

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

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Derek Osborn, Chair • Felix Dodds, Executive Director



Final Report of Stakeholder Forum's "Commission on Sustainable Development Workshop- Preparing for the Future"

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On 11- 12 September, 2005 Stakeholder Forum hosted a workshop in New York on the Commission on Sustainable Development and its processes. Participants included senior representatives of Governments, international agencies and Major Groups. They attended as individuals and did not speak on behalf of their countries or organisations. This report therefore provides an anonymous summary of ideas that were put forward for consideration.

The meeting was chaired by Juan Mayr and Margaret Catley-Carlson who guided the lively discussion towards a degree of consensus on some of the key issues. There was no formally agreed outcome and the attached report is based on Stakeholder Forum's notes and is circulated on their own authority. While some of ideas put forward had wider support than others, participants agreed that all ideas raised deserved further consideration and should be circulated for this purpose.

The primary thrust of the meeting was that the CSD needs to do more to refocus efforts to promote the implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Action and facilitate the advancement of sustainable development. Participants are still looking for "Action, not just more words".

The general sense of the meeting was that the first year of the new CSD cycle (CSD-12) had been comparatively successful in bringing together information about progress on water and sanitation and human settlements and in helping participants learn from others' experience. It also helped to identify areas that needed further support nationally and internationally. The second year of review and negotiation (CSD-13) helped highlight these sectors ahead of the Millennium Review Summit, but reverted to a broad negotiation or renegotiation of old texts rather than focusing on measures to expedite implementation in relation to the issues identified in the first year. The primary task for future rounds was therefore seen as helping the two year process focus attention on a limited number of key issues and secure policies and actions to accelerate implementation of sustainable solutions on those issues.

It was suggested that in future the first year of each CSD cycle should focus on identifying what is working well in the areas for discussion and exploring how success is achieved and where problems lie. The process should particularly concentrate on learning lessons from the experience of individual countries and regions. Analysis of this information might then enable the first year to establish

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key areas for further work during the second year. It should identify the most successful policies, programmes and projects, so that the second year can consider how such experience can be replicated and multiplied. Conversely problems could be flagged up for special examination during the second year.

Approached in this way, the two-year cycle could be conceived of as a single continuous process of focusing effort on a limited number of issues on which substantive progress could be made. Once the issues are identified, it should be much easier in the second year to build political interest and engagement, to identify champions for particular issues or solutions, to organise intersessional activity around specific problems or challenges, to seek the co-operation and support of other international bodies and agencies, to engage the interest of the IFIs and other financing sources to mobilise resources, to concentrate the main part of the negotiations on key problems, and to end up with substantive and measurable progress in the selected areas.

With these objectives in mind, the workshop went on to explore in more detail the part that might be played by governments, agencies, the CSD Chair and Bureau, and the CSD Secretariat in helping the CSD to evolve in this direction. The many suggestions that were made on this are summarised in the report.

I hope that the Workshop and this report of its work may make a useful contribution to the continuing evolution of the CSD. Stakeholder Forum are giving it a wide circulation amongst countries and other groups, and stand ready to answer any points of clarification needed on the matters recorded here.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek Osborn." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Derek Osborn
Chair, Stakeholder Forum

Stakeholder Forum has played an active role around the CSD process since the first CSD meeting in 1993. It has good experience of creating discussion space in which new thinking and suggestions about the CSD process can emerge constructively. SF has facilitated engagement of Major Groups in the CSD process and has contributed to analysis of the process and suggestions for future developments. During CSD meetings it often publishes a daily newsletter with analysis and opinion for the benefit of all participants. It has also published several books on the CSD process. SF has amongst its Board and Advisory Committees representatives of most of the Major Groups concerned with sustainable development and the work of the CSD. Its chair and vice-presidents include several former chairs and bureau members of the CSD.