

SUMMARY OF THE UNCSD (RIO+20) ARAB REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING: 16-17 OCTOBER 2011

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting convened from 16-17 October 2011 at the League of Arab States headquarters in Cairo, Egypt. The meeting was organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the League of Arab States and the UN Environment Programme/Regional Office for West Asia. The meeting aimed to support preparations for Rio+20 by offering a forum for deliberation and consensus building on a consolidated set of issues and priorities reflecting the Arab vision on the objectives and themes to be addressed at Rio+20. A regional capacity-building workshop for Major Groups was held on 15 October 2011.

Approximately 100 participants, including representatives of governments, international and regional organizations, and Major Groups, attended the meeting. On Sunday, 16 October, participants heard opening statements and sessions were convened on: assessing the progress to date and gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development; identifying new and emerging issues affecting progress towards sustainable development in the region; and the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD).

On Monday, 17 October, a session was convened on green economy opportunities and challenges facing the region in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Another session was held on securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development, which included a civil society panel and an expert panel. A small drafting group convened in the afternoon to discuss recommendations from the conference, which were then presented to the plenary for consideration. After lengthy discussions, the recommendations were approved.

This meeting took place in the context of recent changes in the Arab region that have raised expectations for progress and development. Some saw this as an opportunity to build on the momentum to create new forms of debate and participation.

Others, however, believed that some of the transitions in government might have hindered preparations for this regional meeting, and some expressed concern regarding lack of communication within and between ministries on the various issues.

Major Groups actively and eloquently engaged in this meeting in an unprecedented manner for UN regional processes, according to some delegates, who were quite surprised at the level of participation. Arab Youth made the first opening statement and Major Groups intervened during all the sessions.

On green economy, delegates highlighted the lack of a universal definition and agreed to identify green economy as a tool for sustainable development rather than as a new principle that might replace sustainable development. Some participants raised concerns that the green economy concept might add

IN THIS ISSUE

A Brief History of United Nations Sustainable Development Conferences	2
Report of the Meeting	3
Session 1: Assessing the progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development	4
Session 2: New and emerging challenges facing the Arab Region.	5
Session 3: The institutional framework for sustainable development	6
Session 4: A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication	7
Session 5: Securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development	9
Session 6: Recommendations and closing	9
Recommendations of the Arab Preparatory Meeting ..	10
Upcoming Meetings	11
Glossary	12

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Leila Mead, Olivia Pasini and Simon Wolf. The Digital Editor is Francis Dejon. The Editors are Leonie Gordon and Pamela S. Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James “Kimo” Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the Government of the United States of America (through the Department of State Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs), the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the European Commission (DG-ENV), and the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea. General Support for the *Bulletin* during 2011 is provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Australia, the Ministry of Environment of Sweden, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, SWAN International, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Japanese Ministry of Environment (through the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies - IGES), the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (through the Global Industrial and Social Progress Research Institute – GISPRI) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Specific funding for coverage of this meeting has been provided by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the European Commission. Funding for translation of the *Bulletin* into French has been provided by the Government of France, the Belgium Walloon Region, the Province of Québec, and the International Organization of the Francophone (OIF and IEPF). Funding for translation of the *Bulletin* into Spanish has been provided by the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs. The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD or other donors. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications with appropriate academic citation. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11D, New York, NY 10022, United States of America.

constraints on the development or socioeconomic requirements of their countries, and the recommendations from this meeting spell conditions for the use of any future green economy concept. Others stressed the economic and social opportunities of a green economic transition. They referred to various beneficial ongoing activities that can be seen as part of or contributing to this transition, such as the creation of low-carbon cities.

During the conference, participants highlighted the need for balance regarding the three pillars of sustainable development. Many delegates noted that its social dimension requires more attention and cautioned that Rio+20 should not focus on environmental issues only. Some participants also linked the lack of social progress to the current political tensions in various Arab states, saying that persisting unemployment and poverty despite economic growth demonstrate that current economic models are not successful.

Regarding the IFSD, many delegates brought their national experiences to the table, with some explaining, for example, that they have or are in the process of establishing national sustainable development councils. Some said they could not comprehensively discuss the international options until the proposals and their financial implications are fully fleshed out.

The recommendations from this meeting will be submitted to the Rio+20 Preparatory Committee, which is receiving inputs for the compilation document until 1 November 2011.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCES

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) will mark the 40th anniversary of the first major international political conference that specifically had the word “environment” in its title. The UNCSD seeks to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess progress and implementation gaps in meeting previously-agreed commitments, and address new and emerging challenges. The focus of the Conference includes the following themes to be discussed and refined during the preparatory process: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD).

UN CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT:

The UNCHE was held in Stockholm, Sweden, from 5-16 June 1972, and produced three major sets of decisions. The first decision was the Stockholm Declaration. The second was the Stockholm Action Plan, made up of 109 recommendations on international measures against environmental degradation for governments and international organizations. The third set of decisions was a group of five resolutions calling for: a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons; the creation of an international databank on environmental data; addressing actions linked to development and the environment; the creation of an environment fund; and establishing the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the central node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making.

WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

In 1983, the UN General Assembly established an independent commission to formulate a long-term

agenda for action. Over the next three years, the Commission—more commonly known as the Brundtland Commission, named for its Chair, Gro Harlem Brundtland—held public hearings and studied the issues. Its report, *Our Common Future*, which was published in 1987, stressed the need for development strategies in all countries that recognized the limits of the ecosystem’s ability to regenerate itself and absorb waste products.

The Commission emphasized the link between economic development and environmental issues, and identified poverty eradication as a necessary and fundamental requirement for environmentally sustainable development.

UN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

UNCED, also known as the Earth Summit, was held from 3-14 June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and involved over 100 Heads of State and Government, representatives from 178 countries, and some 17,000 participants. The principal outputs of UNCED were the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 (a 40-chapter programme of action) and the Statement of Forest Principles. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity were also opened for signature during the Earth Summit. Agenda 21 called for the creation of a Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), as a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED, enhance international cooperation, and examine progress in implementing Agenda 21 at the local, national, regional and international levels.

UNGASS-19: The 19th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS-19) for the Overall Review and Appraisal of Agenda 21 (23-27 June 1997, New York) adopted the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. It assessed progress since UNCED and examined implementation.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) met from 26 August-4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The goal of the WSSD, according to UNGA Resolution 55/199, was to hold a ten-year review of UNCED at the Summit level to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development. The WSSD gathered over 21,000 participants from 191 governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia and the scientific community. The WSSD negotiated and adopted two main documents: the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI); and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development.

The JPOI is designed as a framework for action to implement the commitments originally agreed at UNCED and includes chapters on: poverty eradication; consumption and production; the natural resource base; health; small island developing states; Africa; other regional initiatives; means of implementation; and institutional framework. The Johannesburg Declaration outlines the path taken from UNCED to the WSSD, highlights challenges, expresses commitment to sustainable development, underscores the importance of multilateralism and emphasizes the need for implementation.

64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY: On 24 December 2009, the UNGA adopted Resolution 64/236, which called for convening the UNCSD in 2012 in Brazil and for holding three Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings prior to the UNCSD. On 14 May 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang as Secretary-General for the Conference. The UN Secretary-General subsequently appointed Brice Lalonde (France) and Elizabeth Thompson (Barbados) as executive coordinators.

UNCSD PREPCOM I: The first session of the PrepCom for the UNCSD was held from 17-19 May 2010, at UN Headquarters in New York. The PrepCom took up both substantive and procedural matters. On the substantive side, delegates assessed progress to date and the remaining gaps in implementing outcomes of major summits on sustainable development. They also discussed new and emerging challenges, a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the IFSD. On the procedural side, participants met in contact groups to organize their work in the lead up to 2012, and to consider the UNCSD's rules of procedure.

FIRST INTERSESSIONAL MEETING FOR THE UNCSD: The first Intersessional Meeting for the UNCSD convened from 10-11 January 2011, at UN Headquarters in New York. During the meeting, delegates listened to a summary of the findings of the Synthesis Report on securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development, which assesses progress to date and remaining gaps in implementing the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development; and addresses new and emerging challenges. Panel discussions were also held on a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the IFSD.

UNCSD PREPCOM II: The second session of the PrepCom for the UNCSD took place from 7-8 March 2011, at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates discussed progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, addressed new and emerging challenges, discussed the scope of a green economy and the idea of a blue economy, and debated on the IFSD. At the end of the meeting, a decision was adopted by consensus on the process for preparing the draft outcome document for the UNCSD.

UNCSD REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: The UNCSD Regional Preparatory Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) convened at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile, from 7-9 September 2011. The meeting provided an opportunity for LAC ministers and heads of delegation, as well as members of civil society and the UN, to share their views on the main themes of the UNCSD, as well as on progress to date and gaps in implementation since UNCED. The main outcome was a set of conclusions, including: finding better ways to measure the wealth of countries that adequately reflect the three pillars of sustainable development; and a flexible and efficient global IFSD ensuring effective integration of the three

pillars. The conclusions do not mention "green economy," as government representative could not agree on whether to refer to the concept. The conclusions will be submitted to the Rio+20 Preparatory Committee.

HIGH-LEVEL SYMPOSIUM ON THE UNCSD: This Symposium, which took place from 8-9 September 2011, in Beijing, China, aimed to facilitate in-depth discussions among all relevant stakeholders on both the objective and the two themes of Rio+20, in order to formulate concrete proposals for the UNCSD. Over 200 participants attended, including UNCSD Secretary-General Sha Zukang and UNCED Secretary-General Maurice Strong. Participants emphasized five new and emerging issues for "priority attention": energy access, security, and sustainability; food security and sustainable agriculture; water scarcity and sound water management; improved resilience and disaster preparedness; and land and soil degradation and sustainable land management. On the IFSD, participants highlighted that reforms should be guided by a set of principles, including: agreement on core problems to be addressed; form should follow function and substance; any reform should not only improve integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, but restore the balance among these pillars; enhance transparency; and embrace complexity by simplifying administration, implementation and compliance arrangements.

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Djamel Eddine Djaballah, Director, Department of Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, League of Arab States, opened the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for Rio+20 on Sunday morning, 16 October 2011.

Aya Mohamed Abd Elmaksoud, representing Arab Youth, stressed that development can only happen when youth have their say and work in cooperation with other groups, and called for issues tackled in Rio to result in the creation of jobs and opportunities for youth. She called for, *inter alia*, reducing poverty, empowering women, and the right to education and sanitation.

Adel Farid Abdel-Kader, Officer-in-Charge, United Nations Environment Programme, Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA), drew attention to the needs of a growing world population, noting that challenges faced at the 1992 Earth Summit, such as poverty, persist today. Noting that the instability facing the region may impact on the environment, he called for integrated policies that mainstream environment and social issues, and stressed that a green economy is a tool for sustainable development.

Elizabeth Thompson, Executive Coordinator for Rio+20, highlighted the objectives of Rio+20, noting that issues facing the Arab region can be found in other parts of the world and require new solutions. She described the Rio+20 context, highlighting the global economic crisis, challenges of food security, access to energy and water, and the links between the three pillars of sustainable development. Inviting delegates to consider how to employ the green economy as a tool in policy frameworks, she underscored that a transition to a green economy can create jobs and improve the quality of lives across the globe.

Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN and Vice-Chair of the Bureau for the UNCSO Preparatory Committee, called for adopting a sustainable development vision that can be achieved by 2020. He said the UNCSO should not only be an environmental summit and called on governments in the Arab region to work together to improve human lives, including through social inclusion, poverty eradication, and empowerment of women. He cautioned against using the concept of a green economy to create new conditions on development and as a strategy that only empowers companies.

Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), noted that recent changes in the Arab region have raised expectations for progress and development. She suggested that current economic models are not working as higher growth rates have neither reduced poverty, nor created sufficient employment. She said sustainable development is not a strategic option but a necessity, and called on governments in the region to take advantage of the global trend towards a green economy.

Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Tuwaijri, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, League of Arab States (LAS), urged Arab countries to ensure their message is heard at the UNCSO. He said that technology transfer should be integrated into the IFSD, and lamented that education deficits in the Arab region are a constraint for making use of technology transfer.

OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA: Roula Majdalani, Director, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, ESCWA, presented an overview of the agenda, noting regional activities to date, including: regional reports on green economy from sustainable development organizations in the Arab region; and more than 15 consultations on a variety of related topics.

SESSION 1: ASSESSING THE PROGRESS TO DATE AND REMAINING GAPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE MAJOR SUMMITS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This session, held on Sunday morning, was moderated by Oussama Mansouri, Director General, Ministry of Economy and Planning – Holy Mecca Region and Member of the National Committee for Rio+20 Preparations, Saudi Arabia.

PRESENTATIONS: LAS Third Regional Report on Progress Made in Implementing the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region: Presenting this report, Ibrahim Abdel Gelil, Arabian Gulf University, explained the mechanism for implementing and monitoring the initiative. He highlighted priority focus areas, such as: peace and security, where he drew attention to conflicts that have afflicted the region; governance for sustainable development, such as environmental legislation; and poverty alleviation, highlighting that the region is on track to halve the share of the population living under US\$1.25 a day by 2015, although national disparities exist.

ESCWA Paper on Progress and Gaps in Implementing the Outcomes of Major Summits on Sustainable Development: Presenting this paper, Roula Majdalani, ESCWA, noted commitments regarding human and social rights and sustainable development, highlighting that while progress has been made on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related

to education, health and poverty eradication, the level of improvement differs among and within countries. She noted increased technology transfer and energy efficiency, while pinpointing gaps, such as in the promotion of human rights and environmental health, and called for common action at all levels. She asked that the reasons that have hindered fulfillment of existing commitments be explored and remedied.

PANEL: Fateh Azzam, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, noted the role of individual rights for sustainable development, including economic and social rights, education and the right to participation. He said challenges in the Arab region include: a trend towards a model of growth that does not foster human development; corruption and mismanagement of resources; and the realization of human rights.

Ali Ibn Abi Taleb Abdulrahman Mahmoud, Islamic Development Bank, noted the need to reform international agreements and financial mechanisms to ensure the interests of developing countries are taken into account and to support sustainable development. He called on developing countries to enhance capacities and cooperation between stakeholders, and called on Arab countries to consider the benefits of a green economy.

Zaghloul Samhan, Environment Quality Authority, Palestine, noted a lack of emphasis on the environmental dimension of development, called for a mechanism to make the coordination between the three pillars of sustainable development compulsory, and lamented budget constraints for financing sustainable development.

DISCUSSION: During the ensuing discussion, Saudi Arabia lamented the lack of commitment to provide financing and technology transfer to the Arab region, and urged restructuring and reorganizing institutions in the region. Tunisia noted progress made in his country since UNCED, including the establishment of a sustainable development committee. He called for sustainable development based on a democratic and participatory approach, and a new economy based on social integration.

Jordan noted the lack of adequate attention given to economic development and social justice. Syria noted a lack of a unified definition on green economy, and said his country has taken steps to improve sustainable development legislation. Regarding climate change, Iraq called for eliminating pollution and compensating those affected by it. Lebanon said the suffering caused by conflicts, including her country's conflict with Israel, should be referred to in the regional report. Algeria noted coordination at the national and regional levels and the establishment of various institutions, including a national laboratory on environment and sustainable development. He highlighted a Global Environment Facility-funded project to build a low-carbon city in Boughzoul, Algeria.

The United Arab Emirates drew attention to regional achievements, such as work on low-carbon cities and water management. Yemen said issues specific to the region should be identified. Palestine explained trade constraints with Israel, noting the need for freedom in defining commercial relations. He noted that Palestine is not a fully-fledged member of sustainable development-related conventions and called for a

post-Rio task force or mechanism to follow up on implementing the outcomes. Sudan highlighted the importance of evaluating progress achieved. Egypt stressed the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, noting developed countries should shoulder their share of responsibility and costs.

Major Groups then made interventions, highlighting, *inter alia*: the importance of education for sustainable development; support for women; the need to enhance international cooperation, including between Arab countries; the lack of expenditure for research; the need for accurate sustainable development indicators; cooperation in managing transboundary areas; and community-based development and traditional knowledge. One participant emphasized the role of media in raising awareness on sustainable development issues and urged that a media training workshop be organized in the Arab region in preparation for Rio+20.

SESSION 2: NEW AND EMERGING CHALLENGES FACING THE ARAB REGION

This session, held on Sunday afternoon, was moderated by Fatma El Mallah, Advisor to the Secretary-General on Climate Change Issues, LAS.

PRESENTATIONS: ESCWA and UNEP Paper on New and Emerging Challenges Facing the Arab Region: Chouchani Cherfane, Chief, Water Resources Section, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, ESCWA, focused on ten challenges highlighted in the paper. Under demographic change and unemployment, she highlighted that 55% of Arabs now live in cities and youth today are often more educated than their parents. On the Arab Spring, she noted the option of creating opportunities out of challenges. Under the financial crisis, she underscored different national realities. She explained that Arab food security cannot be achieved through self-sufficiency alone, noting that countries like Iraq import 70% of their cereals. On water scarcity, she said only six of 22 Arab countries are above the freshwater poverty line and the situation is getting worse. She stressed: that energy consumption is largely tied to gross domestic product (GDP); the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters and climate change impacts; the effects of drought and desertification; and challenges faced by biodiversity loss. She concluded that these ten clusters underpin the three pillars of sustainable development, but stressed that the focus should be on the links between them.

Melanie Hutchinson, Programme Officer, UNEP/ROWA, explained UNEP's foresight process, which addresses emerging environmental issues that are critical to the global environment. She drew attention to the UNEP Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process, explaining that the GEO covers major environmental themes and cross-cutting issues, such as aligning governance to the challenges of global sustainability and social tipping points. She defined the four key issues identified by the regional GEO process as freshwater, land, energy, and oceans and seas, with environmental governance and climate change as cross-cutting issues.

Adel Farid Abdel-Kader, Officer-in-Charge, UNEP/ROWA, presented on the Eye on Earth Summit to be held in Abu Dhabi

in December 2011, which will respond to the need for coherent information and knowledge on which to base decisions and policy.

PANELISTS: Marwan Owaygen, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), noted opportunities from sustainable development, including for local and climate-resilient economies, inclusive growth, and participation and democracy. He called for a paradigm shift from scarcity to security of natural resources, in particular regarding water resources, and highlighted opportunities from a transition to a green economy.

Basel Yousfi, World Health Organization, said governments in the Arab region must address the social and environmental challenges and opportunities of the "demographic window," as a high share of young people now will be followed by an increase in aging populations, particularly beginning in 2045. Highlighting the consequences of climate change on food and water security, he called on governments to improve water use, including through crop choices and more efficient irrigation practices.

DISCUSSION: In the discussion that followed, Jordan stressed the need for the region to work together in an integrated manner and noted a bias toward environmental issues. Syria highlighted localization programs for farmers to increase their stability, and said the economic sanctions imposed on his country have hindered progress on sustainable development. Iraq said his country was preparing a sustainable development plan. Palestine said waste and recycling issues should be addressed.

Yemen said Rio+20 should address the issue of electronic waste. Noting the impact of temperature rise on the Arab region, the United Arab Emirates highlighted the impact on non-conventional water productivity, and said increased disease due to climate change also affects animals and plants. Saudi Arabia emphasized that oil productivity must continue and increase until a viable alternative exists. He noted solar energy efficiency is low, while thermal energy has potential. He stressed the importance of localizing existing technology, and said technology should link the three pillars of sustainable development. Oman noted that developing countries should not wait for technology transfer or support.

A representative of Indigenous Peoples drew attention to the needs of remote and poor communities, underscoring their direct dependence on natural resources and lack of awareness regarding sustainable development issues. An NGO representative disagreed with Saudi Arabia on the low efficiency of solar energy, and noted rural communities are not equipped to deal with climate change. Participants also discussed issues related to: science and technology transfer; food security and sovereignty; trade and agricultural agreements; energy; working conditions; the need for integrated urban development; sanitation; waste, including e-waste; urban mobility; and the fact that some "emerging issues" are in fact old challenges. In her concluding remarks, Moderator El Mallah drew attention to other emerging issues not raised by participants, including food imports, water desalination and tourism. She noted that the Arab Spring should be a catalyst for change and that the financial crisis should be referred to as an emergency.

SESSION 3: THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This session was moderated by Fatma El Mallah, LAS, and was held on Sunday afternoon.

PRESENTATIONS: ESCWA Regional Review of Institutions for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region: Roula Majdalani, ESCWA, highlighted challenges for achieving sustainable development, including: weak governance mechanisms in the Arab region; the lack of stakeholder engagement; difficulties in integrating environmental considerations into development strategies; and weak funding and decision-making processes.

The Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development and International Environmental Governance: Adel Farid Abdel-Kader, Officer-in-Charge, UNEP/ROWA, discussed challenges for the IFSD, including lack of implementation, inadequate capacity building and lack of accountability. He discussed the pros and cons of the following options being considered for strengthening the IFSD: reform of ECOSOC; replacing the CSD with a new Council for Sustainable Development; and an umbrella organization for sustainable development. He said the current International Environmental Governance (IEG) system is fragmented, complex and underfinanced, and noted as main challenges, *inter alia*: weak links between finance and policy making; and a lack of coherence among multilateral environmental agreements, capacity building and implementation. He discussed options for enhancing UNEP by making it a specialized agency or a subsidiary organ under the UNGA. In conclusion, he said, *inter alia*: reform options should focus on addressing the gaps in current functions; existing institutional frameworks should be built upon; strengthening the environmental pillar will support sustainable development; national level institutions should be given greater attention; and incremental reforms will not be enough and an overhaul is required.

Outcomes of the Workshop on the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region (Jeddah, 3-5 October 2011) Abdulbasist Sairafi, Presidency of Meteorology and Environment, Saudi Arabia, discussed the outcomes of the Jeddah Workshop and highlighted recommendations for the IFSD, including: balanced consideration of the three pillars of sustainable development; addressing gaps in existing institutional frameworks to meet the needs of all countries; enhanced coordination among international frameworks at all levels and among UN bodies; civil society participation at all levels; and inclusion of international donor bodies. He said the workshop proposed changing the names of regional bodies to include sustainable development in their titles, such as renaming the Joint Committee on Environment and Development (JCEDAR) as the Joint Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

PANELISTS: Mutasim Al-Kilani, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan, noted that the ESCWA paper was based on a 2003 publication that similarly explored the region's institutional framework, but that it did not explain why the 2003 findings were not implemented. He explained that the current IFSD lacks balance and should focus equally on the three

pillars of sustainable development, rather than on strengthening environmental aspects alone. He underscored that an institutional framework cannot be established before its objectives are made clear, and called for more discussions drawing on international experiences.

Nouri Soussi, Tunisian Environment Observatory, said that national experiences could inform and benefit the region. He highlighted the Arab Spring and the current political will as an opportunity and called for a regional structure for sustainable development and for balance among the three pillars. He proposed creating specialized institutions, such as on the green economy.

DISCUSSION: During the subsequent discussion, Egypt said that existing organizations should be evaluated to determine whether they can meet expectations in the future, and that the focus should not be on changing the names of organizations. He emphasized lack of political will to establish a new international environmental organization. He said more information was needed on the pros and cons of the various options on IFSD, including financial implications. Morocco supported establishing national sustainable development councils, and called attention to her country's Cleaner Production Center.

Saudi Arabia said that existing institutions should be supported and reinforced, and that most governments lack the will to establish new institutions. Sudan questioned whether changing the names of organizations would add any value. Iraq said including environment and sustainable development in the titles of institutions was redundant, noting the three pillars must be considered equally. Moderator El Mallah said names could possibly be changed through the LAS mechanism, although the process could take several years.

Lebanon said that sustainable development requires coordination among ministries and authorities. She noted that changing the name of the directorates or ministries would be a start, but not enough, and called for political will to set strategies and monitor impacts. Palestine called for the three pillars to be balanced and, backed by Iraq, supported the proposed Council for Sustainable Development, which would have three committees, one for each pillar. He also voiced support for a more competent and technical UNEP, and agreed that the environmental pillar requires attention as it has been neglected in the region for a long time.

Algeria noted fragmentation in international agreements relating to sustainable development, and called for monitoring the implementation of such agreements. Jordan stated that until the environmental dimension becomes part of national development plans and strategies, there will be no sustainable development. He noted participants should consider the common interests of the region.

The United Arab Emirates said pursuing sustainable development is a national interest. He highlighted national environmental legislation and institutions for sustainable development, and the need to integrate those ministries and bodies that address sustainable development.

Saudi Arabia said it will be difficult to discuss concrete recommendations for the UNCSD as many uncertainties prevail,

including on the definition of green economy, and said more time should be spent on discussing recommendations.

Major Groups: highlighted the need to optimally use the capacities of young people to create a vision and objectives for sustainable development, in particular, at the national level; called for upgrading UNEP and creating councils for sustainable development at the local, national and regional levels; and urged enhancing transparency and tackling corruption.

SESSION 4: A GREEN ECONOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

Opening this session on Monday morning, Moderator Yahya Al-Mutawakel, Former Minister of Industry and Trade, Yemen, noted that most participants agree that the model of economic development pursued in the Arab region in the last decade has failed since it has not reduced unemployment or poverty rates. He suggested that this failure contributed to the current political tensions in several Arab countries. He said decision makers have not yet responded to calls for different approaches to economic development and emphasized the social dimension of development in considering the concept of a green economy.

PRESENTATIONS: ESCWA Study on Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication—Principles, Opportunities and Challenges in the Arab Region: Tarek Sadek, Climate Change Coordinator, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, ESCWA, noted challenges and fears regarding the transition to a green economy in the Arab region, highlighting limits to trade, obstacles in accessing international funds and loss of productivity. He said that the green economy is a tool to boost the three pillars of sustainable development, highlighting social benefits of the transition to a green economy, including quality of life and living standards in rural areas. He suggested developing indicators to measure these benefits.

He also discussed experiments and experiences with green economic development in the region, including: use of renewable energies, in particular wind energy; establishment of clean technology companies; water recycling; green buildings; sustainable transportation; and green electricity and natural gas. He said key requirements for the transition to a green economy are the generalization of green economic principles, boosting collaboration with the private sector and civil society, specialized markets, regional integration between Arab countries, and boosting innovation, research and education.

Statements on outcomes from specialized regional preparatory meetings on the green economy within the framework for sustainable development and poverty eradication: Riccardo Mesiano, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, ESCWA, presented on the outcomes of the Meeting on Economic Policies Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Arab Region, which was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 20-21 July 2011. He said the meeting was attended by ministers of finance and explored policies to facilitate capital flows into the green economy, and the role of fiscal policies, institutional frameworks for green finance, and environment taxation and investment incentives. He

highlighted the main recommendations from the meeting, including: economic and technical feasibility studies; specialized funds for the green transition, including the creation an Arab Environmental Facility that resembles the Global Environment Facility; and legal systems that improve the investment climate for a green economy. He said participants also considered, *inter alia*, encouraging banks to fund environment-related projects, a unified position against any taxes that discriminate against fossil fuel use, and the benefits of green public procurement.

Fareed Bushehri, Regional Trade, Industry and Environment Officer, UNEP, reported on the outcomes of the Third Roundtable Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Arab Region: Paving the Path to Green Economy in the Arab Region, held in Cairo, Egypt, from 26-27 January 2011. He said that participants agreed that current models of production and consumption have negative effects on the environment and need to be replaced by new models for a transition to sustainable consumption and production (SCP). He said participants highlighted, *inter alia*: the Marrakech Process on SCP; the need to enhance international initiatives; cooperation between international organizations and national centers for SCP; and considering poverty reduction in the transition to a green economy.

Saleh Algaghdaif, Director of the Cairo Office, Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization, reported on the outcomes of the Conference on the Role of Green Industries in Promoting Socio-Economic Development in the Arab Countries, which was held in Beirut from 28-30 September 2011. He said this meeting acknowledged the increasing importance of green industries for economic development. Main recommendations from the meeting included: recognizing the concept of green industry as a main option of industrial development and job creation; encouraging technological partnerships in the Arab region and with developed countries; forums to link regional and international stakeholders; coordination among science and research centers; encouraging finance institutions in the Arab region to support the development of green industries; and supporting small and medium enterprises to implement green industry practices.

Sustainable Development Indicators for Monitoring Progress towards a Green Economy in a Sustainable Development Framework: Tarek Sadek, ESCWA, discussed 13 sectoral topics pertaining to social, economic and environmental indicators. He explained that some countries had offered to implement the indicators at the national level and had prepared training courses, such as in Saudi Arabia. He said that guidelines on how to apply the indicators were available and that funds were sought to translate them.

PANELISTS: Diana Bronson, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group), recalled past failures regarding the nurturing and financing of sustainable development after the 1992 Earth Summit and cautioned against repeating the same mistakes with green economy. She said there was not one green economy, but rather “green economies” that are local, diverse and participatory, built from the ground up, more environmentally sustainable and guarantee social rights, such as to food, health and a clean environment. She explained

that governments were not prepared to predict the needs of a green economy, underscoring that the food crisis had not been foreseen, and questioned whether there was a need for systemic changes and new social policies. She noted changes in knowledge and technology over the past twenty years and highlighted that many elements of Agenda 21, such as the chapter on technology transfer, had not been implemented. She called for resurrecting the precautionary principle and concluded that if the UNCSA fails, the ongoing downward spiral would continue.

Hussein Abaza, Former Director, Trade and Economics Branch, UNEP, explained that the green economy concept has been around for decades. He noted tensions everywhere in the world, opining the climax has not yet been reached and that the transitional period for the Arab countries presents an opportunity to move towards a green economy. He expressed how investing in renewable energy, waste recycling and public transport would create job opportunities, and dealing with climate change would revitalize the economy. He said a green economy should not be perceived as a burden and called for investments in research and development.

DISCUSSION: Iraq discussed the management of natural resources, highlighting water scarcity and its economic and social impacts, and questioned whether a green economy would help to overcome these problems. Tunisia stressed the need for a more detailed definition of green economy and the transition to it, and for a cost-benefit analysis. He said the transition should be harmonized with national priorities.

Lebanon highlighted some steps taken in her country in transitioning towards a green economy, including monitoring industries to stop using ozone depleting materials and promoting cleaner production centers. Yemen stressed paying attention to steps taken by farmers in rural areas, such as recycling and adaptation to climate change. He also said information technology companies must adopt sustainable approaches and establish recycling centers.

Morocco highlighted strategies being taken in her country, including wise use of energy in water treatment, and improving rural conditions for farmers. She noted preparation of a green city project that would reduce carbon emissions and water use. Egypt said more time was needed to address the concept of green economy, and that information should have been made available further in advance, as this is a new concept that lacks a common definition. He feared the concept might be used to impose conditionalities and trade barriers.

Jordan said that after much discussion, there is still no definition of green economy. He said the concept should be addressed regionally in a cooperative manner before being addressed at the international level. He stressed the importance, but lack of public-private partnerships in the region. He asked whether industries in the region are ready to transition to a new economy.

Sudan questioned the advantages and limitations of moving from a brown to a green economy. Syria recalled previous conferences on green development, noting that his country had allocated funds to improve livelihoods and map slums, and that increasing energy demands had encouraged a transfer to

renewables. Saudi Arabia disagreed that previous development models had failed, said there was no agreed definition of a green economy, and drew attention to a blue economy. He noted that discussion on a green economy had not generated any new ideas.

The United Arab Emirates stressed the importance of a green economy, noting that concept addresses the creation of low or zero-carbon economies. He called for clear international policies on green economy, and highlighted transition activities in the region, including: regional cooperation; academic and educational programmes on renewable energies; green buildings; sustainable transportation; and standards for high-efficiency electric devices.

Algeria highlighted the need to define the concept of green economy first and agree on common goals. She suggested any transition to a green economy should be gradual, and that Arab countries could embrace the concept if it does not affect national sovereignty, impact on national priorities, and limit other economic activities. It should also address poverty and increase the accessibility of international funds for transition to a green economy.

Qatar noted developing country concerns related to the green economy, highlighting programmes that target specific sectors and lack of support from developed to developing countries.

Palestine suggested highlighting both the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and the green economic transition, noting that social aspects, such as poverty eradication and job opportunities, have not been sufficiently discussed. He urged reaching a common understanding and agreement among Arab countries prior to Rio+20, highlighting the need for a general framework that confirms political commitment.

Civil society representatives stressed, *inter alia*: the right to develop technologies, including using nuclear power for research; equipping society with the means to deal with climate change; enabling the poor to benefit from technology; and sharing regional experiences in greening the economy. One NGO participant drew attention to the UN definition of a green economy. Another noted the focus should be on defining criteria, like human welfare and the fair distribution of development benefits, to ensure this type of economy would work for the Arab region. Women called for seizing opportunities to create a level environment for women in a green economy and for considering gender in sustainable development issues.

Meeting Rapporteur Anhar Hegazi, Former Deputy Secretary, ESCWA, emphasized that the meeting is not a technical one but meant to define the position of Arab countries on sustainable development and the green economy, and urged that the report of the meeting make reference to the international context and current international processes, and specify a position and highlight recommendations.

In his closing remarks, Moderator Yahya Al-Mutawakel asked participants to provide written submissions for inclusion in the preparation of the meeting outcome document.

SESSION 5: SECURING RENEWED POLITICAL COMMITMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This session was held on Monday morning, moderated by Amr Nour, Director, Regional Commissions New York Office.

CIVIL SOCIETY PANEL: Outcomes of the civil society consultations: Mehdi Ahmed Jaffar, Environment Society of Oman, presented on the consultation that took place in Dubai, from 9-10 October 2011. He said participants discussed issues related to, *inter alia*: international cooperation on just trade; boosting the sustainable development framework to achieve justice and transparency in conformity with international law; elevating UNEP to a level similar to that of the World Trade Organization; improving civil society participation in a systematic way; and building early warning systems to directly and immediately respond to environmental dangers. He said a green economy should aim to achieve social justice and eradicate poverty, optimally use natural resources and reduce emissions, and not impose trade restrictions. He said the consultation identified the following priorities, *inter alia*: using all forms of renewable energy; constructing green buildings; clean transportation; and recycling and reusing grey water, particularly in agriculture.

Ziad Abdul Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development, reported on the consultation that took place in Beirut from 12-13 October 2011, highlighting recommendations, including: addressing international issues, such as trade, debt and environmental assistance; strengthening civil society groups in policy formulation and implementation; respecting the intrinsic links between sustainable development and human rights; and good governance of natural resources. He said agriculture should be addressed not from an economic perspective, but as a development issue.

Emad Adly, General Coordinator, Arab Network for Environment and Development, reported on the outcomes of the consultation that took place in Cairo from 14-16 October 2011. He stressed civil society could be used to achieve sustainable development in the region, highlighting work to raise awareness and strengthen public support for sustainable development, the green economy and the use of renewable energies. He also: called for achieving an optimal representation of the Arab region at Rio+20; supported strengthening UNEP or creating a specialized Council for Sustainable Development; supported national councils for sustainable development, referencing the experience in Tunisia, which employs a bottom-up approach; and highlighted social issues, including illiteracy, unemployment and poverty, in the context of sustainable development.

EXPERT PANEL: Samir Aita, President, Mafhoum, commented on assessing the progress to date and gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development (Session 1) and the way forward. He noted that assessing progress was a complex matter and that there was a need to define indicators and a list of regional priorities, possibly through the formation of expert committees. He highlighted difficulties in measuring the translation of international agreements into regional, national and local applications. In closing, he drew attention to the rights of citizens within the region.

Hassan Machlab, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, commented on new and emerging challenges facing the Arab Region (Session 2) and the way forward. He highlighted that food production is lower than consumption; noted uneven distribution of energy production and a lack of preparedness to deal with natural disasters; and underscored the dependence on foreign labor in some countries and migration of youth to find work. He underscored the importance of region-wide action on international agreements to ensure sustainability of Arab society. He recommended, *inter alia*, establishing an Arab fund for regional initiatives on emerging and existing challenges. In closing, he drew attention to the Arab Forum for Environment and Development, to be held in Beirut on 27-28 October 2011 on a green economy in a changing Arab world.

Waleed Zubari, Arabian Gulf University, commented on the IFSD (Session 3) and the way forward. He recalled agreement on the necessity of balancing the outcomes of socioeconomic and environmental policies, and called for the environment to be at the core of decision making. He noted sustainable development is a continuous process, rather than a project, and an issue of governance. He called for differentiating economic growth, such as GDP, and economic development, which includes literacy rates, life expectancy, poverty, environmental quality and justice. On IFSD, he: noted existing institutions at the international level should be enhanced rather than new ones created; called for a review of existing regional organizations; and noted the need to establish national councils for sustainable development and to strengthen existing ones.

Anhar Hegazi, Former Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCWA, commented on a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication (Session 4) and the way forward. She drew attention to: the Arab Spring; poverty eradication; and caring for the marginalized, particularly women. She called for highlighting the 1992 Rio Principles, such as common but differentiated responsibilities and the polluter pays principle. She called for funding for technology transfer and development projects, and drew attention to the implications of the current financial situation for establishing a green economy in the region.

DISCUSSION: Syria highlighted indicators for the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Yemen called on civil society organizations to have an independent vision and make their voices heard, and demonstrate that they can be a key partner in the Rio+20 process. Jordan presented experiences with sustainable development projects and programmes. Iraq said the main reason for delay on achieving sustainable development is a lack of emphasis on legal and institutional frameworks. Palestine encouraged full participation of NGOs on all issues, noting that NGOs only participate on some issues, but avoid participating on others. Saudi Arabia urged avoiding applying new criteria related to a green economy.

SESSION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSING

Djamel Eddine Djaballah, Director, Department of Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, LAS,

moderated this session on Monday evening. Cesano Melantonio Neto, Brazilian Ambassador to Egypt, addressed the meeting as host of Rio+20, emphasizing that poverty eradication and reducing inequality are conditions for sustainable development. He said green economy would be addressed in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and adapted to particular national circumstances based on all three pillars. He said countries should remain open to new opportunities that may arise. On IFSD, he emphasized practical and affordable solutions that increase the reach and capacity of the UN system, especially in developing countries.

PRESENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DRAFT ARAB REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING REPORT:

Throughout the afternoon and into the evening on Monday, a small group met to draft the recommendations. After the drafting group concluded its work, Moderator Djaballah presented the recommendations to the plenary. Participants then proceeded to comment on and make amendments to the recommendations.

It was emphasized that this document is intended to reflect the Arab region’s vision and would contribute to the outcome document to be discussed in the preparatory process and in Rio. Regarding specific recommendations, one participant asked not only to reaffirm the Rio Principles and the outcomes of other international sustainable development conferences, but also to urge implementing the outcomes and commitments made at these conferences.

In discussing outcomes of the major sustainable development conferences, there was some debate over whether to refer to the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab region (adopted in 2004), with some countries supporting reaffirmation of regional commitments and others saying this is not necessary to include when addressing the international context. It was subsequently agreed that this would be added as a separate point.

Iraq and Palestine reiterated that occupation is a significant obstacle to sustainable development, and that those living under occupation require special support. Participants discussed if and how to include reference to the right of destiny and self-determination.

Egypt proposed language on the consequences of the financial crisis on developing countries, and on a just international trade system that enables achievement of sustainable development and solves the debt problem of developing countries. He also proposed an additional paragraph on IFSD, stating that whatever might be agreed should not result in any additional burdens being imposed on developing countries, or create trade barriers or conditionalities on Arab countries.

Regarding a recommendation related to increased urbanization and the need to increase job opportunities, and provide basic services and infrastructure, Jordan proposed adding reference to environmentally-friendly cities, but Saudi Arabia and Sudan opposed. Saudi Arabia also opposed a proposal by Yemen to add reference to the Marrakech process on SCP, noting there was no agreement at CSD 19 on SCP.

Participants also decided to make reference to supporting the participation of women, young people and people with special needs, and to give them a voice in the Rio+20 process.

Delegates approved the recommendations and Moderator Djaballah noted that the recommendations would go forward to the UNCSD Preparatory Committee. He also explained that the JCEDAR would be discussing a ministerial declaration immediately following this meeting, which will be adopted by Arab ministers at the next meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment in December.

CLOSING STATEMENTS: In closing, Roula Majdalani, ESCWA, Djamel Eddine Djaballah, LAS, and Adel Farid Abdel-Kader, UNEP/ROWA, thanked participants for their contributions to the meeting, as well as the organizers and interpreters for their hard work. Majdalani emphasized that participants had agreed to a number of recommendations of importance to the region as a whole, thus paving the way for a strong voice at the Rio+20 conference. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 pm.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ARAB PREPARATORY MEETING

The recommendations are divided into the following sections: an introduction; general recommendations; progress achieved and gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development; new and emerging challenges; IFSD; and green economy.

The **introduction** refers to national and regional preparations for Rio+20 and addresses, *inter alia*:

- the need for a balanced approach to achieving sustainable development for promoting linkages and interactions between the three pillars;
- the need to achieve development, taking into consideration justice, including human dignity and combating poverty, among others; and
- the fundamental role of regional cooperation in strengthening sustainable development programmes, and the importance of regional dimensions as an outcome of Rio+20.

General recommendations emphasize the importance of the Rio Principles and reaffirm, *inter alia*:

- the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and the protection of the environment and natural resources of people living under occupation;
- the outcomes of the major conferences on sustainable development, including Agenda 21, the MDGs, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Monterrey Consensus; and
- the need to ensure enhancement of and integration between the three pillars of sustainable development.

On **progress achieved and gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development**, the recommendations, *inter alia*:

- note the progress achieved by Arab countries;
- note remaining challenges, such as poverty eradication, job creation, social cohesion, women’s rights, access to information, needs of youth, trade liberalization, technology transfer, funding mechanisms and capacity building;
- call on developed countries to fulfill their commitments to developing countries;
- reaffirm the commitment to implement “The Sustainable Development Initiative of the Arab Region,” adopted in 2004;

- stress the importance of promoting and strengthening regional integration to support the achievement of sustainable development;
- support the participation of women, young people, people with special needs, the private sector and civil society in development and in the decision-making process;
- call for establishing sustainable development information and data networks, and creating a regional sustainable development information system; and
- the need to support people living under occupation in meeting their development requirements.

On **emerging and new challenges**, recommendations relate to, *inter alia*:

- the socio-political transformations in the region as an opportunity to reconsider development priorities, notably through the social dimension, such as social justice and job creation;
- new issues facing the Arab region, such as climate change and adaptation, and its impacts, including on food and water security, land degradation, and increasing drought and desertification;
- the international financial crisis and its repercussions, and call for a fair and just international trading system that would help developing countries access resources to achieve sustainable development, and resolve their debt problems; and
- unprecedented population growth and urbanization, which require the provision of basic services and infrastructure.

Recommendations related to the **IFSD** note that any future IFSD should: not be an end in itself, but rather linked to the nature of the decisions that will be agreed upon at the conference; address the three pillars of sustainable development; and not result in imposing any additional burdens on developing countries, or create any trade obstacles or conditionalities on Arab countries.

The recommendations emphasize:

- the need to strengthen the existing international institutional framework, and establish and strengthen the regional and national institutional frameworks;
- that the IFSD should not use environmental considerations as barriers or conditions for providing development assistance;
- the need to strengthen or establish national councils for sustainable development;
- focus on activating and making optimal use of existing institutions at both the regional and international levels prior to considering the possibility of creating new institutions; and
- enhancing coordination among national, regional and international frameworks, and between UN agencies and bodies.

On **green economy**, the recommendations note the lack of an agreed definition, but state that any definition that may be approved in the future would be considered as a tool for achieving, and not as substitute for, sustainable development. The recommendations further state that: if an international concept of the green economy is adopted, a gradual transition towards such an economy should be emphasized according to each country's socio-economic characteristics.

The recommendations state that any future concept of green economy should not be used as:

- a unified model to be applied to the region as a whole;
- a pretext to create trade barriers and new environmental standards;
- a basis for providing financial support and aid;
- a means to limit the right of developing countries to utilize their natural resources; and
- a tool to exempt developed countries from their commitments to developing countries.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

For additional meetings leading up to the Rio+20 conference, go to the UNCSO homepage <http://www.uncsd2012.org/> or IISD's Sustainable Development Policy and Practice knowledgebase <http://uncsd.iisd.org/>

UNCSO Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia and the Pacific Region: The UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific and partners is convening a regional meeting in preparation for the UNCSO. **dates:** 19-20 October 2011 **location:** Seoul, Republic of Korea **contact:** UNCSO Secretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.unescap.org/esd/environment/Rio20/pages/RPM.html>

UNCSO Regional Preparatory Meeting for Africa: The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and partners will convene the African regional preparatory meeting for the UNCSO. **dates:** 20-25 October 2011 **location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **contact:** UNCSO Secretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/sdd/events/Rio20/preparatory.asp

Fourth Annual Conference of the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED): This conference addresses questions such as: Do Arab states have economic development policies for the sustainable management of their resources to ensure food and water security? How do economic activities and population growth affect natural resources in Arab countries? Are Arabs ready to compete in a low-carbon economy world? **dates:** 27-28 October 2011 **location:** Beirut, Lebanon **contact:** AFED Secretariat **tel:** +961-1-321800 **fax:** +961-1-321900 **email:** info@afedonline.org **www:** <http://www.afedonline.org>

Second Expert Meeting on Trade Implications of the Green Economy: The second Expert Meeting on Trade Implications of the Green Economy will be convened by UNCTAD. It will continue exploring ways a green economy, through trade-led growth, could become a pro-development income-generating instrument that will directly contribute to meeting the sustainable development imperative. The outcomes will serve as an input to the Rio+20 preparatory process. **dates:** 8-10 November 2011 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** Lucas Assunção **fax:** +41-22-917-0247 **email:** lucas.assuncao@unctad.org **www:** <http://www.unctad.org/>

Bonn 2011 Conference: The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus: Solutions for the Green Economy: Organized by the German Government, this conference pursues two objectives: to develop cross-sector solutions for achieving water,

energy and food security; and to position the interface of water, energy and food security within the discourse of the Rio+20 process and green economy. **dates:** 16-18 November 2011 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** Imke Thiem, Secretariat **phone:** +49-6196-79-1547 **email:** bonn.conference2011@giz.de **www:** <http://www.water-energy-food.org/>

High Level Expert Meeting on the Sustainable Use of Oceans: This meeting, to be hosted by Monaco, will take place in November. **dates:** 28-30 November 2011 **location:** Monaco **contact:** UNCSecretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=50>

UNCSecretariat Regional Preparatory Meeting for the ECE Region: The UN Economic Commission for Europe and partners will convene a regional meeting in preparation for the UNCSecretariat. **dates:** 1-2 December 2011 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UNCSecretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.unece.org/env/SustainableDevelopment/RPM2011/RPM2011.html>

Eye on Earth Summit: The Eye on Earth Summit: Pursuing a Vision is being organized under the theme “Dynamic system to keep the world environmental situation under review.” This event will launch the global environmental information network (EIN) strengthening initiative and address major policy and technical issues. **dates:** 12-15 December 2011 **location:** Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates **contact:** Marije Heurter, Eye on Earth Event Coordinator **tel:** +971 2 693 4516 **email:** Marije.heurter@ead.ae or Eoecommunity@ead.ae **www:** <http://www.eyeonearthsummit.org/>

Second Intersessional Meeting for UNCSecretariat: The second intersessional meeting for the UNCSecretariat will be convened in late 2011. **dates:** 15-16 December 2011 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNCSecretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

23rd session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE): This meeting is expected to adopt an Arab Ministerial Green Economy Initiative prepared by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the League of Arab States and UNEP/ROWA. **dates:** 21-22 December 2011 **location:** Cairo, Egypt **contact:** ESCWA Secretariat **www:** <http://www.escwa.net>

12th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum: The Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) will hold its 12th special session to focus on the UNCSecretariat themes of green economy and international environmental governance and emerging issues. **dates:** 20-22 February 2012 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jamil Ahmad, UNEP **phone:** +254-20-762-3411 **fax:** +254-20 762-3929 **email:** sgc.sgb@unep.org **www:** <http://www.unep.org/resources/gov/>

Planet Under Pressure: New Knowledge toward Solutions: This conference will focus on solutions to the global sustainability challenge. The conference will discuss solutions to move societies on to a sustainable pathway and provide scientific leadership towards the 2012 UNCSecretariat. **dates:** 26-29 March

2012 **location:** London, United Kingdom **contact:** Jenny Wang **phone:** +86-10-8520-8796 **email:** Jen.wang@elsevier.com **www:** <http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net>

UNCSecretariat Informal Consultations: The UNCSecretariat Preparatory Committee will hold a series of information consultations on the zero draft of the outcome document in January, February, March and April 2012. **dates:** 16-18 January 2012; 13-17 February 2012; 19-23 March 2012 and 30 April - 4 May 2012 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNCSecretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/>

Third Intersessional Meeting for UNCSecretariat: The final intersessional meeting for the UNCSecretariat will be convened in March 2012. **dates:** 26-27 March 2012 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNCSecretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/>

Third PrepCom for UNCSecretariat: The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the UNCSecretariat will take place in Brazil just prior to the conference. **dates:** 28-30 May 2012 **location:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil **contact:** UNCSecretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

UN Conference on Sustainable Development: The UNCSecretariat will mark the 20th anniversary of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, which convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. **dates:** 4-6 June 2012 **location:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil **contact:** UNCSecretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

GLOSSARY

CSD	UN Commission on Sustainable Development
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
ESCWA	UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
IFSD	Institutional framework for sustainable development
JCEDAR	Joint Committee on Environment and Development
LAS	League of Arab States
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
Rio+20	UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSecretariat)
SCP	Sustainable consumption and production
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSecretariat	UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNEP/ROWA	UN Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia
UNGA	UN General Assembly