

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 Tuesday, 19 June 2012

The Landscape: Transformative action through cross-sectoral coordination

Organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)



Rachel Kyte, World Bank, called for vision and leadership to realize progress towards sustainable development.

This side event focused on landscape approaches to integrate sustainable land management practices in the agriculture and forests sectors.

During opening remarks, Roberto Cavalcanti, Brazilian Ministry of Environment, spoke about recent developments in the Brazilian forest sector, including efforts to rewrite the Forest Code and make commitments to reforest degraded areas.

Monique Barbut, CEO, GEF, highlighted investment in 300 forest projects in the past 20 years with a total of US\$ 1.6 billion dollars dispersed, stressing the need for investment in countries with less forest coverage, which the GEF aims to provide funding through the Sustainable Forest Management programme.

Rachel Kyte, World Bank, elaborated on the governance aspects of sustaining forests and the need for “viable integrated solutions that work for people on the ground.” She identified components of the landscape approach, including: secure land tenure; appropriate pricing regimes to ensure the rational resource use; appropriate regulation to avoid pollution and run-off; and communications and information infrastructure.

Eduardo Rojas-Briales, FAO, introduced the CPF, which aims to promote sustainable management of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end.

Jan McAlpine, UNFF, introduced the CPF publication on “The Contribution of the Collaborative Partnerships on Forests to Rio+20,” concluding that sustainability is not achievable in forests unless there is collaboration across sectors and institutions.

Emmanuel Ze Meka, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), underscored the importance of landscape restoration to maintain the social functions of forests and called for implementing landscape approaches to facilitate better planning, coordination and involvement of all stakeholders.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD, identified the institutional maturity reached by the CBD through the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets for 2020 agreed upon at CBD COP10. Dias underscored the need to recognize better community-based approaches for biodiversity preservation.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UNCCD, stressed the essential role of forests in drylands. He noted that the majority of forest depletion is caused by farmland dispersion, and implored the international community to commit to land restoration through landscape approaches.

Tony Simons, Director General, ICRAF, highlighted the agroforestry benefits of considering global tree cover “inside and outside the forest,” including food security elements.

Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP, addressed how forests can propel the transition to a green economy and noted that the UNEP Green Economy Report finds that an additional investment of 0.034% of global GDP each year could raise the value-added in the forest industry by US\$ 600 billion in 2050.

Stewart Maginnis, IUCN, addressed the potential of landscape approaches and the livelihood potential of forests and trees. He highlighted the “ambitious but achievable” target set in the Bonn Challenge to restore 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded lands by 2020.

On the topic “Integrating Forests into Landscapes at the Country Level,” Don Koo Lee, ITTO, spoke about the opportunities to realize economic, environmental and social sustainability in forests. He elaborated on the: changes in the Korean forests; new paradigm of using forest resources; integration of people and forests into landscape using the Baekdu-daegen Mountains; and lessons learned regarding sharing forests.

Tim Rollins, Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, stated his optimism regarding landscape restoration as a way forward.

More information:

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Sustainable Development Goals: From 'silo thinking' towards an integrated approach. Insights from the European Report on Development

Presented by the EC

This event presented the new European Report on Development (ERD), "Confronting Scarcity: Managing water, energy and land for inclusive and sustainable growth," which examines the constraints on and interactions between water, energy and land.

Robert Watson, UK's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on behalf of Caroline Spelman, UK Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, lamented inadequate progress in the last 20 years on issues including poverty, climate, and biodiversity. He stressed the need to integrate policies from the national to the global level if global challenges are to be addressed effectively. Watson emphasized that there is no dichotomy between economic growth and a safe environment, and said the UK's perspective is that food, water and energy security should be the three themes of the SDGs. Underlining the importance of sustainable agriculture, Watson said that methods for increasing production should be accompanied by decreasing environmental footprints. He noted the centrality of the non-market value of ecosystem processes, and called for the need to commit to natural capital accounting.

Speaking on behalf of Janez Potočnik, EC Environment Commissioner, Arnold Jacques De Dixmude, EU, endorsed the importance of the ERD and said that it shows clear evidence that environment and development are interlinked and cannot be tackled in isolation. He said that being resource efficient is no longer a choice, and stressed the need to proactively transform economies and develop greener sources of growth and jobs. He also noted the Report calls for a radical change in the use of water, energy and land, and said this is consistent with the EU message for Rio+20 to deliver strong commitments for effective actions by both developing and developed countries. Mentioning the EC's "Agenda for Change," De Dixmude pinpointed agriculture and energy as sectors for sustainable growth in developing countries. He urged for goals and targets on key topics including energy, water, land, oceans and resource efficiency.

Imme Scholz, German Development Institute, and co-author of the ERD, noted that the management of water, energy and land is characterized by under-provision to users as well as increasing demand and pressures due to rising incomes and growing populations. She stressed the importance of the water, energy and land nexus, saying it is a developmental issue. She also emphasized the need to optimize across the water, energy and land nexus, rather than maximize one issue at a time, and concluded that the integrated nexus approach avoids perverse solutions and promotes innovative ones.

Dirk Willem te Velde, Overseas Development Institute, and co-author of the ERD, presented the example of Lake Naivasha in Kenya, showing how the coordination of stakeholders along with integrated thinking led to an innovative solution: a payment by downstream water users to upstream land users. He emphasized the importance of the underlying factors behind the achievement of SDGs, including: effective institutions; integrated thinking; appropriate capabilities; and the precise sector components of SDGs. He urged that the sectoral factions of the water, energy and land communities continue to talk after Rio+20, and do not retreat into silos.

Andrew Steer, Special Envoy for Climate Change, World Bank, said the report lays the framework for thinking about the issues and global challenges of water, energy and land scarcity. Comparing the effectiveness of disaggregated indicators for single elements such as sustainable agriculture and urbanization with the efficiency of an integrated indicator, he pointed to natural capital as an area for integration into national accounting.

Amb. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN, emphasized the dependence on natural resources for the most vulnerable people living on rural areas, and stressed the need for a coherent and integrated approach for water, energy and land management, and its link with poverty alleviation.

In the ensuing discussion, participants commented on: the organizational architecture for deciding on the SDGs; human dimensions of sustainable development; and the role of education for achieving sustainable development.



Speaking on behalf of Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment, Arnold Jacques De Dixmude, EU, said the EU supports the SDG proposal in Rio+20 as long as it builds on and complements the MDGs, for which the reiterated EU's commitment.



Andrew Steer, Special Envoy for Climate Change, World Bank, recalled the atmosphere of willingness to achieve progress at the UNCED and noted a lack of enthusiasm, confidence and trust at Rio+20.

More information:

<http://www.erd-report.eu/>
<http://www.odi.org.uk/>

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Oceans at Rio+20: Toward Implementation of the Rio Ocean Commitments

Organized by the Global Ocean Forum

The event, moderated by Richard Delaney, Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, reported on the outcomes of Oceans Day at Rio+20, highlighting tangible commitments for oceans, coasts and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) made by the global ocean community at Rio+20. The event also highlighted the Rio Ocean Declaration, which addresses priority action items for the oceans both at and after Rio+20.

Amb. Neroni Slade, Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, explained the purpose of Oceans Day, which considered opportunities and challenges of implementing the “oceans package” at Rio+20. He said that issues dealt with at Oceans Day included: climate change and oceans; integrated ocean governance; marine protected areas, marine pollution and the move towards the blue economy. He added that its outcomes included 12 Voluntary Commitments and the Rio Ocean Declaration.

Andrew Hudson, UNDP, discussed a recent UN report “Catalysing Ocean Finance,” which revealed that overfishing, hypoxia, and acidification are geometrically worsening, caused by market failures. He added that the failure of putting a price on carbon is leading to the acidification of oceans. Noting that funding for sustainable development and ocean governance already exists through the GEF, he deplored the lack of political will to make difficult choices to reverse exponential ocean degradation issues.

Lynne Hale, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), presented on climate and oceans, focusing on adaptation and DRR. She underscored that the management and defense of coastal communities is the most costly component of climate change adaptation. Hale added that coastal ecosystems conservation reduces vulnerability and creates blue economy jobs. She concluded by stressing the importance of climate change mitigation and implementing ecosystem-based adaptation strategies.

Manuel Cira, Coordinator, World Ocean Network, calling for more cooperation with governmental agencies and businesses, stressed the need for new funding mechanisms to sustain innovation and research, and emphasized the importance of new and innovative ways of using the ocean sustainably, rather than only changing operations to reduce marine pollution.

During the ensuing discussion, Hudson noted a decrease in the frequency of large-scale oil spills, but a dramatic increase its traffic, and lamented the high incidence of salmon aquaculture that has reached critical proportions. On non-traditional partners in the protection of the ocean, Delaney lauded the US navy’s funding initiative to transform their vessel fuel use to renewable energy sources. Hale lamented the nonexistence of a model of action for policy making in the absence of scientific evidence and emphasized the urgency for innovative ideas. Slade, warning against taking the ocean for granted, underscored that even though humanity does not fully understand oceanic complexities it remains dependent on them, given that oceans are where the planet, people and prosperity unite.



Lynne Hale, The Nature Conservancy, underscored that insurance companies and not only the NGO community have concluded that coastal ecosystem conservation is cost effective.



Manuel Cira, Coordinator, World Ocean Network, solicited “thinking out of the box” to devise new ways of using the ocean’s resources.

More information:

<http://www.globaloceans.org/sites/udel.edu.globaloceans/files/OceansDayAtRio20Program.pdf>

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United Nations Conference

L-R: Manuel Cira, Coordinator, World Ocean Network; Richard Delaney, Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies; Amb. Neroni Slade, Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; Andrew Hudson, UNDP; and Lynne Hale, The Nature Conservancy

The Global Atlas for Solar and Wind Energy

Organized by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

During this side event, high-level policy makers declared their support for IRENA's Global Solar and Wind Atlas, and presented national work and commitments on the advancement of renewable energy. The event included a demonstration of the Atlas, an interactive, online tool for sharing and analyzing data on renewable energy and catalyzing planning, development and investment in renewable energy markets.

Adnan Amin, Director-General, IRENA, said the Atlas is expected to become the principle resource for renewable energy development, saying it is an important part of IRENA's strategy to work with countries to promote renewable energy through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and international cooperation.

Martin Lidegaard, Danish Minister for Climate, Energy and Building, strongly endorsed international cooperation with IRENA, referring to the outcomes of the 2012 Clean Energy Ministerial Meeting in London.

Victorio Oxilia Dávalos, Executive Secretary, Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), pointed to IRENA as an excellent example of international cooperation, noting that one of the principle barriers to growth in renewable energy in Latin America is a lack of accurate and reliable data on renewable energy potential.

Dipuo Peters, South African Minister of Energy, reaffirmed her country's international commitment to advancing renewable energy, citing South Africa's Wind Atlas of South Africa (WASA) as an example.

Altino Ventura Filho, Brazilian Ministry of Mines and Energy, looked forward to technical cooperation with other countries through knowledge and technology sharing, particularly in the areas of hydropower and ethanol.

Hosni Ghedira, Masdar Institute, on behalf of United Arab Emirate's Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy for Energy & Climate Change, announced a new solar power atlas to serve as a resource for the Global Solar and Wind Atlas.

Karsten Sach, German Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, referred to IRENA as a knowledge hub for sharing the expertise of national research centers and said it was especially important for countries to organize joint value by sharing data and methodologies for assessing renewable energy resources.

Steve Sawyer, Secretary-General, Global Wind Energy Council, stated that there is no question there are sufficient renewable resources to decarbonize the global economy. The challenge, he said, is to make the best use of those resources, and that the Atlas will prove valuable to this end.

Ron Benioff, US's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), underscored his agency's technical support for the Atlas, noting four key contributions: timely and high-quality data provision; cooperative design of analytical tools; hosting data servers; and linking with related databases and outreach programs.

Paolo Frankl, International Energy Agency (IEA), said his agency stands ready to support the Atlas, calling it a sign of real leadership, progress, transparency, and open collaboration.

Following the presentations, there was a signing and exchange of a partnership agreement between IRENA and OLADE.



Adnan Amin, Director-General, IRENA, said discussions tend to focus on the abundance of renewable energy but skip over key questions about their viability and location.



Martin Lidegaard, Danish Minister for Climate, Energy and Building, said that the text on energy will be one of the most important parts of the agreement at Rio+20.

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

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L-R: Steve Sawyer, Secretary-General, Global Wind Energy Council; Hosni Ghedira, Masdar Institute; Martin Lidegaard, Danish Minister for Climate, Energy and Building; Adnan Amin, Director-General, IRENA; Dipuo Peters, South African Minister of Energy; Altino Ventura Filho, Brazilian Ministry of Mines and Energy; and Karsten Sach, German Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety