



Taking Issue

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Visit the SDIN morning strategy meetings for reports from working groups, information sharing and strategic discussions. SDIN Morning Meetings are open to all NGOs.

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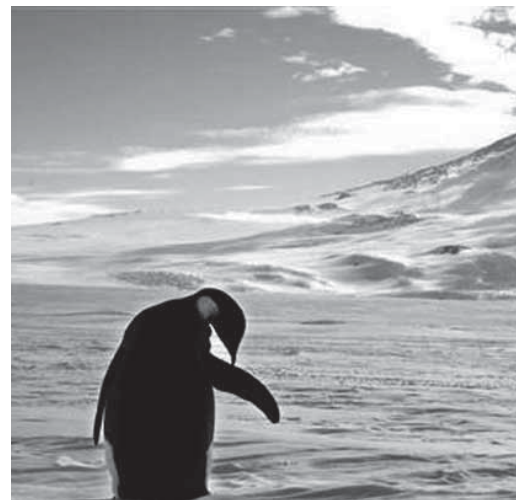
Chair's Text Rings Death Knell for the CSD

The Chair's draft negotiating document miserably fails to provide substance and direction to the current thematic cluster. Without any substantive overhaul—if not a complete re-writing—CSD-15 will be remembered in history as the session that has put the final nail in the CSD coffin.

Neth/Hira/Juan, 2March07

The first sentence of the Draft Text sets the tone for the entire document: fossil fuel is here to stay, so let us just make it cleaner without any strong commitment to genuinely changing the unsustainable production and consumption patterns and shifting to environmentally sustainable alternatives that are already available. The Chair completely ignored the resounding voices of developing countries that dependence on expensive fossil fuel is making them poorer and preventing them from meeting the MDGs.

Rather than addressing this pressing problem by highlighting the calls for strong commitments to shift to renewables, the smorgasbord of options and possible actions on energy sifted by the Chair from the (un)interactive discussions selectively focuses on pushing for an energy mix that prominently features "cleaner fossil fuels", with only weak references to renewable energy. If there is any urgent call for action in the text, it is towards moving for upscaling and deployment of carbon capture and storage (CCS) and enhanced oil recovery (EOR) technologies— but nothing about the need for sustainability criteria for biofuels that could provide sensible direction to all



Searching for direction

the excitement on the creation of an international market on biofuels.

The section on Industrial Development barely addresses the fundamental barriers raised by developing countries, such as tariff walls and subsidies in developed countries, monopolistic intellectual property rights that impede technology sharing and transfer, and the failure of developed countries to meet their commitment in increasing ODA levels.

LPG is the most prominent alternative to health-damaging traditional cooking

and heating methods mentioned in the text, with not a single reference to other affordable, locally-available, and culturally-appropriate technologies raised by a host of developing countries. The LPG industry has been very successful in their lobbying at the IPM.

Despite of the desperate calls from the SIDS for decisive and immediate action to address climate change, the Chair's Draft Text only offers market-based solutions anchored by public-private partnerships. It reeks of market

fundamentalism that even queerly considers strengthening the carbon market as a long-term strategy to address Climate Change.

Effectively overhauling the Chair's draft text could give CSD a new lease on life. An overwhelming majority of the developing world—those who do not depend on petro-dollars - have said that dependence on fossil fuel must stop in order for sustainable development to proceed. Sustainability criteria must be adopted to guide the current craze over bio-fuels. Genuine efforts that promote sus-

tainable consumption and production must be exerted by the world community, not as a showcase but as a lifestyle. As a lone voice from the oil-producing world, Venezuela said it beautifully: what the world needs is not market fundamentalism, but collective action and solidarity.

The CSD owes it to the world and the next generation. We can still pump some life back into the CSD. But we must first re-write the Chair's draft text.

Biofuels: Access to energy or market fundamentalism?

What does one make of Brazil's announcement about the launch of the International Biofuel Forum aimed at creating an international market for biofuels? Nnimmo Bassey from Nigeria said, "It is a declaration of war against poor communities". How so? Is not this initiative, pioneered by Brazil, China, India, South Africa, the US and the EC a breakthrough in providing renewable energy source?

Hira/NethTWN/2March07

Biofuel is not a new source of energy. Many communities have used it in the past. For example, during the Japanese occupation in Southeast Asia, many rural communities, having no access to kerosene, used oil extracted from castor oil (*Jatropha curcas*) for lighting lamps at night. What is new is the international market dimension in an increasingly globalized world. The market based paradigm is taking the real solution to energy access where biofuels might become one option.

Large scale, industrialized biofuel development became popular internationally following the steep hike in fuel prices in 2005. Countries

that are dependent on fossil fuel imports want a cheaper alternative, and countries that produce biofuels want to capture the potential market share. Nothing wrong in that, except that the issue of energy access for the poor gets sidelined.

Tragically, biofuels are being promoted more as a technological quick fix without paradigm shift. The emphasis is on international market demands to fulfill the tremendous demand of the industries and the industrialized nations, which gives rise to the following key concerns:

Food security issues

The current biofuels are mostly to

be produced from food crops such as soybean, maize, cassava, maize, sugarcane and groundnuts. Also palm oil is being developed to provide energy at an industrialized scale. Other plants such as *jatropha* and *pongamia* are tree crops that have been underutilized in the past. Thus, competition between biofuel and food supply is expected at two levels. First, food crops would be produced more for biofuel rather than national food supply, especially if the price paid by energy companies is higher than the food market. It would divert local carbohydrate and protein sources for people to the energy market. It would also result to higher food prices due to



Polar bears adrift in Arctic as ice cap melts away

high demand of food crops for energy use. Second, even those biofuel that do not involve food crops, there would be competition for land between food production and biofuel production. That could mean massive conversion of agricultural lands for planting jatropha or palm oil crops for biofuel production. And that competition does not only involve land, but water resources as well.

Environmental issues

The production of biofuel based on intensive monoculture systems would increase the use of chemicals, and the associated problems of water and soil pollution. With a sad twist of irony, fossil fuel-based agrochemicals would be used to produce biofuels. Genetically modified crops are also promoted to accelerate and increase biofuel crops whether in the form of food crops or GM trees. This will result to widespread contamination of the food chain by GM crops, on top of the potential environmental risks posed by GM trees.

In countries like Indonesia, palm oil plantations have been associated with forest and land fires that have led to serious damages in terms of biodiversity erosion, further ecological degradation and recurring transboundary haze that endanger human health, as well as economic losses. With increased international demand for biofuels, we can expect heightened pressure in converting

more forest lands to energy plantations.

Inequity Issues

Without any fundamental shift in paradigm, any technological fix would potentially aggravate the inequity between the rich and the poor. If the transition to biofuels is based more on market fundamentalism, it will fail to provide more energy access to the poor. Biofuels may be considered as a renewable energy source but without paradigm shift, it will merely repeat the world's experience with fossil fuel energy where subsidies, market mechanisms and corporate control over technology have led to highly unequal access to energy, distorted prices, cartelized operations and environmental problems.

Developing countries may potentially be producing biofuels for another subsidized northern industry and fueling unsustainable lifestyles, while ignoring the basic energy needs of their own people. It would not automatically improve the working and living conditions of workers in monocropping plantations. Worse, in a highly centralized and distorted energy production and distribution system, developing countries may be subsidizing the energy needs of their industrial elite at the expense of the poor's welfare. For economic reasons, poor farmers may be pressured to grow crops for biofuels than for food, while not having access to

energy. This would merely repeat the numerous stories of large-scale hydropower plants displacing communities for the sake of providing energy to industries and cities while leaving poor villages in the same areas without electricity.

Adopting biofuels as a technology fix would definitely not make the poor less marginalized and disempowered. A meaningful shift to biofuels, or for any renewable energy source for that matter, would take a paradigm shift in energy, and in the mode of production and the consumption pattern. There is glaring inequity in energy distribution, where the rich, in the North and the South, consume and waste more energy while the multitude of the poor do not have access to energy. This situation must be rectified.

Biofuels can be make real difference if done at the community level, based on the sustainable use of local resources, promotion of local energy efficiency and empowerment of community in managing energy production and consumption. The concept of energy sovereignty should be promoted. Only then can biofuel become a source of reliable, accessible, affordable and sustainable energy for the poor majority. Biofuels developed in the "business as usual" manner will only aggravate energy inequity.

CSD 15 needs to develop a set of standard criteria for sustainable production of biofuels, based on a genuine paradigm shift and taking into account the potential socio-economic and environmental impacts. Countries need to conduct careful assessment of their energy needs, local energy sources and technological capacity, and to formulate a sustainable energy plan that would primarily be aimed at providing equal access to energy for all, and empower people to manage their own energy production and consumption.

Indigenous Peoples' Priorities for Action



We Indigenous Peoples are some of the most vulnerable peoples in relation to the environmental effects of development such as industrial development, air pollution and climate change. Whilst these effects impact negatively on our lives, we are prepared to provide our experiences and knowledge in order to generate solutions and contribute to policy development and implementations.

Estebancio Castro Diaz, International Indian Treaty Council/Indigenous Environmental Network

The Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifteenth session must demonstrate for leadership for governments to promote models for broad based participation, inclusive and transparent governance on these thematic issues, underpinned by social and ecological balance and justice. Good public governance must comprise robust policy, regulatory and enforcement frameworks that would assure for full corporate responsibility and accountability for social, health, environmental and cultural impacts. Good governance must include participatory decision-making processes that value the central contributions of all major groups. Good governance must also meet the JPOI criteria and be consistent with national and international human rights law.

Looking back at the Review Session of CSD 14, we are concerned with the positions of some governments promoting nuclear power as a sustainable energy option. The Indigenous Peoples Caucus commented in the CSD 14 session that "in the United States and Canada our Indigenous brothers and sisters have carried the burden of the unsustainable nuclear chain of destruction – from the mining of uranium on our lands, to production and the plans

of the United States and its nuclear energy policy to transport and store its radioactive waste in the homeland of its Indigenous peoples. The Aboriginal peoples in Australia have also suffered from a toxic legacy of uranium mining. Nuclear reactors create waste that remains toxic and radioactive for thousands of years". This is one of the reasons that Indigenous Peoples do not consider nuclear power as a sustainable energy solution. Nuclear power does not meet the JPOI criteria of "reliable, affordable, economically, viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound" energy.

The effects of climate change are a day-to-day reality for the worlds' Indigenous Peoples. Our lands, waters, ecosystems and traditional means of subsistence are increasingly impacted. The upcoming CSD 15 must recognize that any climate change solutions cannot and should not be separated from issues of social and environmental justice. Economic superpowers have been as successful today in their disproportionate occupation of the atmosphere with carbon emissions as they were in their colonial occupation of land. Global inequality in the form of an industrialized minority has been overusing the Mother Earth's ability to cleanse

the atmosphere of excess carbon and other greenhouse gases.

The Indigenous Peoples Caucus expects the participating governments of CSD 15 to be strong in their commitments to develop appropriate actions backed by adequate resources in these critical areas. The current extraction of materials, the production of waste and level of consumption within industrial development is not sustainable. The general observation of many indigenous peoples and indigenous organizations worldwide is Mother Earth and its natural resources cannot sustain the consumption and production needs of this modern industrialized society, including the waste that is created. As we walk towards the CSD15, governments of the world must support the principles of clean production, green engineering, green chemistry and the concepts of zero waste. Our Mother Earth depends on it.

For more information about Indigenous Peoples' Priorities for Action, please visit the CSD web site: <http://www.un.org/esa/sust-dev/index.html>

CSD-15 priorities from youth

Today, as the chair gavel this meeting close, we leave New York with profound concerns. With twenty-two months of the CSD cycle already past, clear priorities and leadership are still missing.

While we listened to the same rhetoric of economic development at any cost with a vague illusion to the other pillars of sustainable development, we, youth and children, once again would like to reiterate that we do not wish to inherit a toxic, radioactive, dirty, carbon driven world. We stand in solidarity with vulnerable communities, the least responsible groups for the state of our atmosphere including low income people, marginalized groups, indigenous peoples and those living in geographically vulnerable areas, are suffering the consequences of the fuels burned for the comfort of a few. Following the principles of the Rio Declaration, we need to change the paradigm of the cost of pollution.

What need at CSD

We need leadership. We need countries to address the relationship between affordable energy access and poverty reduction not as a matter of economic development, but as matter of meeting basic needs and reaching the MDGs. We must stop confusing increased energy supply with increased access. The wires from nuclear and coal plants will not get to rural villages. We need recommendations from the CSD that set the stage to effectively ad-

dress the areas listed in the JPOI. We need to go beyond a few token partnerships, we need a framework that encourages collaboration with the guidance of government. Hoping that sustainable development will come by virtue of the market is naïve and reckless.

'Sustainable' is a vague word. We need a clear definition of sustainable energy and clear, time-bound targets for the implementation of a sustainable energy policy that frees us from air pollution, climate change and a radioactive legacy. The outcomes of Johannesburg were meant to give guidance, and the current format of the CSD is supposed to give concrete and meaningful direction. We have stressed the role of renewable sources, energy efficiency and savings, and importance of addressing issues

Sustainable consumption and corporate responsibility and accountability were absent during this session of the IPM. We, as the children and youth, will work to see these important issues come back to the table at CSD15. For your information, there is only one planet, and at the current pace of consumption and waste, future generations will only get to see the crumbs.

At the CSD15, we must:

- Create a framework that allows countries to shift to clean and renewable energy
- Foster technology transfer of renewable technologies
- Promote access to sustainable energy through localized and context-sensitive solutions
- Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Internalize the cost of pollution
- Empower youth with information and education to promote sustainable energy
- Realize that Agenda 21 and JPOI were meant to be followed... and do so.

CSD 15 priorities from Science and Technology

Science, engineering, and technology are double-edged swords that can underlie both unsustainable and sustainable developments of society. We are here to help advance the latter -- to raise awareness of the ways in which science, engineering and technology can contribute directly to the solutions of the world's most pressing sustainable development challenges.

On Air Pollution:

Effective air quality management requires that all nations maintain a strong scientific and technical foundation for assessing air quality status and impacts; for setting emission standards and ambient air quality objectives; and for designing and implementing pollution control strategies and technologies.

As the impacts of air pollution emissions can reach well beyond national boundaries, there is an inherent motivation for strong international cooperation in addressing this issue, and proactive sharing of cutting-edge observational and modeling tools, and pollution prevention and control technologies. Likewise, as air pollutants and greenhouse gases have many common sources, all nations should explore strategies to simultaneously meet air quality control and climate change mitigation targets.

On Climate Change:

As confirmed by the IPCC, climate change is real, and it is being caused by human activities. Strong public policies and economic incentives are urgently needed to sharply curtail greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, action is needed to implement strategies for adapting to the

consequences of climate change. At the same time, we must continue to improve our scientific understanding of the climate and the Earth system, to reduce uncertainties in projections of future climate and its impacts, particularly at the regional level. In this respect, important priorities are: 1) to enhance support for long-term observations of the Earth and climate system, with full implementation of the Global Earth Observing System of Systems; and 2) to vigorously pursue climate change related research, notably through the World Climate Research Programme and related global environmental change research programmes.

On Energy:

Meeting the world's growing energy demands is such a massive challenge that all feasible energy sources must be on the table for consideration. This includes a high priority on energy efficiency and conservation, and advanced renewables; but also includes clean fossil fuel energy systems (with carbon capture and storage), and safe, secure nuclear energy systems. There is no simple uniform solution to this challenge. The optimal energy mix for any particular country will depend upon many factors, including the available

natural resources base, population distribution, and technical and economic capacity. In the transportation sector, we support not only strong efforts to promote cleaner fuels and more efficient vehicles; but also strong efforts to reduce demand for personal vehicle use, by promoting public transport and smart urban/regional planning.

Finally, we emphasize the critically important need for strong, ongoing support of basic research and development. Existing technological options are insufficient for meeting the world's growing energy needs in an affordable and sustainable manner; and many of the fundamental challenges we are dealing with today will remain unsolved for decades to come without further technological advances -- for instance, in lowering the costs of solar photovoltaics, in producing biofuels from cellulosic materials, and finding feasible mechanisms for hydrogen production, storage, and transport. We likewise need social science research, to better understand public attitudes and behavior related to energy use; and systems-science research, to more fully appraise the ecological impacts and sustainability limits of different energy technologies.

CSD-15 priorities from NGOs

After one week of IPM negotiations, the following points emerged as NGO priorities for CSD 15.

- Taking concrete steps to assist countries to expand access to energy while simultaneously moving away from fossil fuels, including substantial shifts in the funding policies of the International Financial Institutions towards renewable energies and energy efficiency;
- Encourage countries to present voluntary commitments for the promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency and access to energy;
- Initiate an inclusive dialogue on sustainability criteria for bio-energy between producer and consumer countries, as well as civil society;
- Call on all states to speedily agree on a second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol with deeper and more comprehensive commitments;
- Taking concrete steps to make industrial development more sustainable;
- Promote indoor clean-air technologies based on energy efficiency and renewables;
- Promote clean public transport systems.

CSD 15 priorities from Trade Unions

Unions Perplexed by CSD Chair's Summary.

New York - United Nations 1 March, 2007

The draft document tabled this afternoon by the Chair of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) from Qatar Mr. Abdullah Al-Attiyah does not reflect the debates by governments and Major Groups that have taken place in recent days about energy, climate change, industrial development and air pollution.

Trade unions, echoed by other Major Groups attending the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM) to the CSD say they have the impression the Chair either did not hear the views of the participants, including from governments, or chose to ignore them.

Trade Unions call on all Governments attending the IPM to make significant changes to the Chair's document in order to avoid losing ground on the agreements reached since the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

and in keeping with the full recognition and participation of major groups as envisioned in Agenda 21 and WSSD.

TRADE UNIONS SUGGEST that a few elements of the Chair's text be used as building blocks for a more positive agenda for change. They suggest strengthening and supporting the following:

- Reduce negative social impacts of industrial restructuring and mainstream gender access and equality,
- Enforce the relationship between industrial development, social advancement and environmental protection. Support employment creation in industrial development and invest in education and skills development to improve employment opportunities,
- Strengthen governance to advance progress on sustainable development, eradicate poverty and encourage policies & regulatory environments
- Strengthen, rehabilitate and ex-

pand the capacity of the electric power sector

TRADE UNIONS FURTHER SUGGEST

A. MODIFY page 3, 6th bullet point as follows: "Promote more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, including through more efficient use of natural resources, pollution reduction, waste minimization and recycling (ADD: including through workplace activity) and awareness raising to change consumer behaviour toward more sustainable lifestyles."

B. MODIFY page three 14th bullet point: "Enhance Corporate environmental and social responsibility (ADD: through recognition of the principles embodied in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises).

The US' "54-page previously agreed texts":

A Case of Selective Amnesia – An analysis from Third World Network

Providing a dash of suspense to the generally uninspiring and un-interactive discussions at the IPM for the past five days is the US' repeated reference to the "54-page previously agreed texts". Curious, some of us asked key delegations about the mystery document, and we got answers ranging from completely baffled, to partly confused, to just plain blank. We were even more surprised to find out later that the US Delegation has actually circulated the document to the delegations prior to the IPM. Huh?!

By Neth/Hira

We tracked the mystery document by asking the esteemed delegates of the US themselves about it. Our sleuthing has led us to a 55-page document (including cover) that puts together all energy-relevant commitments of governments contained in Agenda 21 (1992), Rio + 5 (1997), CSD-9 (2001) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002). The US took the initiative to put together these previously agreed texts into a single document to remind the CSD about their commitments on energy, to support its position that there is no need to re-negotiate on the four thematic clusters. The compilation fits perfectly with the US' consistent mantra in the IPM to stick to the CSD Matrix of initiatives to address the thematic issues. The whole week, the US has been projecting a handful of cases culled from the Matrix which it thinks worthy to be upscaled and replicated.

Hey, isn't it great that the world's only superpower is urging the

CSD to "come back to earth" after reaching a "cruising altitude", by beginning to take practical actions and stop all the rhetoric in the basement of the UN?

Yes, indeed, BUT...

Let us not forget that governments and the international community have actually implemented very little of what it has committed in various environmental agreements since Rio. The world has, in fact, generally forgotten that they have agreed to be guided by the Precautionary Principle and to adopt the principle of Common but Differ-

entiated Responsibility in the Rio Declaration which provides the Soul of all the agreements that came out since 1992. Curiously, the US forgot to make any reference to these principles in their 54-page compilation. The CSD has to take stock of which commitments have been implemented so far and which have not and why, and address the hurdles to implementation while providing the leadership in tackling the current challenges.

Not to be outdone, the EU has come forward with its proposal of setting up a "basket of voluntary commitments". It appears

"Let us not forget that governments and the international community have actually implemented very little of what it has committed in various environmental agreements since Rio."

at first glance to be no different from the US' proposal of voluntary partnerships and obsession with the CSD Matrix, time will perhaps show.

We should not gloss over the fact that the commitments made by governments since Rio, very little of which has yet been implemented, may not be adequate anymore to address the world's worsening environmental problems. The price of oil in 1992 was only about half of what it is now. A scientific consensus has already been reached that Climate Change is a real and urgent problem, which was still a subject of debate 15 years ago. The international community needs to renew and even reinforce its commitments to comprehensively and holistically address the interlinked challenges to sustainable development, not to be content with solutions that they agreed to in the past which they have not even delivered. Our environmental problems today are much more serious than what it was during the time of Rio and we definitely cannot rely on voluntary partnerships and voluntary solutions. We need commitments that come with political will to translate those to urgent and practical actions which are comprehensive, holistic, participatory and environmentally sustainable.

Tools like the CSD Matrix may serve as useful guide for governments and different stakeholders on actual and practical solutions to the challenges in sustainable development, but it should not distract us from the big picture. The packet of initiatives on renewable energy should not deceive developing countries that they are still heavily dependent on fossil fuel that deplete their natural revenues that ought to be allocated for social

services. The showcases of public-private partnerships in providing cleaner LPG cooking facilities to poor women should not make us forget that most rural households cannot even meet their basic daily needs. So-called success stories of SMEs involved in renewables must not deceive us into believing that the CSD can push trade barriers biased against developing countries, environmentally-damaging subsidies and monopolistic IPRs under the rug.

The CSD must address strategic issues and interlinkages beyond adopting a "business-as-usual" attitude and contenting itself with upscaling initiatives that do not address the fundamental issues in equity, sustainability and participation. Otherwise, the world will be left with a bad case of selective amnesia.

THANK YOU!

The Taking Issue Team would like to thank you for your valuable inputs in the newsletter at this IPM.

We look forward to reading your insights and thoughts in our publications in April and May as we work to push governments for a strong CSD 15 outcome.

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

--Albert Einstein

Commitments – yes! Voluntary action – no!

If I were asked about my expectations for the IPM meeting I would say honest, clear and strong decisions for action: commitments. In the current state of affairs, governments cannot longer avoid taking responsibility to substantially transform the development paradigm that has led us to the point where we stand now.

By Maria Arce Moreira

Severe droughts or flooding, such as the one in East Africa last year or the one in my country Bolivia right now, generate food crises and destroy the livelihoods of millions of poor people around the world. Emissions of greenhouse gases – overwhelmingly by the richest countries – contribute to these ever more frequent events decreasing the already limited chances of developing countries to overcome poverty and increase their vulnerabilities unfairly. In addition to that, energy poverty affects billions of people either through lack of access to electricity or reliance on biomass fuels, limiting the fulfilment of their basic energy needs. The picture looks grim but the realities of the energy poor who are also the victims of climate change are even worse.

Three clear obligations

Industrialised countries have three clear obligations: to reduce their impacts on the climate; to support developing countries adapt to the consequences of changes that are now inevitable; and to support poor countries gain access to cleaner and more efficient energy sources and services.

Most governments and main stakeholders agree on the fundamental role that energy has for sustainable development and therefore that energy services should be accessible, equitable, safe and affordable for all; the fact that there are vast inequities in both access to energy (sources and services) and energy use between industrialised and developing countries and within countries as well, makes it urgent to adopt time bound commitments to address energy poverty and define differentiated responsibilities to achieve them. Ideally all governments should be willing to make a commitment to end energy poverty. So far, there are some cautious signs in that direction but more clarity is needed.

Voluntary schemes or time-bound commitments will require synchronised collaboration and support from governments, donors and multilateral actors to succeed. They will also require flexibility and openness to support the mainstreaming of simpler, participatory, gender responsive and decentralised approaches tested and implemented by civil society for many years now in the bigger



Partnerships without commitments can dry up quickly

energy agenda. It is clear that the decisions and choices made by any of these powerful actors will have an impact on the achievement of any set target, even if it is made on voluntary basis. It is important then to reflect on the level of co-responsibility and support that will be expected from all them in order to achieve the greatest impact when tackling energy poverty. Directly or indirectly accountability applies to all.

Political Will is the Only Answer for a Successful UN Reform

A free and frank exchange between government and civil society representatives on UN reform took place in conference room C on February 27. The meeting focused on: How to address the environmental elements of UN reform, in light of UNEP's recent Governing Council meeting and the meeting in Paris on Global Ecological Governance, and How to address the sustainable development aspects of the report of the HLP on UN system wide coherence.

Chatham rules

The meeting was held under the Chatham rules, and all participants spoke in their personal capacity on the issue of international environmental governance. Stakeholder Forum (SF), the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Development (FBOMS), ANPED—Northern Alliance for Sustainability, and the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN NGLS) hosted the workshop on UN system-wide coherence.

Governance for environment problematic

A panel consisting of governments and civil society addressed the meeting. The discussion highlighted an emerging consensus that the current structure of international environmental governance and governance for sustainable development are not working. As one speaker said, the initial outcomes of the General Assembly informal discussions on the environment reveal an agreement among Governments that there are serious problems with governance for the environment, including a lack of political leadership, insufficient coordination and cooperation, lack of scientific expertise, and lack of financing. All speakers seemed to

implicitly accept these propositions as a foundation for discussions on reform of IEG.

Upgrade the environment

The disagreement that remains is over how to address these problems. The need to strengthen the environmental pillar by upgrading UNEP into a UNEO was stressed; a specialized agency for the environment will not solve the problems was a counter-argument. Civil society representatives reported that many Northern based organisations are supportive of proposals to establish a United Nations Environment Organisation, while many developing country organisations remain uncertain that a UNEO would provide an answer. Still, there is a growing convergence on the views that the environmental pillar within the UN is underrepresented in terms of political status and need to be strengthened.

What to do with CSD

On governance for sustainable development, there was an equally strong sense that the Commission on Sustainable Development is failing its current mandate. Speakers recognized accomplishments of the CSD, but generally supported the High Level Panel's call to strengthen the

Jennifer Peer and Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

CSD's ability to support implementation. a government representative in the audience called for an informal stocktaking dialogue to assess the successes and failures of the CSD. Another supported this proposal, highlighting the need to address such institutional questions, given the fact that the themes of the CSD sessions beyond the agriculture session are not confirmed.

Political determines

While the meeting confirmed that governments and civil society organisations alike have not agreed on a way forward to address the shortcomings of the UN system, there was little doubt that political will would ultimately determine whether the international governance architecture for sustainable development and the environment can and must be strengthened. Without determination among governments to implement sustainable development commitments, the form of any environmental authority would be inconsequential.

The fact that more than 80 people, had found their ways to conference room C to participate and learn from this side event, speaks to the importance both governments and civil society ascribe to the reform issue.

Question of the day

What should NGOs do between now and CSD 15?



Mr. Alain Edouard Traore
Vice-Chair, Burkina Faso

NGOs have to play a great role to make an interactive discussion with states, because it is time to be more effective in the process. It is time for NGOs to criticize states and oblige them to find the best way. I think as we are approaching to CSD-15 it is important to be more practical.



Filimone Kau
Counsellor/Deputy Permanent Representative, Fiji Mission to the United Nations

I think NGOs should critique and very properly study the chairman's text, ensure that NGO issues are imported in the text. They must ensure that the voices of the public outside of the intergovernmental process are taken-up in the negotiations during CSD-15. So while intergovernmental representatives continue to take the positions of governments, NGOs have a role in bringing the other perspective that needs to be heard and recorded during the CSD-15 negotiations.



Michael Strauss
Earth Media, United States

NGOs can utilize the CSD issues of energy and climate in their broader sense to reach the public, through the press, to try to influence the decisions of governments and the actions of people's daily life.

Old Rio is Dead?

Today's battles were lost yesterday
Tomorrow's battles must be fought today

Tears rolled down many eyes
When your speech tumbled down
Parrots echo talks failed partnerships
Eco-tourists from rich nations
Eco-tourism in poor nations
Fossilised ideas revived and
up-scaled
Pipelines
Cleaner dirty energy
Oil spills, gas flares:
do they make you dance?
Don't you know that carbon sinks
will sink the world?

Today's battles were lost yesterday
Tomorrow's battles must be fought today

Would you just because you have a
technology
Use it?
Would you use nuclear power to light
a stove?
If clean technologies roast the sky
Won't you think?
Be careful people
Snares are set in the *matrix*
And this is no movie
No matter how voluntary,
Shopping baskets work very poorly
at the well

Today's battles were lost yesterday
Tomorrow's battles must be fought today

Tears rolled down many eyes
From shock, sorrows and agony
15 years since Rio
Should we still crawl?
Did we fly over the oceans, deserts
and forests
To insist on *replication* of battles long
lost
You say fossil fuels will last your
lifetime
But what will you do

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