



SIDS PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 14 APRIL 2004

The 12th session of the Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD-12) opened on Wednesday at UN headquarters in New York. During the opening Plenary, the Commission heard opening remarks, elected its officers, and adopted its agenda and organization of work. Preparations for the International Meeting (IM) to review the implementation of the programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS), commenced with consideration of accreditation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other Major Groups to the IM, followed by introductory statements and a presentation of the outcome of the SIDS inter-regional meeting. In the late morning and through the afternoon, delegates convened in informal consultations to begin deliberation on the Strategy Document.

OPENING PLENARY

CSD-12 Chair Børge Brende, Norway's Minister of the Environment, opened the session, noting that it is the first to be held under the new CSD work programme. He said CSD-12 and 13 offer a unique opportunity to focus on implementing actions to achieve the internationally-agreed goals on water, sanitation and human settlements. He also drew attention to the first three days of the session, devoted to the preparations for the IM.

Chair Brende noted that following CSD-11, he and Bruno Stagno Ugarte (Costa Rica) were elected to the CSD-12 Bureau, and that the election of other Bureau members was postponed. The Commission then elected by acclamation as its Vice-Chairs, Toru Shimizu (Japan), Bolus Paul Zom Lolo (Nigeria), and Eva Tomic (Slovenia), with Vice-Chair Lolo serving as Rapporteur.

Following a brief comment by the Secretariat on the provisional agenda and other organizational matters, including on the status of documentation for the session and on participation of intergovernmental organizations at CSD-12, the Commission adopted its agenda (E/CN.17/2004/1) and organization of work (E/CN.17/2004/1/Add.1 and E/CN.17/2004/L.1).

PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SIDS

The Commission adopted the list of NGOs and other Major Groups to the IM (E/CN.17/2004/9).

José Antonio Ocampo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, welcomed the CSD-11 decision to include the vulnerability of SIDS as a cross-cutting issue in the CSD's multi-year programme of work. Introducing the UN Secretary-General's report on Review of Progress in the Implementation

of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (E/CN.17/2004/8), he said the report provides a comprehensive review of the overall implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), describes the continuing challenges facing SIDS, and identifies those areas where additional support of the international community is required.

Underscoring the General Assembly resolution on the IM, Anwarul Chowdhury, Secretary-General of the Mauritius International Meeting, said the IM must examine the shortfalls in the implementation of the BPOA and address why matters have not advanced since the BPOA+5 review in 1999. He said it was necessary to focus on concrete actions regarding new and emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS, market access, information and communication technology, and security. He said the foremost questions for the IM are how the meeting can make a positive difference in promoting the welfare and wellbeing of the people in SIDS, and how SIDS can gain the support, genuine commitment and political will of all partners to make substantive headway in implementing the BPOA.

The BAHAMAS presented the outcomes of the inter-regional preparatory meeting held in Nassau, Bahamas in January 2004, highlighting the Nassau Declaration and the AOSIS Strategy Paper for the Further Implementation of the BPOA. She noted that during the meeting, delegates renewed calls for political will, increased financial resources, and greater support from the international community to facilitate SIDS' implementation of the BPOA.

Stating that they had endorsed the AOSIS Strategy Paper, Mauritius for the G-77/CHINA presented and outlined the Strategy Document, highlighting the special challenges faced by SIDS in sustainable development and urging greater understanding and cooperation from the international community in honoring their commitments from "Rio and Barbados." Noting concerns raised in the informal consultations that the Strategy Document is too long and lacks prioritization, he stressed that the document reflects the range of issues confronting SIDS and underlined the need to address these concerns in a holistic manner. On the UN Secretary-General's report, he cautioned against the impression that SIDS can resolve their sustainable development challenges by themselves, and said this idea does not embrace the spirit of partnership of the BPOA and WSSD. He welcomed a "full and frank" discussion on the best way forward.

Stating that the IM provides a unique opportunity to follow up on the implementation of agreements in the Millennium Declaration and the WSSD, Ireland for the EU said the IM should be action-oriented, have added value, and should not renegotiate the BPOA. He said the IM should reinforce the importance of country-driven and -owned strategies for poverty reduction and sustainable development, adding that it should focus on the role of the interna-

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tional community in supporting these national initiatives. He said the EU considers SIDS as key partners in the areas of climate change and renewable energy.

The US expressed concern over the structure and content of the Strategy Document, indicating that it: is a list of demands; is too long and detailed; seeks to change the international community's rules; seeks to alter language negotiated in other international fora; and contains issues that are not particular to SIDS. He highlighted that the concerns of the US are reflected in a non-paper, which was circulated during the intersessional informals.

TUVALU expressed hope that all delegations would see this meeting as an opportunity for dialogue, and asked delegates not to disregard the work of the SIDS ministers in developing the Strategy Document. He called on international financial institutions (IFIs) to fund BPOA implementation.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said the IM should make a significant contribution to the implementation of the WSSD outcomes, and must be carried out within the parameters of other international agreements.

Don MacKay (New Zealand), Facilitator of the intersessional informal consultations, reported on the two informal "informals," noting that these sessions provided delegates with the opportunity to express their initial views on the Strategy Document, including through a chapter-by-chapter reading where delegates identified areas of convergence and areas where further discussions would be required. Prior to closing the opening plenary, Chair Brende proposed, and the Commission agreed, to designate MacKay as Facilitator of the session's informal consultations.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: Facilitator MacKay opened the informal consultations, underscored the General Assembly's mandate of the IM, and stated that the informal consultations would focus on the Strategy Document and the agenda for the IM.

Delegates started with an initial reading of the introduction and the sections relating to climate change and sea-level rise, and natural and environmental disasters. They also began consideration of the section on waste management. Throughout the discussions, developed countries insisted on deleting language giving specific directives to the international community, suggesting instead that the text should "invite" the international community to support SIDS in their sustainable development activities.

Introduction: On the introductory paragraph, some developed countries suggested including text reaffirming SIDS' commitment to Agenda 21, the WSSD, Monterrey Consensus, and other international agreements on sustainable development. Developed countries also proposed deleting text on financial support and ODA, proposing instead to reference text from the Monterrey Consensus. Developing countries suggested that such text be included in a political declaration, stressing their preference to focus on the BPOA in the document. On language on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, delegates agreed to reference Rio Principle 7.

On good governance, developed countries preferred using language from the Monterrey Consensus, while developing countries suggested referencing text from the JPOI. Regarding text on the urgent need for greater democracy, transparency, and inclusiveness in international financial and economic systems to allow for the effective participation of SIDS in decision-making processes, several developed countries proposed deleting the existing paragraphs and replacing them with text from the Monterrey Consensus. While supporting the agreements reached in Monterrey, developing countries underscored the need for the Strategy Document to include steps that highlight the need for the democratization of IFIs.

On security, several developed countries proposed deleting text highlighting the diversion of financial resources from the sustainable development agenda to address security concerns.

On paragraphs relating to international law, human rights and the UN Charter, and to the role of UN bodies, several developed countries proposed streamlining and shortening the text, and making them more relevant to SIDS issues. Delegates agreed, without amendment, to paragraphs addressing the need to achieve sustainable development through the adoption of integrated and holistic approaches, the importance of culture and cultural diversity, and the integral role and participation of youth in sustainable development. A paragraph addressing South-South cooperation was agreed to with a minor amendment to include cooperation on oceans.

On gender equality and access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities and decision making systems for sustainable development, developed countries said the text should reference the relevant MDGs.

Climate change and sea-level rise: Some developed countries recognized that the issue of climate change is of particular importance to SIDS and that the text should emphasize moving toward a common goal to reduce greenhouse gases, rather than singling out needed actions from industrialized countries. Developing countries indicated that climate change is a global problem that requires global action, and that developed countries need to take responsibility for contributing to sea-level rise. While some developed countries called for merging text concerning the GEF with text on regional development banks and other IFIs, developing countries noted varying problems with the different funding mechanisms, and urged separating the two issues. Facilitator MacKay said new language proposed by several delegations would be considered at a later time.

Natural and environmental disasters: A number of developed countries called for deleting text on establishing an international fund for disaster reduction, and insurance and re-insurance arrangements for SIDS, including during the 10-year review of the Yokohama Strategy on Natural Disaster Reduction in 2005. Developing countries objected to these amendments.

Waste management: Delegates discussed the chapeau of this section. Several developed countries proposed deleting text addressing the disposal and transport of radioactive waste, and suggested substituting reference to World War II shipwrecks with text referring to "other forms of waste."

IN THE CORRIDORS

Facilitator MacKay opened Wednesday's informal consultations, noting that with 86 paragraphs to consider in the next three days, delegates would have approximately 10 minutes to devote to each paragraph. Faced with this monumental challenge, the international community commenced its work.

The first day of discussions saw limited movement on contentious issues, with seasoned sustainable development negotiators saying that discussions on finance and good governance resembled those previously experienced in Monterrey and Johannesburg. They also observed a growing trend by developed countries to block attempts to "go beyond" these agreements.

According to some observers, the initial comments on the Document revealed more divergences than convergences between developed and developing countries, with several delegates expressing concerns regarding the amount of bracketed text that could be forwarded to the IM. Several delegates were concerned with what would transpire in the intersessional period to assist in moving negotiations forward, with some suggesting formal negotiations and others resisting intersessional activity.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: Delegates will meet in the morning and afternoon in Conference Room 1 to continue deliberations on the Strategy Document. Delegates will also consider the provisional agenda of the IM.