

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 Friday, 15 June 2012

Special Ceremony to Commemorate the Twentieth Anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit

Organized by the Government of Brazil



Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the 1992 Earth Summit, said we need to look back in order to move forward.

This side event was convened to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the UNCED, also known as the Rio Earth Summit, and to honor its leaders.

Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Brazilian Minister of External Relations, commended the enormous capacity and efforts undertaken by the Brazilian government two decades ago, saying the celebration is more than a tribute but rather an example of what can be achieved with visionary leadership.

Sha Zukang, Secretary-General of Rio+20, acknowledged the strong role played by the Brazilian government in achieving success at UNCED, saying that the success celebrated multilateralism and a spirit of partnership, and showed that cooperation between nations can lead to great success.

Reflecting on UNCED, Fernando Collor de Mello, former President of Brazil, said the two conferences cannot be compared, noting that they represent two different moments in time. He lamented that, although the world has changed, it has not been for the better. He urged delegates to bravely embrace the future without leaving the spirit of 1992 behind.

Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the Rio Earth Summit, expressed caution, saying that although the event is a celebration, there is little to rejoice over. He called for an independent system of accountability, warned that the earth is close to "the tipping point" and said that Rio+20 is the moment in history to ensure a sustainable and equitable existence on this planet.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary, reminded governments that Rio+20 provides an opportunity to reaffirm the commitments made at UNCED and said that in spite of great scientific progress and various agreements, biodiversity still remains in a precarious position.

Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, paid special tribute to the leaders who made the outcome of the Rio Earth Summit possible, but warned that although his own organization is a true offspring of this Summit, much remains to be done by governments before land degradation ceases to be a problem.

Daniele Violetti, Chief of Staff, UNFCCC, recalled the important role the Rio Earth Summit played in the launch of the three conventions on desertification, biodiversity and climate change. He applauded the many scientific achievements, adoption of mechanisms and creation of institutions such as the Green Climate Fund, which support countries taking action on climate.

More information:

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

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Green Economy and Trade : Assessing challenges and opportunities

Organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC), UNEP and International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD)

This event focused on what the green economy means for trade, and identified key trade opportunities and challenges.

Alexander Kasterine, ITC, presented a report on opportunities and challenges presented by trade during the transition to the green economy. He described the “double-edged” sword of the trade-environment nexus which could either degrade the environment or drive a transition towards greener economies. He described green trade opportunities in agriculture, fisheries, forest, renewable energy, manufacturing and tourism. He noted a competitive advantage for developing countries for organic agricultural production and that government procurement is driving demand for sustainable fish products. He said there is an opportunity for developing countries to leap-frog from outdated infrastructure and technology to clean technologies. He listed enabling conditions that would facilitate the transition to a green economy, including: international sustainability standards; strong domestic environmental rules and regulations; reducing non-tariff barriers to imports of environmental goods and services; and facilitating market access for green sectors.

Ricardo Mélenlez-Ortiz, ICTSD, underscored the importance of clarity and purpose for governments’ regulatory frameworks to prevent the deterioration of present and future living standards.

Dale Andrew, OECD, discussed reforming fossil fuel subsidies. Noting that countries continue to spend a significant portion of their GDP on fossil fuel subsidies, he cited examples of developing countries which have initiated subsidy reform. He highlighted obstacles to reform such as a lack of transparency, infrastructure and international coordination. He applauded China for becoming the biggest manufacturer of wind turbines and PV cells. He cautioned, however, that there are risks to renewable energy, such as trade-distortions and the collapse of certain renewable energy markets. With the exception of Brazil, he noted that biofuels remain uncompetitive compared to conventional fossil fuels.

Noting that developing countries may have concerns about the transition to a green economy, Moustapha Kamal Gueye, UNEP, said developing countries have the potential to lead green markets given they are, *inter alia*, already producing organic agricultural exports. He added that organic agriculture in Africa can provide higher selling prices for farmers. He also noted that developing countries are presently receiving more private investment in renewable energy than developed countries.

Brenden Vickers, South African Department of Trade and Industry, said the green economy offers opportunities for developing countries to reduce GHG emissions, support local solar manufacturing and address unemployment. He underscored that trade policy for renewable energy must emanate from existing industrial policy. Citing the example of Lesotho, which has begun to produce compact fluorescent light bulbs, he said that having tariff regimes on renewable energy products can have merits. He cautioned that countries such as South Africa can be vulnerable to border taxes and international carbon standards.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: competitiveness of organic farmers from developing countries in international and domestic markets; the importance of an open regime for the free trade services and goods; and patent and innovation protection as hindrance on technology transfer to developing countries.



Alexander Kasterine, ITC, underscored that shifting to a green economy will yield significant environmental benefits.



Ricardo Mélenlez-Ortiz, ICTSD, said that there are presently more service jobs than manufacturing jobs in the wind and solar energy sector.

More information:

<http://www.intracen.org/about/itc-partners/rio20/>

<http://ictsd.org/i/events/dialogues/134116/>

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L-R: Alexander Kasterine, ITC; Ricardo Mélenlez-Ortiz, ICTSD; Dale Andrew, OECD; Moustapha Kamal Gueye, UNEP; and Brenden Vickers, South African Department of Trade and Industry

Green Jobs: A chance for youth!

Presented by UNEP, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Tanzania

This event, moderated by Peter Poschen, ILO, and Steven Stone, UNEP, explored links between youth and the green economy, and highlighted strategies for scaling-up green jobs for youth during an era of record unemployment.

Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA, via a video recording, urged investment in youth education and life skills for full, productive and remunerative employment.

Amina Mohamed, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, cautioned that inadequate investment in youth is an enormous waste of resources that could lead to economic failure across the world. She described UNEP's efforts to harness the potential of youth to drive the green economy, including: the UNEP-ILO Green Jobs Initiative, the UNEP Governing Council's long-term strategy for youth engagement, and the UNESCO/UNEP YouthXchange Initiative.

Peter Poschen, ILO, underscored the challenge of turning the largest cohort of young people to enter the labor market into a population dividend, rather than a lost generation facing social and economic alienation.

Highlighting the energy and creativity of young people, John Wali, Junior Achievement Kenya, shared lessons from the Junior Achievement programme in Kenya, which guides young people in entrepreneurship, financial literacy and work readiness in order to bring innovative business ideas to market.

Rosana Sousa, Central Única dos Trabalhadores, Brazil, emphasized that green jobs must bring not only employment but human dignity as well, and challenged efforts that have portrayed call centres and other insecure, low-paying jobs as "green." Sousa identified priorities for creating meaningful green jobs, including taxation and monitoring of financial transactions, and social protection for vulnerable laborers and communities.

George Zedginidze, Georgian Deputy Minister of Environment Protection, lamented that youth have been omitted from global efforts to build a better common future, questioning the purpose of educating the next generation, if opportunities to contribute to national, environmental and social goals are not provided.

Modest Mero, Permanent Mission of Tanzania to the UN, said stakeholder collaboration is key in knowledge creation, educational investments, and skills development for making youth a priority in national development.

During the ensuing discussion, participants inquired into: why the G-77/China is calling for the removal of green jobs from the negotiating text; how to make green jobs attractive to the majority of young people who are now looking for white collar jobs; and what needs to be done to include rural youth.



Rosana Sousa, Central Única dos Trabalhadores, argued that green jobs is still an empty concept and efforts should rather focus on "decent work."



John Wali, Junior Achievement Kenya, quoted Aristotle, saying "good habits formed at youth make all the difference."

More information:

<http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/lang-en/index.htm/>
http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/features/greenjobs.asp/

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L-R: Steven Stone, UNEP; Amina Mohamed, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP; Rosana Sousa, Central Única dos Trabalhadores; John Wali, Junior Achievement Kenya; Peter Poschen, ILO; George Zedginidze, Georgian Deputy Minister of Environment Protection; and Modest Mero, Permanent Mission of Tanzania to the UN

Contributing to the Greening of Economies and Poverty Alleviation

Organized by WMO, FAO, UNCCD, UNISDR and World Health Organization (WHO)

This side event, moderated by Mannava Sivakumar, WMO, presented the contributions of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) to support greening economies, improved health, disaster risk reduction (DRR) processes and poverty reduction.

Sivakumar lamented the ever-increasing gap between developed and developing countries, particularly the inaccessibility of climate information in developing countries due to a lack of technical services, technologies and infrastructure.

Jan Egeland, Human Rights Watch (HRW), lamented that one of the greatest injustices is that those who contributed the least to climate change suffer most from its consequences. On the short term priorities of the GFCS, he emphasized: water resource management; DRR through science-based prevention and response strategies; agriculture and food security through advice to farmers on adaptive measures; preventive drought monitoring; and benefits for health through reducing malaria and waterborne diseases.

Elina Palm, UNISDR, underscored that DRR cannot be successful without access to climate information given that many do not have access to weather forecasts nor have the resources to act upon them when they are available.

To a question on the links between climate and health, and on how the health sector is addressing climate uncertainty, Carlos Dora, WHO, reminded participants that the largest disease burdens are highly climate sensitive including under-nutrition, diarrhoea, malaria and extreme weather events.

On the establishment of community-based early warning systems, Nelson Castaño, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), emphasized the connection between climate information dissemination, development of actionable practices in communities, and participatory processes that ensure ownership of the information.

Alexander Müller, FAO, stressed the importance of climate services as building blocks for constructing healthy communities, emphasizing the need to integrate them into policies that solve climate problems related to health and food services.

Carlo Scaramella, World Food Programme (WFP), called for consensus on how to connect services to policies, and urged support for countries in anticipating risks and strengthening capacity to manage risks where people are most exposed to the impact of weather patterns and climate change.

Jarl Krausing, World Bank, warned against the impending era of multiple crises, urging improved management to deal with risk, noting that the trend in the World Bank portfolio is to build capacity in risk as a core element of an adaptation portfolio.

Participants discussed: the need for hydro-climatic information; collaboration among NGOs and civil society via user information platforms; limitations to recipients of information at grassroots level; and implementation of sector-specific activities and strategies.



Jan Egeland, HRW, lamented that climate information services do not trickle down to those who need them.



Elina Palm, UNISDR, said having adequate information, knowing risks and being prepared is essential.

More information:

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L-R: Jarl Krausing, World Bank; Mannava Sivakumar, WMO; Alexander Müller, FAO; Elina Palm, UNISDR; Jan Egeland, HRW; Carlos Dora, WHO; Nelson Castaño, IFRC; and Carlo Scaramella, WFP

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) for Water and Wetlands

Organized by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

This event presented the work undertaken for the TEEB for Water and Wetlands synthesis report, which aims to demonstrate how understanding and capturing the value of ecosystem services related to water and wetlands can lead to well-informed and efficient decision making. The report will be released at the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD.

Claudia Fénérol, Ramsar Convention, noted that the Ramsar Convention is the first of the modern intergovernmental environmental agreements. Mentioning the Convention's 40th anniversary, she underscored the importance of wetlands as key infrastructure for ecosystem services, saying they provide concrete and measurable contributions to human society.

Patrick ten Brink, Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), noted that biodiversity and wetland ecosystems are at the core of the water, food and energy nexus. He lamented that the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services is not fully reflected in markets, policies and investment decisions. He stressed that the values of water and wetlands must be integrated into decision making, calling for action at all levels and involving all stakeholders. Ten Brink said it is critical to assess where working with nature saves money.

Johannes Förster, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, presented case studies from the Sourou River Valley in Burkina Faso and the Kala Oya River Basin in Sri Lanka, and argued that all values of ecosystems, including economic, cultural and aesthetic, must be recognized and captured in the decision-making process.

Mark Smith, IUCN, commented on the idea of nature as infrastructure and its importance in the green economy, which cannot be achieved without considering water and wetlands. Citing an example from Nigeria, where a dam built for irrigation during the 1960's brought farmers fewer benefits than expected, he stressed how the needs and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people must be considered in policy making.

Mary Barton-Dock, World Bank, addressed the services provided by water and wetlands, lamented that they suffer from the tragedy of the commons, and said their value is not traded due to the lack of a suitable market. She stressed the importance of incorporating their value in countries' national accounts, and said that this approach seems to be embraced by Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Inger Hotten, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, elaborated on ways to better address the issue of wetlands at the governmental level. She talked about elements of "good decisions," including accessible information, transparency and accountability, and stressed the need for increased attention to the wetlands as undervalued ecosystems.

In the ensuing discussion, participants talked about the nexus between development and environment co-benefits, PES, and available research on ecosystem services.



Patrick ten Brink, IEEP, emphasized the need to put water at the heart of the transition to a green economy, and recognized the critical role of wetlands and water-related ecosystems in the water cycle.



Mary Barton-Dock, World Bank, spoke about the challenge of measuring and assessing the longevity of ecosystem services provided by water and wetlands.

More information:
<http://www.teebweb.org/>

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L-R: Inger Hotten, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway; Mary Barton-Dock, World Bank; Mark Smith, IUCN; Patrick ten Brink, IEEP; Claudia Fénérol, Ramsar Convention; and Johannes Förster, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research

Biodiversity and The Future We Want: The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020

Organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD)

This event discussed the role of biodiversity for the outcomes of Rio+20 and was moderated by Tim Christophersen, SCBD.

Underscoring that biodiversity is a foundation for human health, Carlos Corvalan, WHO, presented on the report "Our Planet, Our Health, Our Future," which links the three Rio Conventions, the CBD, the UNCCD and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), with human health and wellbeing. He stressed the importance of the association between mental health and green spaces and drew attention to the health risks faced by the world's most marginalized populations due to environmental change.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary, presented the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. He described the Strategic Plan's framework, vision, mission, targets and implementation mechanisms. He explained how the Plan's 20 Aichi Targets are grouped under strategic goals to address underlying causes and direct pressures on biodiversity and biodiversity safeguarding. He added that the other Aichi Targets address enhancing benefits arising from ecosystem services and the implementation of the CBD. Acknowledging the failure to meet the 2010 Target to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, he assured participants that the Aichi Targets have done a better job through linking human health, food and water security, and the sustainable development goals. Making reference to the results of the CBD's Third Global Environmental Outlook Report, he said most ecosystems are being degraded and pressures on them are still increasing.

Árni Mathiesen, FAO, said his organization has an important role in implementing several Aichi Targets. Noting that there will have to be a 60% increase in world food production by 2050 to satisfy predicted growth in population and per capita consumption, he said food consumption and production systems will have to achieve greater production and quality with fewer resources. He said that the food industry can use biodiversity to increase its production by using diversified crops, strengthening seeds systems, and improving soil management. He announced that the FAO will be releasing its "State of the World's Biodiversity" in 2017.

Recalling his organization's experience in eradicating poverty, Charles Di Leva, World Bank, said his organization is aware of the impacts of biodiversity loss on the world's poor. He drew attention to the economic impacts of invasive species on projects funded by the World Bank such as invasions of zebra mussels in irrigation and ports projects. Di Leva also said the World Bank is linking some projects to carbon markets for win-win situations through its Forest Carbon Partnership Fund, Forest Investment Program and BioCarbon Fund. He also described World Bank projects aimed at enhancing efforts to combat trade of endangered species.

In the ensuing discussion, one participant inquired why Rio+20 negotiators are ignoring the Aichi targets on mainstreaming biodiversity in national accounting and eliminating perverse subsidies to biodiversity. Other participants highlighted efforts by the World Bank to curb illegal poaching when such activities are essential to livelihoods, as well the legal implications for World Bank project host countries that do not respect biodiversity concerns. Participants also addressed FAO's position on organic agriculture and the importance of youth education in restoring habitat.



Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary, underscored that Rio+20 must integrate biodiversity conservation concerns if sustainable development is to be achieved.



Tim Christophersen, SCBD, highlighted that one third of developing cities depend on protected areas for their water supplies.

More information:

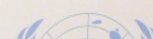
<http://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/2011-2020/Aichi-Targets-EN.pdf>

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United Nations Conference



L-R: Carlos Corvalan, WHO; Tim Christophersen, SCBD; Charles Di Leva, World Bank; Árni Mathiesen, FAO; and Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary

Connecting the Dots: Science, the IPCC and the policy picture

Organized by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNEP and WMO

The event presented recent and forthcoming work of the IPCC, and explored ways to enhance the usefulness of science for policy making.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP, underscored the added value of scientific assessments for policy making, noting the importance of systemic thinking for understanding and managing interactions among complex systems.

Moderator Renate Christ, IPCC, provided an overview of the work and policy relevance of the IPCC.

Youba Sokona, Co-Chair, IPCC Working Group III, presented the IPCC Special Report on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change (SRREN). He noted that renewable energy is becoming economically competitive with fossil fuels, yet its adoption is slowed by a lack of price on GHG emissions and underinvestment in renewable technologies.

Reinhard Mechler, Lead Author, IPCC Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX), reviewed the conclusions of the SREX, which underscores the increasing number of extreme climatic events, noting that these events combine with social vulnerability and exposure to produce natural disasters. He outlined suggestions in the report for mitigating disaster risk, including: reducing GHG emissions, improving forecasting systems, reducing poverty, weather-proofing assets, and building early-warning systems.

Bedřich Moldan, Director, Charles University Environment Center, conveyed five criteria that science must meet to become more useful to policy making, including: clear and unambiguous communication; credibility; openness and transparency; political legitimacy; saliency; and translation between the languages of science and policy. To meet these criteria, he said "boundary organizations" like the IPCC can facilitate communication and knowledge sharing between scientists and policymakers.

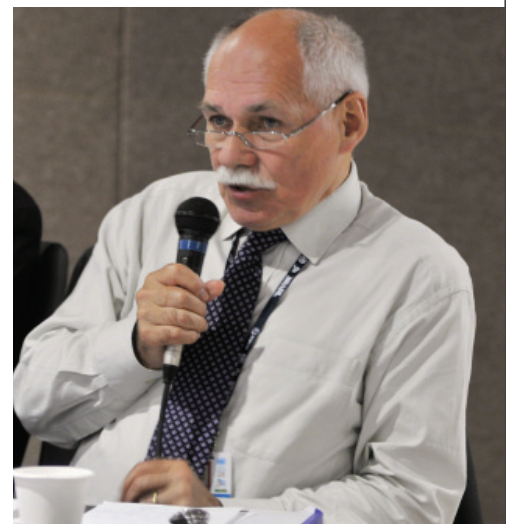
Stéphane Dion, Member of Parliament, Canada, said that, even if followed, current international commitments to limit GHG emissions will result in a 3.5 degree Celsius increase in global temperature by 2100. He urged that policy making shifts from such target-based commitments to GHG pricing in order to deliver more rapid and assured results.

Suzana Kahn Ribeiro, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, recounted the five-fold increase in worldwide renewable energy investment from 2004 to 2010, noting that even in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's largest producer of gas and oil, initiatives like the Rio Energy Capital Program are proving popular and effective.

Christian Blondin, WMO, said the scientific assessments of the IPCC have been an important stimulus to international cooperation, and supported the UN Secretary-General's call for a science advisory board to foster informed decision making within the international community.



Reinhard Mechler, Lead Author, SREX, said that uncertainty in the climate system calls for low-regret, but not necessarily optimal options for robust adaptation.



Bedřich Moldan, Director, Charles University Environment Center, said persuading audiences that science is legitimate and unbiased is one of the most important but also most difficult steps in making it useful for policy.

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L-R: Youba Sokona, Co-Chair, IPCC Working Group III; Christian Blondin, WMO; Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP; Renate Christ, IPCC; Suzana Kahn Ribeiro, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro; Stéphane Dion, Member of Parliament, Canada; Reinhard Mechler, Lead Author, SREX; and Bedřich Moldan, Director, Charles University Environment Center