

## A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20)

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Events convened on Wednesday, 13 June 2012

## High Level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP)

Organized by WMO, UNCCD, FAO, UNESCO, UNISDR, and CGEE



Mannava Sivakumar, WMO, pointed to record droughts that have impacted many regions in the last two years, including central China, southeastern England, Texas and northern Mexico, and the western African Sahel.

Mannava Sivakumar, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), introduced the session on the High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP) to be held in Geneva in March 2013.

Sergio Zelaya, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), noted that drought has become more widespread across the world over the last decade. He highlighted UNCCD's efforts to develop policy tools to mitigate drought impacts, including advocacy policy frameworks on drought and water scarcity, and the 10-year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance Implementation of the Convention. Zelaya identified challenges for drought mitigation policy, including shifting patterns of drought associated with climate change, increased drought severity and heightened risks of communal violence, civil war, and other forms of civil unrest.

Sivakumar said that while drought is the most significant natural disaster, only Australia has a national drought policy in place. He emphasized the need for legally-binding national drought policies to move drought preparation and response from being reactive to being proactive.

Antonio Magalhães, Center for Strategic Studies and Management (CGEE), provided a historical context of drought in Brazil, and offered suggestions for improving drought policy. He described how the impacts of drought have grown with environmental degradation over the last century but said that social responses have themselves grown in effectiveness and complexity. Magalhães noted that drought relief has been effective, but that weak regional development institutions and low levels of federal attention are needed to reduce economic and social vulnerability to drought.

Don Wilhite, University of Nebraska, outlined the programme for the HMNDP, which will focus on: developing dialogue between scientists and practitioners; advancing scientific discussions on drought prediction, preparedness, mitigation, and response; and drafting high-level ministerial recommendations on drought policy.

An interactive panel session followed the presentations. Anil Mishra, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), described UNESCO's contributions in science and capacity building, including the International Drought Initiative and Drought Monitoring System for East Africa. Mohamed Bazza, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), identified a lack of political will, long-term planning, and collaboration as critical barriers to effective drought policy. Helena Molin-Valdés, UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), said initiatives like the Drought Risk Reduction Framework and Practices are needed for integrated drought policies that emphasize not only monitoring and technology but social dynamics and institutional capacity.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed inter-sectoral and cross-agency collaboration, and the need for common methodologies on improved drought monitoring.

### More information:

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# Ensuring that Climate Finance is an Effective Driver of Sustainable Development

Organized by Transparency International

In this event, panellists discussed ways of incorporating governance safeguards into commitments and processes that come out of Rio+20, while offering concrete guidance on the form that these safeguards should take.

David Banisar, Article 19, chairing the event, spoke of the need for more transparent approaches to establishing climate finance, stressing that the establishment of safeguards is about engendering trust, building participation, supporting knowledge, and having real discussions in the multilateral environment. Calling for a “transparency revolution,” he stressed the need for knowledge collaboration, and lamented the lack of strong commitments and legal measures in the outcome document that would ensure transparency and access to information.

Lisa Elges, Transparency International, spoke of the link between corruption, environmental destruction, conflict and poverty, underscoring the need for robust governance based on transparency and accountability. She underlined actions that encourage accountability, including: mapping and assessment; monitoring; learning through networking and multi-stakeholder engagement; and corruption awareness within society in order to demand change and find solutions. On anti-corruption solutions, she highlighted advocating for legal centres within countries for anonymous tip-offs and protection for whistle-blowers, and developing integrity pacts as a tool in public procurement processes. She elaborated on potential actions such as an undertaking by bidders and public authorities to not accept bribes, and suggested arbitration as a conflict resolution mechanism.

William Ehlers, Global Environment Facility (GEF), elaborated on the GEF’s fiduciary standards as a management tool to avoid abuse of allocated climate and development project funds. He stressed the core principles of professional standards of independence, transparency, monitoring and response, and summarized the GEF’s required financial processes, including: external financial audits; financial management and control frameworks; financial disclosure; a code of ethics; and internal audits. On activity processes and oversight, he suggested implementing appraisal standards, procurement processes, monitoring systems, and independent evaluations of possible misconduct.

Rafael Lopes Torres, Brazil’s Tribunal de Contas da União, stressed the importance of making climate finance an effective driver of sustainable development through performance audits, which address money transfers from the federal government to states, municipalities and private entities, and of assessing how the money is spent. On challenges faced during these phases, he outlined: the technical capacity of proponents; compatibility of the project in relation to the general objectives of the funding; project feasibility analysis; evaluation of project costs; and following-up the project’s execution.

Participants discussed: evaluating investments and follow-up after the portfolio of investments has been implemented; challenges to implementing audit policies; minimizing the risks of abuse of funds in fragile States; the cycle of corruption in municipalities and local governments; investing in social control mechanisms; and capacity building for civil society through the development of local networks.



Lisa Elges, Transparency International, said it is in everybody’s interest to eradicate corruption.



Rafael Lopes Torres, Brazil’s Tribunal de Contas da União, used examples of climate finance projects within Brazil to explain the country’s auditing processes.

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United Nations Conference

L-R: Rafael Lopes Torres, Brazil’s Tribunal de Contas da União; Lisa Elges, Transparency International; David Banisar, Article 19; and William Ehlers, GEF



# Towards an Agreement for Protecting the High Seas

Organized by the High Seas Alliance

This side event focused on the sustainable management and development of the high seas as an imperative to achieving the environmental, economic and social benefits of a global public resource.

Sue Lieberman, Pew Environment Group, chairing the event, lamented the insufficiency of current ocean governance systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of the marine environment. She reflected on the numerous times over the past forty years when commitments to ensure the sustainable development of marine resources have been agreed on and called for concrete action to implement these commitments.

Duncan Currie, Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, presented a review of progress made in ecosystem protection through high seas fisheries governance and the UN General Assembly (GA) processes. On the decline in fish stocks, he said the collapse of diversity is accelerating, and warned that it presents dire consequences to the oceans' ecosystem services. Calling for the further establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs), which currently constitute 1% of the ocean, he listed benefits from marine protection, such as the conservation of species' diversity, and improved resilience and fisheries productivity. He suggested strategies for the recovery of degraded ocean ecosystems, including: the protection of coral habitats; expansion of MPAs; and actual implementation of agreements.

Kristina Gjerde, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), spoke about the problems of interconnected ocean space, saying that 64% of the ocean is beyond national boundaries. She lamented the lack of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) to determine cumulative impacts as a whole, and noted ways to address marine governance gaps, *inter alia*: international cooperation; science-based management; global facilitation; correct operating principles; protection of marine genetic resources; and regional cooperation.

Arni Finnsson, Icelandic Nature Conservation Society, referred to Iceland's role in international agreements and spoke of the obstacles in negotiations over the past two decades. Highlighting the role of civil society, he provided several illustrations of "carefully" drafted policy statements that "resisted" pressures from environmental organizations to protect the ocean. He lamented his government's narrow view that pollution remains the singular threat to oceans.

Sophie Mirgoux, Belgian Ministry of Environment, discussed marine governance gaps, lamenting the lack of a comprehensive operational framework for: developing institutionally agreed standards; monitoring and enforcement; and capacity building and technology transfer. She identified limitations in regional mechanisms and sectoral instruments, referring to several international commitments at previous negotiations, which have not yet been delivered on. Mirgoux suggested building blocks for an international framework, including: MPAs; EIAs; and marine genetic resources.

In the ensuing discussion, participants deliberated on: the potential of complying with an implementing agreement; interim agreements if negotiations should fail; legal mechanisms and practical steps to ensure implementation; gaps in the science of the marine environment; and potential payment for ecosystem services initiatives.



Sophie Mirgoux, Belgian Ministry of Environment, applauded suggestions for setting an imminent date towards a legal framework of the high seas.



Discussing the Rio+20 negotiations, Arni Finnsson, Icelandic Nature Conservation Society, said "magic can happen."

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L-R: Sophie Mirgoux, Belgian Ministry of Environment; Sue Lieberman, Pew Environment Group; Duncan Currie, Deep Sea Conservation Coalition; Arni Finnsson, Icelandic Nature Conservation Society; and Kristina Gjerde, IUCN



# People and the Planet: Population, consumption and the environment

Presented by the Royal Society of the UK, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the African Institute for Development Policy

This event focused on how both changing population dynamics and increasing levels of material consumption present long-lasting challenges to human health and wellbeing, and to the natural environment.

Martyn Poliakoff, Royal Society, presented his organization's report on "People and the Planet," which linked population, consumption and the environment. He stressed the important role of scientists in the sustainability policy discussion and in ensuring that natural resources are more efficiently used. He also emphasized that 1.3 billion people need to consume more basic materials to lift themselves out of poverty, while many in developed countries must consume less by learning to use natural resources more efficiently.

Paula Caballero, Colombia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that any metrics developed during the Rio+20 negotiations, such as sustainable development goals, must incorporate population dynamics. She noted that high fertility rates can be controlled only if women are empowered and provided with education.

Noting that the world is inextricably bound by its environment and demographic changes, Michael Herrmann, UNFPA, said the success of least developed countries (LDCs) and developing countries will affect all of humanity. He called for sustainable consumption and production while simultaneously changing unsustainable demographic changes, which he emphasized can be changed. He concluded that the challenge of sustainable development is to promote human wellbeing while ensuring environmental sustainability.

Eliya Zulu, African Institute for Development Policy, said the number of people living in slums in sub-Saharan Africa continues to grow due to migration and urban population growth. He noted that contraceptive planning in Rwanda continued after the 1994 Genocide because its government realized that it cannot develop a middle-income class without addressing high population growth. He highlighted the link between the lack of demographic planning and climate change, explaining that leaders of African countries are presently more willing to address uncontrolled demographic growth as they realize its impact on the environment.

Suzana Cavenaghi, Latin America Population Association, provided a Latin American perspective on demographic planning. She reiterated that sustainable consumption cannot be detached from demographic dynamics, which includes gender inequality. Presenting the change in Brazil's population pyramid in the past 40 years, Cavenaghi explained how population increases are highest among the poorest segments of the population, while the lowest growth rates are found among the richest segments of the population. She explained that developing countries, such as Brazil, must deal simultaneously with these two issues. She underscored the importance of considering population dynamics in the implementation of any sustainable development policy.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: preventing and controlling AIDS; reorienting consumption and demographic patterns; universal family planning; and eradicating gender violence, particularly in Africa. Other participants lamented the absence of an international forum to openly address land tenure rights, fertility planning for women; and strategies to control western-style consumption patterns in the emerging middle-class of developing economies.



Michael Herrmann, UNFPA, said that human wellbeing goes beyond physical desires and goods and services.



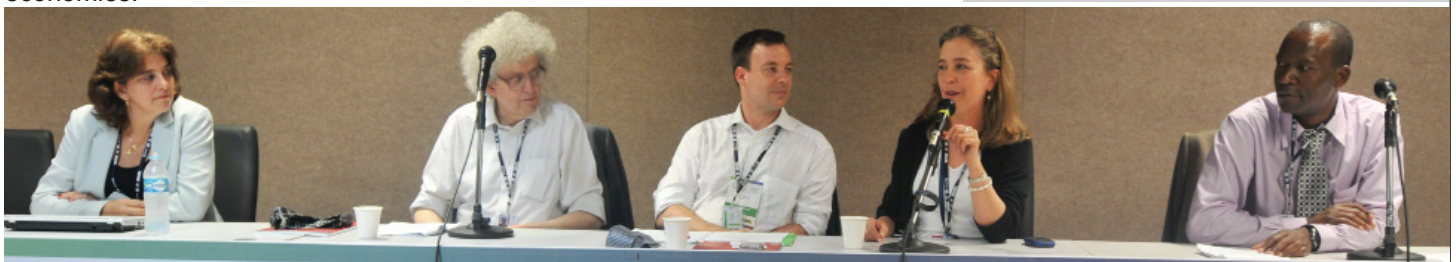
Suzana Cavenaghi, Latin America Population Association, said environmental problems will only be solved if gender inequality and human reproduction are taken into account.

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L-R: Suzana Cavenaghi, Latin America Population Association; Martyn Poliakoff, Royal Society; Michael Herrmann, UNFPA; Paula Caballero, Colombia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Eliya Zulu, African Institute for Development Policy



# Expanding the Use of Electric Mobility: Options for sustainable urban transport

Presented by UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Ralph Wahnschafft, DESA, chaired the event, which presented an overview of an initiative by the Global Forum for Human Settlements (GFHS) and the Renault-Nissan Alliance to provide zero-emission transport for Rio+20.

Lu Haifeng, Secretary-General, GFHS, noted that the demonstration vehicle project is comprised of two parts: providing Rio+20 Secretariat transport; and allowing delegates, public and viewers to experience the electric vehicles. He noted that a pure electric vehicle is the best embodiment of sustainability in the transport sector, including through improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Noting that the technology is now maturing, he stated some governments have provided incentives to encourage the adoption of this technology.

Murilo Moreno, Renault-Nissan Alliance, stated that unprecedented growth in the global population has led to an expanding middle class, which is demanding increased mobility. Due to this increasing demand, he cautioned that the status quo cannot remain, and urged for progress to be made to reduce GHG emissions. He highlighted that the alliance is the leader in electric vehicles, saying there are four models commercially available and more are to be released in the future. He lauded the success of partnerships to drive and promote the use of electric vehicles, citing partnerships with Mexico City and São Paulo.

Kathleen Abdalla, DESA, lauded the general support for electric mobility. She noted that the sustainability community has been addressing transportation impacts since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 20 years ago, as it affects all three pillars of sustainable development. Noting mobility is essential for economic growth, she highlighted that development has historically been spurred by improvements in mobility. She cautioned that this has led to a number of sustainability concerns, warning that electric mobility is one part of a menu of options for sustainable transport.

David Redfern, Renault-Nissan Alliance, noted that many people question whether electric vehicles are a true sustainability solution. He contested this idea, citing numerous improvements in the technology that has led to vehicles having zero emissions, being a “no-compromise real car,” that allows a sophisticated drive with lower fuel and maintenance costs. He said that the demonstration vehicles are being used to provide a shuttle service for participants during the duration of Rio+20, noting that test drives of these vehicles may also be arranged.



Kathleen Abdalla, DESA, noted that electric vehicles also contribute to decreasing noise pollution.



Lu Haifeng, Secretary General, GFHS, hoped that the partnership with the Renault-Nissan Alliance would contribute to Rio+20's success.

**More information:**

<http://www.nissan-global.com/en/company/profile/alliance/renault01/>  
<http://www.renault.com/en/groupe/l-alliance-renault-nissan/pages/l-alliance-renault-nissan.aspx>

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L-R: Lu Haifeng, Secretary General, GFHS; Kathleen Abdalla, DESA; Murilo Moreno, Renault-Nissan Alliance; David Redfern, Renault-Nissan Alliance



# Forests in a Global Bioeconomy Requires Wise Governance and Management

Organized by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish Forestry Agency

This event focused on the Swedish experience in transitioning from conventional forestry to sustainable forest management (SFM). The event was preceded by a film documentary on forest management practices, programmes and policies in Sweden, which portrayed the different perspectives of various forest stakeholders, highlighting the increased demand for forestry products as a result of the increase in biomass demand and other manufacturing sectors.

Tomas Lundmark, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, moderating the event, presented on the Swedish forestry model. He said his country has 2% of the world's boreal forests but produces 5% of the world's renewable forest products, indicating highly efficient forestry production per hectare. He described how Sweden overexploited its forested in the 19th century to gradually become a leader in forest sustainability. He also indicated that annual forest growth is presently superseding forest felling in Sweden.

Björn Merzell, Swedish Forest Agency, presented on recent national forest policy developments. He said that 70% of Sweden's land mass is forested and 11% of exports come from forest-related products. Describing the evolution of the Forestry Act from 1903 to 1993, where environmental considerations were progressively integrated, he said that the 1993 Forestry Act calls for equal goals for wood production and environmental conservation. Noting that the Forest Agency is under the Ministry of Rural Affairs, he said his agency oversees the implementation of the Forestry Act by all forest owners.

Annika Nordin, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, said there are increasing demands on boreal forests such as timber, recreation, habitat conservation, water protection and bioenergy. By focusing her presentation on the bioenergy potential of forests to reduce Sweden's dependency on oil and reducing its GHG emissions, Mossing said that intensifying forest growth through enhanced fertilization, improved forest regeneration, and fast-growing species, Sweden's dependency on oil could be reduced. Citing a scenario conducted by Sweden's Royal Academy of Science, she predicted that Sweden would need to harvest, approximately, an additional 50 million cubic meters of timber to become carbon neutral, translating into 24 billion cubic meters of timber at the global scale.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: the relationship between food security and the use of agricultural land by the forest sector; the ramifications of increasing the demand of biomass on biomass-exporting nations; and comparisons of the carbon life cycle of biomass versus biofuels. Responding to a question on how Sweden facilitated the transition from conventional forestry to SFM, Merzell said his government avoided providing subsidies to the unsustainable industrial wood production sector.



Björn Merzell, Swedish Forest Agency, said Sweden's 1993 Forestry Act provides subsidies to promote environmental stewardship rather than supporting the wood industry.



Tomas Lundmark, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, said Sweden has gone from one of the most deforested to one of the most densely forested countries in the EU in the past century.

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L-R: Björn Merzell, Sweden's Forest Agency; Tomas Lundmark, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences; and Annika Nordin, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences