



A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the
First Round of 'Informal-Informal' Negotiations on the Zero Draft of the
Outcome Document *and* Third Intersessional Meeting of the UN Conference
on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20)

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Events convened on Monday, 26 March 2012

Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform: Building momentum at Rio and beyond

Presented by the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the UN, Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform and International Institute for Sustainable Development - Global Subsidies Initiative (IISD-GSI)



Christopher Beaton, IISD-GSI, said countries should report on and review their experiences of fossil fuel subsidy reform.

This event addressed the benefits of fossil fuel subsidy reform, its links to sustainable development and why fossil fuel subsidy reform should be a priority on the Rio+20 agenda.

Amb. Jim McLay, New Zealand Permanent Representative to the UN, introducing the side event, noted that fossil fuel subsidies are perverse incentives that may hinder a country's transformation to a green economy, as well as place large pressures on government budgets.

Ian Parry, International Monetary Fund (IMF), addressing the economic dimensions of fossil fuel subsidy reform, urged reform to be undertaken using a gradual, sequential process to reduce negative impacts, as far as possible. He stressed the need for introducing carefully targeted compensation schemes as reform is undertaken.

Christopher Beaton, IISD-GSI, speaking on the social impacts of fossil fuel subsidy reform, underscored that current fossil fuel subsidy reform tends to be simplistic in nature and lacks recognition of the impact of reform on the poor. He suggested a number of complementary policies that can be used to account for the poor when undertaking reform, such as cash transfers, social safety nets and pro-poor expenditure. He urged delegates to ensure that the Rio+20 outcome document commit to phasing out fossil-fuel subsidies that undermine sustainable development.

Amb. Tekeda Alemu, Ethiopian Permanent Representative to the UN, said that Ethiopia has committed to undertake fossil fuel subsidy reform through steps to ensure that renewable energy generating capacity increases and encourage the use of public transport. Javier Díaz Carmona, Costa Rican Ambassador for Climate Change and Global Environment Affairs, said his country has been taxing fossil fuels for the preceding 20 years to ensure payment for ecosystem services. Staffan Tillander, Swedish Ambassador for Rio+20, emphasized that his country has seen economic growth decoupled from natural resources use, through implementing a carbon tax.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: the hidden consequences of fossil fuel subsidies; lack of reporting on the G20 commitment to phase out fossil fuel subsidies in the medium-term; and governance structures and support for fossil fuel subsidy reductions.

More information:

<http://www.iisd.org/gsi/fossil-fuel-subsidies>

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Why Energy and Equity Matter: Lessons from the field

Presented by UNDP and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

This side event explored the relationship between energy and social equity, and considered best practices from Nepal and Tajikistan.

Opening the panel, Olav Kjørven, UNDP, underscored the need for policy issues to address social, economic and environmental domains in order to overcome critical policy failures at the global and national level. Monika Linn, UNECE, presented findings from the report "From Transition to Transformation: Sustainable and inclusive development in Europe and Central Asia," and elaborated on ways to address energy efficiency policies alongside social equity goals. Ben Slay, UNDP, shared findings from the report "Triple Wins for Sustainable Development." He described the "triple wins" for sustainable development as policy outcomes that expand the sustainable development "sweet spot" at the intersection of economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability.

Sulton Rakhimov, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources Management, Tajikistan, explained how hydropower initiatives support sustainable development, underscoring the importance of small hydropower plants as a means to provide electricity to remote rural areas, enhance economic development and poverty reduction, and reduce land erosion and mud floods through avoided deforestation. Amrit Rai, Nepalese Permanent Mission to the UN, shared results from the Rural Energy Development Programme, which introduced decentralized, reliable and low-cost energy services in rural communities. He noted that the programme raised living standards in rural areas, created employment opportunities, and improved local health and environment conditions.

In the ensuing discussion, delegates discussed the energy and social relationships of sustainable development and how Rio+20 outcomes can improve sustainable energy and equity goals.



Monika Linn, UNECE, explains policy measures to achieve sustainable and inclusive development in Europe and Central Asia.

More information:

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html>

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Oceans at Rio+20: Highlighting oceans issues in the Rio+20 outcome document

Presented by the International Coastal and Ocean Organization and UNESCO

Opened by Biliiana Cicin-Sain, Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands, this side event addressed ways to advance oceans at Rio+20.

Wendy Watson-Wright, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission-UNESCO, referred to the publication "Blueprint for Ocean and Coastal Sustainability," as a guide for advancing ocean issues. Elizabeth Thompson, Rio+20 Executive Coordinator, highlighted linkages between green economy and oceans. Amb. Gary Quinlan, Australian Permanent Mission to the UN, noted the need to implement previous agreements. Amb. Joseph Goddard, Permanent Mission of Barbados to the UN, underscored marine resources' sustainable management to enable developing countries to benefit from ocean resources. Amb. Ronald Jumeau, Permanent Mission of the Seychelles to the UN, called for more involvement on ocean issues.

Minister Plenipotentiary Maria Teresa Mesquita, Brazilian Permanent Mission to the UN, indicated the possibility for an oceans dialogue between the third Rio+20 Preparatory Committee Meeting and Rio+20. Vladimir Jares, UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), said UNCLOS's 30th anniversary presents an opportunity to address emerging oceans issues. Andrew Hudson, UN-Oceans, called for robust, globally-agreed blue carbon methodologies. Brittany Baschuk and Joe Appiott, NGOs Major Group, underscored conserving high seas biodiversity. Scott Doney, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, addressed ocean acidification in the zero draft. Biliiana Cicin-Sain provided a briefing on the High-Level Ocean Event at Rio+20 taking place on 16 June 2012.



Elizabeth Thompson, Rio+20 Executive Coordinator, described the widespread interest in oceans in the green economy, saying that when the green economy emerged, "it suddenly became very blue."

More information:

<http://www.globaloceansforum.org>

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Water, Food, and Energy Nexus: Why mountains matter

Presented by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

This event, chaired by Ambassador Gyan Chandra Acharya, Nepalese Permanent Representative to the UN, aimed to share actions that strengthen the water, food, and energy nexus in the post-Rio+20 regime, including promoting green economy in and beyond the mountains.

On addressing mountain issues for sustainable development, David Molden, Director General, ICIMOD, suggested, among others: focusing on people and livelihoods; developing solutions in the water-food-energy nexus; and compensating for mountain ecosystems goods and services.

Ambassador Paul Seger, Swiss Permanent Representative to the UN, underscored the Lucerne World Mountain Conference held in October 2011, which adopted an action plan with seven priorities, including facilitating mountain communities' fair access to resources.

Ambassador Cesare Maria Ragaglini, Italian Permanent Representative to the UN, highlighted key ways to promote sustainable development in mountains towards Rio+20, such as sustainable tourism.

Ambassador Enrique Roman-Morey, Peruvian Permanent Representative to the UN, supported holding a Mountain Pavilion at Rio+20 to showcase work for sustainable development in mountains.

Brice Lalonde, Rio+20 Executive Coordinator, suggested that ecosystem services from mountains be adequately compensated through projects piloting payment for ecosystem services.

Talaibek Kydyrov, Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the UN, supported references to mountains in the draft Rio+20 outcome, as well as global, regional and national mechanisms to compensate services provided by mountains.

Olman Serrano, Coordinator, Mountain Partnership Secretariat, highlighted the relevance of mountain ecosystems and the need to reflect this in the Rio+20 outcome.



Amb. Paul Seger, Swiss Permanent Representative to the UN, suggested integrating the priorities identified at the Lucerne World Mountain Conference into the Rio+20 outcome.



David Molden, Director General, ICIMOD, highlighted the relevance of and pressure on mountain ecosystems.



Amb. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Nepalese Permanent Representative to the UN, said that the revised Rio+20 outcome document should enhance awareness of sustainable development for mountains.



L-R: Amb. Cesare Maria Ragaglini, Italy; Amb. Paul Seger, Switzerland; Amb. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Nepal; and Olman Serrano, Mountain Partnership Secretariat

More information:

<http://www.mountainpartnership.org/eventspage/rio/indexen.html>

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Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

Presented by the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, the South African Department for Environmental Affairs, US State Department, ICSU and UNEP

This event, chaired by Minister Plenipotentiary Peter Silberberg, Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, addressed scientific needs by policy makers and looked at how the science community can support decision-making in a joint path towards a sustainable future.

Arab Hoballah, UNEP, highlighted scaling up institutional innovation and transformation, as well as strengthening the science-policy interface by providing good quality and consolidated information using a holistic and systematic approach.

Alice Abreu, ICSU, said that challenges for a stronger science-policy interface, include, among others: coordination between different disciplinary areas and stakeholders; balance between relevance and usefulness; integration of different kinds of knowledge at different scales; and effective communication to the wider society and decision-makers.

Ashok Khosla, Co-Chair, International Resource Panel, highlighted examples on why science and policy-making must go hand-in-hand, depicting the invention of plastics, which resulted in dangerous effects to the environment.

Thomas Graedel, Yale University, explained that some developing countries will require great amount of materials if they want to “catch-up” with consumption patterns of developed countries. To defer some of the mining this would entail, he suggested promoting recycling, and depicted how science could provide valuable information for developing rational recovery policies.

John Matuszak, US State Department, described data collection by governments and the relevance of having transparent and integrated information at the national level for grounding decision-making.

Dorah Nteo, Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa, supported the institutionalization of a science-based policy interface for sustainable development to inform the sustainability arena, while enabling the adoption of national approaches. Rajneesh Dube, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, India, underscored rationalizing consumption patterns and challenges for strengthening the science-policy interface, including capacity building and data management.

Anne Miehe, German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, described a national resource efficiency programme recently approved by her government and underscored the need for stronger indicators reflecting the three dimensions of sustainability.

In the ensuing discussions, participants addressed topics, including strengthening the science-policy interface towards Rio+20 and how to consider traditional knowledge.



Dorah Nteo, Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa, wondered whether scientific research should be more democratic and thus open to multi-stakeholder participation.



Ashok Khosla, Co-Chair, International Resource Panel, highlighted the role of credible and authoritative scientific support for specific areas of policy-making.

More information:

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