

UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2012

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) opened on Wednesday, 20 June 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Following the election of officers, adoption of the agenda and other organizational agenda items, delegates proceeded to conduct a general debate. As of 10:00 pm, 48 Heads of State and Government, Vice-Presidents, and ministers and heads of delegation had addressed the meeting. The high-level participants also took part in a roundtable discussion. In addition, the Rio+20 Partnerships Forum opened, SD-Learning at Rio+20 continued, numerous side events convened and multiple events took place throughout Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

PLENARY

Wednesday morning, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon introduced a video, "Welcome to the Anthropocene," which was produced for the Planet under Pressure conference, following which Brittany Trilford, winner of the Date with History competition, encouraged leaders to focus on "saving the planet," rather than "saving face."

ELECTIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Ban called the UNCSD to order at 10:45 am. Delegates elected Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil, as President of the Conference, and Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Minister of Foreign Relations, Brazil, as *ex officio* Vice-President. Delegates adopted the provisional rules of procedure, as recommended by the UNCSD PrepCom (A/CONF.216/2), the provisional agenda (A/CONF.216/1), the election of 25 Vice-Presidents, accreditation with observer status of intergovernmental organizations, and election of the credentials committee. Delegates established a Main Committee and selected John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) as its Chair.

Milôs Koterec (Slovakia), President, ECOSOC, suggested that sustainable development be given its own ministerial meeting, and to incorporate the proposed high-level Forum within the ECOSOC framework.

STATEMENTS BY MAJOR GROUPS: On the outcome document, Women noted, *inter alia*, lack of: commitment to reproductive rights; a high commissioner for future generations; and recognition of the destruction caused by nuclear energy and mining. Children and Youth noted their "red lines" that were not addressed in the outcome document, including: recognition of planetary boundaries; a high commissioner for youth; rights to food, water and health; and sexual and reproductive rights. Indigenous Peoples called for the return to dialogue in harmony with Mother Earth, to adopt a new paradigm on living well, and

to include culture as a dimension of sustainable development. NGOs said that "we cannot have a document without the mention of planetary boundaries, tipping points and earth's carrying capacity." Local Authorities stressed the need for multilevel governance for sustainable development, and a new urban agenda, territorial cohesion and regionalization. Workers and Trade Unions highlighted how the decent work agenda has "built bridges" with environmental policies. Business and Industry said it will continue to bring solutions to the market for inclusive and green growth and that governments should promote enabling policy frameworks for inclusive green growth. Science and Technological Community underscored that we have entered the Anthropocene and called for Rio+20 to forge a new contract between the science and policy community. Farmers stressed the need to put food sovereignty at the center of sustainability and said that it is straight forward – "no farmers, no food, no future."

CEREMONIAL OPENING: In the afternoon, to commence the ceremonial opening of UNCSD, President Dilma Rousseff highlighted the decisions of the conference, urging governments not to weaken in their commitments.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said sustainable development is his number one priority, and stressed that it requires leadership. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the 66th session of the UNGA, thanked Brazil for hosting the third international earth summit and noted the role that the UNGA will play in implementing the decisions outlined in the draft outcome document. UNCSD Secretary-General Sha Zukang recognized the remarkable leadership of Brazil on sustainable development issues, and stressed that achievement of the UNCSD goals will depend on governments, Major Groups and all participants.

GENERAL DEBATE: As of 10:00 pm, 48 speakers had addressed the meeting. Thirty-three Heads of State and Government represented the following countries: Tajikistan, Zimbabwe, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Tuvalu, Nepal, Barbados, Fiji, Bhutan, Djibouti, Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Iran, Guinea, Republic of Korea, China, Kenya, Niger, Peru, France, Chile, Chad, Republic of Congo, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Namibia, Benin, Kiribati, Uruguay, Spain, Vanuatu, and Central African Republic. The President of the EC also spoke. Fourteen Vice-Presidents, Ministers and heads of delegation represented Sudan, New Zealand, Paraguay, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Angola, Moldova, Burkina Faso, Japan, Bahamas, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Georgia.



This section highlights some of the topics raised and commitments presented. Robert Mugabe, President, Zimbabwe, said *inter alia*: the CBDR principle should be reaffirmed, global monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be strengthened, and ECOSOC should play a central role in creating coherence on sustainable development pillars. Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives, said the Maldives will become the first country to be a marine reserve, and recalled that it has one of the world most ambitious carbon neutrality targets. Abdelkader Bensalah, President, Algeria, said the G-77/China believes green economy must be based on the Rio Principles, especially CBDR, Agenda 21 and JPOI, take into account different national development priorities and approaches, and be linked to lifting trade barriers, rescheduling developing country debt, providing new and additional financial resources, and transferring appropriate technology.

Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, Nepal, said he wanted to raise the sustainable mountain development agenda at Rio and has launched the Mountain Initiative to highlight mountain issues at the global level. Prime Minister Freundel Jerome Stuart, Barbados, highlighted his country's commitment to increase renewable energy as a share of all energy consumption to 29%, and to reduce electricity consumption using energy efficiency measures by 22% by 2029.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President, Iran, called for leaders to establish a "humane and decent world," including a redesign of the international order. Lee Myung-bak, President, Republic of Korea, announced the signing ceremony today in Rio to formalize the Global Green Growth Institute launched in Seoul two years ago, pledging to provide ODA for green growth, including support for energy-efficient power generation, renewable energy, energy storage systems, green buildings and infrastructure development.

Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, pledged to provide additional support facilities for the expanded membership of the UNEP Governing Council. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, announced that Peru will implement the principle of Prior and Informed Consent as contained in the ILO Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention with regard to the use of biodiversity.

François Hollande, President, France, declared support for a tax on financial transactions, with part of the earnings to be earmarked for development. He also stressed the need to avoid the decline of farmlands at the expense of food sovereignty. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President, Republic of Namibia, welcomed the establishment of the Green Climate Fund, and requested the UN to support locating the Fund's secretariat in Windhoek. Wen Jiabao, Premier, China, pledged: funding to UNEP for projects and activities for developing country capacity building; help for training environmental managers; build a global network for technological cooperation to promote best practices; and funding to help African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to tackle climate change. President Anote Tong, Kiribati, said "we have become collateral damage to the narrow definition of sustainable development," and recalled that it has devoted part of its exclusive economic zone to a marine protected area.

José Manuel Durão Barroso, President, EC, announced the EC would mobilize 400 million Euro to support sustainable energy projects, particularly welcoming the UN Secretary-General's SE4All initiative. Koichiro Gemba, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan, announced a Future City initiative to construct cities all over the world with state-of-the-art sustainable technologies, a Green Cooperation Volunteers initiative for technical cooperation, funding for a three-year programme of disaster risk reduction, and several conferences.

ROUNDTABLE

Four roundtables will convene during UNCSD and will consider the theme "looking at the way forward in implementing the expected outcomes of the Conference." The session on 20 June was co-chaired by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco and Armando Emilio Guebuza, President, Mozambique. Nurlan Kapparov, Minister of Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan agreed to act as rapporteur. Speakers included six Heads of State or Government, 16 ministers, seven entities of the UN system, four Major Groups, one intergovernmental organization, one regional organization, and one Nobel laureate.

Heads of State and Government and Ministers stressed, *inter alia*: the importance of capacity building and technology transfer as well as cooperation and collaboration; the need to move forward with the SDG process in a transparent, accountable, inclusive, coherent and efficient manner; that there are many concrete experiences showing that the green economy is working, but that the green economy should be bottom-up and democratized; and the need for better understanding of planetary boundaries.

Rapporteurs of the sustainable dialogue days provided recommendations on forests, energy and water, including a target of zero net deforestation by 2020, concrete steps to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, and recognizing the right to water access. Major Groups noted: the lack of affordable finance in local and rural areas; the importance of preserving the culture of Indigenous Peoples and the right to water, food and education; and the lack of a high-level representative for future generations, reference to planetary boundaries, and reference to sexual and reproductive rights in the outcome document.

Entities of the UN system highlighted the need to: look at innovative sources of financing; collaborate on capacity building, analysis and review; set up a common forum on green economy and trade; respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms including the right to development; build linkages between culture and development; strengthen the science-policy interface; better design of urban spaces; and make agricultural systems more environmentally friendly. Other delegates stressed the importance of: a transition to a green economy; bottom-up approaches and effective platforms at the regional level for an effective IFSD; and moving beyond GDP and putting a price on natural resources.

IN THE CORRIDORS

With only high-level statements and a series of bilaterals to attend to, most participants enjoyed participating in what is now largely a spectacle, with cauldades of power, endless TV crews and interviews, and observers relaxing in front of giant screens in between spotting the heads of state who qualify as celebrities

On a more substantive note, some noted that a bridge between civil society's extensive presence in Rio and the Heads of State and Government will see thirty recommendations transmitted to high-level roundtables. Consistent with the host country's experience with experiments in "participatory democracy" and recognition in the negotiated text that the intergovernmental process is unlikely to move forward without a thriving global movement for sustainable development, the results of a series of four days of thematic discussions engaging civil society ended yesterday. Gilberto Carvahlo, Secretary-General, Office of the President, Brazil, described the sessions as a "great success in participatory democracy." Civil society participants have been speculating about the manner in which the host country will choose to reflect the recommendations in the outcome of the UNCSD.