

CSD 18 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 3 MAY 2010

The 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 18) opened on Monday morning, 3 May 2010, at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates adopted the agenda, offered opening statements and discussed regional implementation.

OPENING PLENARY

Opening the meeting, Luis Alberto Ferraté, CSD 18 Chair and Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources, Guatemala, encouraged a constructive and pragmatic dialogue. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, on behalf of Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, stressed, *inter alia*: significant new challenges have arisen since transport was last considered by the CSD; chemicals issues remain under-resourced; the dearth of quality data is a global obstacle for waste management; subsidies for mining decrease incentives for green activities; and capacity building is needed at national and local levels to achieve sustainable consumption.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Delegates elected as Vice-Chairs, by acclamation, Tania Raguž (Croatia), Ulf Jaeckel (Germany), and Eduardo Menez (Philippines) to replace Hilario Davide (Philippines). Menez was elected as Rapporteur. Delegates recalled that Mohamed Al-Mabrok Alahraf (Libya) had been elected during the first session of CSD 18. Delegates also adopted the agenda and organization of work without amendments (E/CN.17/2010/1).

OPENING STATEMENTS: Yemen, for the G-77/CHINA, highlighted the new challenges of transport in developing countries, environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals, and waste management, including e-waste. Referring to mining, he reiterated the sovereign rights of developing countries over national resources. He called for delinking growth from environment degradation, for the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, and underlined the importance of this year for SIDS.

The EU said CSD 18 is an excellent opportunity to revisit the core message of sustainable development, and to share best practices and exchange information. He stressed that sustainable consumption and production interlink the other issues of this CSD cycle, and the 10-year framework of programmes on SCP patterns can be a major response to how to green our economies.

Nepal, on behalf of the LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, emphasized links between the themes and the paucity of financial resources to address them. Chile, for the RIO GROUP, described regional advances in addressing SCP and other

issues, cautioned developed countries of maintaining a culture of overconsumption, and urged technology transfer, capacity building and predictable new and additional financial resources.

Lebanon, on behalf of the ARAB GROUP, called for ensuring balance between economic and social development and for implementing governmental commitments, especially based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. He also called for ending illegal activities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Paraguay, on behalf of the GROUP OF LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, highlighted the challenges of high transportation costs faced by landlocked countries. The Solomon Islands, on behalf of the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS), stressed the unique situation of “sea-locked” countries especially in accessing markets. The Federated States of Micronesia, on behalf of PACIFIC SIDS, underscored the difficulty in accessing international finance, and the possibility that some islands would be made uninhabitable due to climate change. St. Vincent and the Grenadines, on behalf of the CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM), called for increased partnership at the international level and concrete financing plans to support development efforts. Nigeria, for the AFRICAN GROUP, underscored that Africa remains the world’s most vulnerable continent, and stressed the importance of fulfilling commitments made.

The US emphasized: the application of science and innovation; using a “one size does not fit all” perspective focused on tailored solutions that may include regulatory approaches, such as those being considered in the mercury negotiations, and partnerships; and good governance, transparent use of scientific data and involvement of all affected parties. CHINA suggested focusing international cooperation on sustainable development on: implementing the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; promoting common development for mutual benefit and win-win results; and securing funding and technology and strengthening result-oriented cooperation. JAPAN stressed the need for a new model of sustainable consumption and production patterns, and stressed climate change and biodiversity loss are the key issues that put global sustainability at risk. INDONESIA called for practical, action-oriented recommendations for CSD 19 to initiate necessary reforms in consumption and production patterns.

ISRAEL highlighted environmental education, sustainable lifestyles, new partnerships and new solutions for achieving sustainable development. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed concrete data and analysis taking into account economic and social aspects of various issues. IRAN highlighted efficient and sustainable transportation systems. INDIA reported on national plans and activities in the field of energy and emission-cutting.

CANADA said the strength of the CSD lies in its inclusiveness, especially in view of the role of stakeholders. SWITZERLAND noted that all current themes are interrelated and are vital elements of the green economy.

STATEMENTS BY MAJOR GROUPS: WOMEN called for gender equality in sustainable development, CHILDREN AND YOUTH stressed awareness, education and empowerment, and INDIGENOUS PEOPLES noted the overexploitation of natural resources. NGOs called for an organic change in nature's structure, and for an ethic of reciprocity. LOCAL AUTHORITIES noted their instrumental role in implementation, and WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS urged decent work and safer conditions. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY highlighted the ability of the private sector to develop innovative solutions. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY said applying sound scientific knowledge must be central to solutions for the CSD 18 themes. FARMERS urged a substantial increase in agricultural investment.

REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: The ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC) presented outcomes from their Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM), observing that social inequality and diverse productive structures have made it difficult for great progress in the region. ARGENTINA emphasized the need for: attention to public transportation; effective financial mechanisms for chemical management; increased education for waste management; and energy efficient mining programmes. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA presented the perspective of a Caribbean SIDS, highlighting, *inter alia*, challenges related to inter and intra-regional transportation, the value of investment in public transportation systems and capacity building, and the issue of transshipment of hazardous material.

During the discussion, participants emphasized: inclusion of green technology in economic recovery strategies; work programmes combating social inequality and improving production patterns; the lack of clarity regarding the concept of green economy and its relationship with poverty eradication; the need to balance growth of food and biofuel crops; the importance of the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel Conventions and the upcoming negotiations for a mercury convention; inequalities between consumers with different levels of income; and the special vulnerability of SIDS.

AFRICA: South Africa summarized the outcome of the Africa RIM. The ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA) highlighted the need for systems and mechanisms that promote integrated planning. The AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION (AUC) underscored the important role of regional economic communities, noting they provide effective links between national and regional level priorities.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted: waste management; connecting the issues of sustainable consumption and African food systems; integrated development and management of natural resources; the need for a waste management strategy for Africa; access to technologies; the private sector's role in managing chemicals and wastes; adapting and replicating good practices in sound management of wastes and chemicals; shifting to more sustainable consumption patterns; reusing and recycling resources; and moving to a low-carbon economy.

EUROPE: Vice-Chairs Raguz and Jaekel informed on the fourth UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) RIM. It reviewed progress on the region's sustainable development commitments on CSD 18 themes, and noted different progress in sub-regions in Europe. Special importance was accorded to SCP. Victoria Thoresen, Headmark University College, Norway, described regional barriers and constraints on SCP, in particular: slow transition from consumerism; little financial support for

initiatives and few of incentives; and reluctance to include education on SCP in curricula. Patrick Chevalier, Department of Natural Resources Canada, described green mining initiatives and impact benefits agreements with indigenous peoples.

During the discussion, delegates commented on: addressing poverty reduction and SCP as interlinked and independent challenges; recognizing the contribution of youth to education on sustainable development; the exclusion of major group representatives due to the pass requirements for CSD 18; and linkages with issues discussed during the April 2010 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: Vice Chair Menez presented the outcomes of the Asia and Pacific RIM. The INSTITUTE FOR GEO-RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT, Japan, promoted the concept of "geoethics," which takes into account indigenous knowledge on local mining and conservation. The UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNESCAP) discussed sustainable development in the region, and called for a paradigm shift to sustainable growth patterns.

In the ensuing discussion, participants: noted national concerns with POPs and nuclear waste; stressed the need to ensure corporate social responsibility is implemented in a harmonized manner; expressed a willingness to participate in the Partnership on Clean Development and Climate involving seven countries; noted existence of partnerships on chemicals and mining in the region; expressed concern with increasing consumption as means for enhancing development; highlighted a willingness to share experience in promoting green development; urged incorporating the interests of the indigenous peoples in mining activities; urged helping farmers get their produce to market; and appealed to businesses, governments and consumer activities to work together to achieve sustainable development.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On Monday morning, the unusual configuration of the aircraft hangar-like North Lawn temporary building created some confusion among CSD 18 participants, as they tried to cope with a drastically reduced seating area (two seats per delegation) and restricted access to the conference rooms. The initial dearth of headphones made it difficult for some to grasp interventions by the Spanish-speaking Chair. Several delegates noted that the Secretariat was trying hard to alleviate the disruption caused by renovation work in the UN compound, while some NGOs questioned the secondary pass system that UN Security required, given the expectation that the smaller conference rooms would reach capacity. Their objections rose in the afternoon, when they still were denied entry to sparsely attended regional discussions without the proper pass. The variety of secondary pass types, from "liaison" (for those who could enter the conference rooms to deliver messages but could not "loiter" or listen to the discussions), to "day" (which must be obtained on a daily basis) to "permanent," confused everyone, including security guards, and left some wondering why the annual CSD meeting was not moved to Geneva during the UN Headquarters renovation.

Despite the hiccups, the meeting quickly segued into the familiar CSD routine, including a consistent breach of the five, three and one minute speech limit, depending on the category of speaker. As the oppressive humid atmosphere in the gleaming white Conference Room 1 lifted with perked up air-conditioning, substantive statements from the floor directly addressing the themes of the CSD 18 agenda also perked up those who had come to New York to identify sustainable development policy options.