

CSD 18 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 4 MAY 2010

Delegates to CSD 18 continued discussing regional perspectives on the thematic topics during the morning. In the afternoon, they discussed transport and chemicals.

REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS

WEST ASIA: The UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA presented outcomes from their RIM, and highlighted regional priorities including: moving into mass transport systems; the adoption of an international finance mechanism to support the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM); and the need to address e-waste. SAUDI ARABIA discussed progress achieved in the region including success in mining of non-ferrous minerals. He stressed that mining could help improve the livelihoods of poor people.

PALESTINE described the problems in transport and waste management in the occupied territories, and urged CSD 18 to consider the unique circumstances of the Palestinian people. CAMBODIA introduced national efforts related to the 3Rs and 3Cs (clean air, clean water and clean soil), and stressed the importance of CSD attention to environmentally sound transport. FARMERS emphasized the need for technology transfer to farmers in the region.

Topics discussed by delegates and panelists included: the need for real breakthroughs in renewable energy technologies; concerns about effects of natural resource mining on indigenous peoples and children; activity in the occupied Palestine territories; and the lack of a clear definition of “green economy,” to be clarified by the Rio +20 PrepCom.

CROSS-REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES: Marco Keiner, UNECE, reviewed regional policies and best practices for sustainable development, highlighting cross-regional programmes such as: the development of Euro-Asian inland transport links by UNECE and ESCAP; ECLAC and ESCAP cooperation on the promotion of sustainable urban infrastructure; and the Global Energy Efficiency Project. He also discussed South-South cooperation including projects such as the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) system in Latin America and Africa, regional cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean in implementing the Marrakech 10-Year Framework of Programmes, and the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association fostering inter-Arab dialogue between suppliers and stakeholders.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted: that more opportunity should be given to hear the views of major groups; the need to move from pilot projects and experiments to broad reform of agricultural activities to replenish nutrient deficient soil; successful examples of partnership approaches

to sustainable development; the need to follow through and implement past decisions; examples of successful youth-led cross-regional partnerships; the need to associate CSD with the financing for development process; and the impacts of toxic and radioactive discharges on indigenous peoples.

The AFRICAN UNION (AU) expressed appreciation to the EU for its support in implementing cooperative programmes between the AU and EU on food security and disaster reduction. The UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) stressed the importance of cleaner production and called for sharing experiences in this area. SWITZERLAND said the topics under the thematic cluster of CSD 18 and 19 are all related to the green economy. WOMEN highlighted institutional capacity, financial resources and mainstreaming the gender issue. The EU said national projects can become regional projects and can find funding with the EU. BRAZIL said his country intended to expand international cooperation with all the regions. NIGERIA expressed concern with the transboundary movement of wastes.

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

TRANSPORT: The session was chaired by Vice-Chair Meñez. Kathleen Abdalla, DESA/DSD, introduced the UN Secretary-General’s report on transport (E/CN.17/2010/4). Panelist Andre Lago, Ministry of External Relations, Brazil, focused on BRT systems, using the example of the city of Curitiba, and on the need to exchange information on biofuels. He described the advantages of using a gasoline/biofuel mix in vehicles, and stressed its economic importance for developing countries. He noted that the report was inadequate on that point, criticized the “new colonialist mentality” in refusing to see the advantages of biofuels, and urged emulating Brazil’s experience.

Panelist Allison Davis, a consultant with Arup (US), stressed that the reduction of vehicle miles traveled is an important way to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Stating that improving public transport is a political, not technical, issue, she noted the following challenges: poor pedestrian environments, fragmented transit provisions; disconnect between residential and transport development; auto-supportive policies; weak political institutions; and lack of implementation data.

The G-77/CHINA said areas for action include: the expansion of all-weather road networks in rural areas; the establishment and improvement of multi-modal transport systems; the improvement of coverage and affordability of public mass transit; and supporting alternative modes such as cycling and pedestrianization. The EU’s key messages included: transport demand needs to be optimized and external costs across all transport modes should be internalized; sustainable forms of mobility should be promoted; transport options need to be decarbonized; and global solutions need to be facilitated.

The AFRICAN GROUP said obstacles include: inadequate policies; limited implementation of sub-regional and regional agreements; funding gaps; and the need for technical and institutional capacity assistance. Pacific SIDS (PSIDS) highlighted a role for the international community in developing the international standard infrastructure for shipping and aviation facilities and the capacity to maintain this.

The ARAB GROUP noted work to strengthen transport including improved fuel and oil, infrastructures and emissions standards. The US identified public-private partnerships such as its Smart Wave Programme. CHILDREN AND YOUTH challenged delegates to recognize that transportation encourages social and economic development as well as meets economic needs. FRANCE described efforts in modernizing river transport, while CANADA identified investment in a sustainable transport stimulus fund and creation of new emission standards. ISRAEL called for fuel taxation and demand management mechanisms to internalize costs of transport. BRAZIL emphasized their attention to biofuel production as a key change in “mentalities” towards transport. CHINA identified the creation of new regulatory standards and implementation strategies prioritizing development of urban public transportation.

WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS noted that long commutes waste workers’ time and transport projects have job-creation benefits. SENEGAL emphasized cooperation at the sub-regional level and multi-modal transport, among others. Panelist Lago highlighted the role of the CSD in sharing information and best practices.

UGANDA said there is not yet a standard definition of “green economy.” LIBYA said a new rail line linking his country with Tunisia has just opened, and emphasized further integration of transportation within Africa. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION highlighted road traffic safety issues and called attention to the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety his country hosted in November 2009. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY reported on efforts the airline and road transport industries are undertaking that will reduce GHG emissions. Panelist Davis encouraged the development and use of long-term transportation plans to identify and sequence projects as funding becomes available.

CHEMICALS: Vice Chair Raguž chaired the session. Muhammad Chaudhry, DSD, introduced the Secretary-General’s report on chemicals (E/CN.17/2010/5). Panelist Ivan Erzen, Slovenia, noted that the world is yet to reach the optimum relationship between the benefits and risks of chemicals. He underscored the need for increased cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). Panelist Jamidu Katima, International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), highlighted the importance of access to information, political will, capacity building and financial resources in implementing SAICM. Panelist Pat Mooney, ETC Group, said that impacts of nanotechnology, synthetic biology, and geo-engineering on the environment, health and security should be assessed and managed.

The G-77/CHINA expressed concern with the dumping of chemicals and radioactive wastes in developing countries, and urged businesses to adhere to corporate responsibility in the countries of their operation. The EU highlighted the need to integrate chemicals management into countries’ overarching sustainable development strategies and, supported by INDONESIA, requested CSD 18 to reflect the outcomes of the simultaneous extraordinary meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. The ARAB GROUP called on the developed countries to help the developing countries in implementing SAICM and expressed concern with chemical wastes in the occupied territories.

SLOVENIA suggested involving WHO country offices in chemical management. CANADA highlighted the importance of focusing on ensuring full and effective implementation of

existing global agreements and in utilizing existing fora such as SAICM. INDONESIA highlighted the importance of capacity building and financing for chemical management. ISRAEL introduced its efforts in chemicals management and expressed willingness to share experiences.

Poland, for the Central and Eastern Europe Group (CEE), highlighted the importance and usefulness of the Globally Harmonized System for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) and stressed the need to translate it into languages. URUGUAY underscored the role for regional organizations in transfer of technology and training. LIBYA stressed dumping of hazardous material in developing countries should be condemned in all fora. CUBA supported the work on synergies among the chemicals and wastes conventions and said existing commitments should be implemented before developing new ones. AUSTRALIA highlighted examples of regional cooperation and support to the Pacific region. ARGENTINA underscored the success of the Montreal Protocol and said its financing structure should be used as a model. NORWAY provided examples on how the use of chemicals will be affected by climate change. SWITZERLAND stated the upcoming mercury negotiations offer the opportunity to address compliance issues with a new approach. BRAZIL emphasized that transfer of technology should be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. GUATEMALA said synergies should result in better implementation of the three conventions. Stressing the need for cost effective and environmentally sound alternatives, INDIA said DDT has an important role in vector control. MEXICO stressed the need to enhance the institutional capacity. SENEGAL highlighted subregional activities to harmonize chemicals practices. The US described its chemicals management programme and steps taken to identify safer alternatives.

The INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) underscored its extensive work on chemical safety, and the integrated approach taken by chemical industries and trade unions. CHILDREN AND YOUTH stressed the usefulness of life-cycle assessment in dealing with chemicals. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY provided examples of capacity building projects undertaken in developing countries. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES recommended that awareness and sensitization be undertaken with communities to empower them to manage their chemicals related risk.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On the second day of CSD 18, the entry-pass situation seemed to be on the path to resolution: more passes were distributed. Apparently, the Bureau addressed the issue, and the need for secondary passes was being looked into. However, there was widespread understanding among participants of the reasons for tightened security both in New York (following the Times Square bomb scare) and the UN compound, where another important event – the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference – is being attended by several top-level dignitaries, among them Iranian President Ahmadinejad and US Secretary of State Clinton. If the access situation had some implications for NGO participation, civil society was making a visible contribution during the side events. Some of the latter are referred to as being livelier, more provocative and informative than the “official” discussions. They also provide an opportunity to engage directly with governments and UN agencies. Some in the corridors have suggested that it is in the side events that the involvement of civil society is strongly felt, and in the long run this would be a measure of the CSD’s effectiveness.