mixed, but concern about the slowly eroding political impact of the CSD seemed reason enough to think about creating an alternative structure to deliver effective sustainable development governance.