

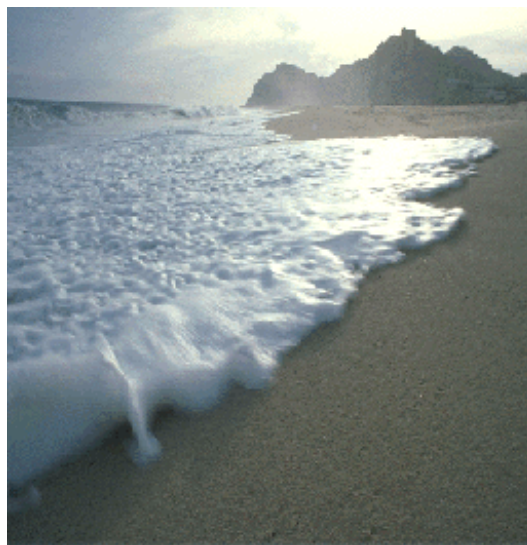
NETWORK 2005

UNEP GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

APRIL 2004

Charting the Course on the International Water Agenda

The first global debate on water was held in 1977 in Mar del Plata, Argentina. In-depth discussions were held and thus the documents that were produced contained lots of bright ideas for effective and efficient water management. Since then, over more than twenty five years, huge volume of water has flowed through the Ganges and the Thames but has there been progress in-terms of emergence of new ideas and approaches, and how much of those ideas are really being practiced at ground level? We posed this same question at Jeju as UNEP GCSS/GMEF prepares for CSD12 to be held in New York next month.



The global process of consultation was re-initiated in Dublin in 1992. It produced four convincing policy statements through which the entire water management at global, regional and national level would be rationalized. Known as *Dublin Principles* these were appropriately incorporated in Agenda 21. Since then, a plethora of global and regional events have further debated the way forward on the water agenda. In 2002, at WSSD we have reached a general acceptance of the importance of Integrated Water Resources (IWRM) with governments agreeing to adopt, by 2005, national IWRM strategies and water efficiency plans. Currently an estimated one-third of the countries would comply with the target and there is a vital need to accelerate action for addressing the challenges of water management.

Thus the answer to the question we had posed earlier, is possibly that we have managed to define IWRM and set out the essential ingredients for it but we are still debating over implementation strategies.

Water is essential for our lives and our livelihoods and it is essential for the ecosystems on which we, as individuals and as a species, depend for our lives and our livelihoods. Historically, water management has been a central driver of human cooperation and a hallmark of human achievement from ancient Mesopotamian irrigation systems to Roman aqueducts to Classical Chinese flood control systems. Indeed, modern intergovernmental

organizations spring from the 19th century river commissions of Europe. But water, or the lack of access to it, can also be a driver of human conflict. And too much of the world today does not have adequate access to healthy water for personal, agricultural or commercial uses.

In recognition of these inequities, the UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Development Goal to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015. At the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the international community adopted a complimentary target to reduce by half by 2015 the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation.

While we focus on water supply and sanitation, it is important that we also embrace the wider framework within which the provision of clean water must be expanded. This includes WSSD commitments to develop integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005, to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, and in, the widest sense, manage our natural wealth sustainably.

The challenge is to keep our eye on the immediate needs of the millions without access to clean water and simultaneously ensure the provision of clean water in the long term. The latter will not be achieved without taking a holistic approach to water resources management, or without conserving our natural ecosystems as an integral part of the infrastructure needed to deliver water to our homes. The international community's response to date has been far too narrowly confined to debates about distribution of water between competing sectors and needs, and has largely failed to address water within an ecosystem context from source to sea. UNEP's working paper for the GCSS/GMEF proposed the Ecosystem Approach for IWRM, which would include the following elements:

- i) assessment of vulnerability and resilience of water ecosystems to cumulative anthropogenic and natural pressures;
- ii) mitigation of the impacts of urbanization on water ecosystems,
- iii) management of environmental flows i.e. ensuring minimum stream flows would be essential.
- iv) the principles and practice of IWRM with the integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) should be linked up;



- v) water supply and sanitation practices are environmentally sustainable must be ensured, and;
- vi) pressure on ecosystem arising from poverty, and pressure on poverty arising from degraded ecosystem must be alleviated.

The Jeju meeting presents an ideal opportunity for governments, intergovernmental agencies and Major Groups to share their experiences in integrating poverty alleviation, conservation and watershed management. During CSD 12, governments will present their integrated water resource management plans, as promised in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In light of this it is essential that governments, intergovernmental agencies and major groups implement policies and measures to realize the international targets related to water as contained in the MDG and JPOI. A step forward in achieving these targets would include an increased attention on the following issues:

- i) adoption of a systems approach to water supply and sanitation;
- ii) establishment of 'environmental flow requirement' in the context of river basin planning and IWRM;
- iii) financing of the project that aim at maintenance of nature's infrastructure, and;
- iv) improvement in governance of water management.

The Ministerial Consultations, in Jeju, has endorsed the approaches contained in the discussion paper and approaches summarized in the preceding paragraphs. They argued for adoption of an ecosystem approach in water resources management; suggested that flow regimes that balance human and ecosystem needs are ensured in all basins of the world; proposed for protection of coastal environment by ensuring adequate supply of upstream flows; and recommended that all stakeholders are effectively involved to improve good governance in water management. Now it remains to be seen that how much of these approaches will take roots at ground level.

Ainun Nishat and Sebastian Winkler, IUCN – The World Conservation Union

Editorial

UNEP's recent Global Ministerial Environment Forum was an interesting, if not groundbreaking, event. Apart from the beautiful location and silky smooth running, the gathering offered an interesting insight into government and stakeholder thinking on environmental aspects of water, sanitation and human settlements.

Admittedly, there were no headline grabbing developments. A lot of the language used was familiar to seasoned conference hacks, but the tone seemed to change. That intangible *je nais se quoir* that drifts along corridors unencumbered by brackets.

The closest the Ministerial came to giving this phenomenon a name was perhaps witnessed in the governance discussions, which opted for an 'omnibus approach' to options available. In plain speak - a rarity, I know - it was a 'lets leave most things on the table now, and focus down by our next Governing Council session' tactic. With the Ministerial free from the demands of achieving consensus, governments were able to afford themselves the next 10 months to consider options before the binding GC session, next February.

Again, its not the act itself here that is of interest, but more a case of what that act implies. Following 12 (exhaustive) years of negotiations, the main issue are known and have largely been negotiated to death. The positions of various groups have been stated and stated again, as are the a considerable number of available initiatives, solutions and policy options.

Within that context governments, and lets not forget stakeholders too, essentially have 3 options at their disposal. One: reverse - drop away from priority issues by lowering political will. Two: stagnate -, regurgitating well worn positions. Three: advance - by starting a process of what one observant delegate at the Ministerial called '*An accumulation of small successes*'. It seems consensus is behind door number three.

This bodes well on one level, less so on another. On the bright side, as with the governance discussion, governments can trade between options to achieve best fit options. While these may not be the most optimal approach available, it is at least progress. On the other hand, the dark gloomy cloud lurking within this silver lining is centered around the murky web of governance structures within which this process will unfold. The very mechanisms that led to entrenched positions and 'business as usual' may very well, unless reformed, suffocate any willingness to innovate.

The first case study of the relative merits of 'an accumulation of small successes' will be CSD 12. Its format is new, and offers delegates of all types an opportunity to brainstorm a shopping list of success stories, their replication, constraints and barriers, their removal, and roles and responsibilities around this. This shopping list would then provide the tradable commodities for governments to achieve their small successes, at next years CSD, at UNEP's governing Council and ultimately during the 5 year MDG review.

Of course, there are a lot of assumptions here: That government departments talk to each other within their own national boundaries; that governance structures are open to change from within; that sacred cows are put out to pasture and that resources are committed at meaningful levels to support all those words. After all, its not the talks that take the time, it's the time it takes to implement the talks that takes the time.

T. Middleton, Editor

Network 2015

Building Partnerships for Sustainable Development

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SUSTAINABLE NEWS

Throw Away Society New Threat to Island Paradises

Urgent international assistance is needed to help small island states deal with a rising tide of rubbish and wastes. Studies by the UNEP indicate that along with issues including rising sea levels, over-fishing, water shortages and inadequate sanitation services, waste is fast becoming another key problem.

The Pacific island of Nauru, for example, now has a “blue green shoreline”. But this has nothing to do with it being next to a beautiful azure sea. The colour is caused by rubbish or more specifically mounds of discarded Fosters and Victoria beer cans.

The wastes not only threaten public health but also livelihoods. Many small island developing states (SIDS) are dependent on income from tourists. Visitors are likely to be less inclined to return to an island or recommend it to friends if the landscape, shoreline and coastal waters are littered with plastics, old cans, discarded sofas and other industrial and household rubbish.

Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP, said: “Small islands across the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and the Pacific are some of the most vulnerable nations on Earth. For example they are threatened by global warming in the guise of more extreme weather events and rising sea levels and their water supplies are often restricted. Many are also found in remote locations and have limited natural resources which in turn makes them economically vulnerable”.

“Handling solid wastes from industry, households and tourism is emerging as another issue with which they need advice and help. Such wastes are not only unsightly and a threat to wildlife, they can also contaminate rivers and ground waters as they slowly degrade,” he said.

UNEP, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies and waste institutions, has been assisting SIDS to prepare waste minimization plans, draw up directories of environmentally sound waste management technologies and promote cleaner production techniques that generate less pollution.

Jagdish Koonjul, chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) who is from Mauritius, said: “We urgently need access to effective and affordable technologies including recycling equipment before this issue of wastes becomes critical. It is a cry for technology transfer”.

“Many small island developing states, including my own country of Mauritius, have launched public awareness campaigns and the people have responded. But the fact remains that unless you have ways of re-using and recycling rubbish, it is difficult to know what to do with materials such as plastics including plastic bags, aluminum and paper,” he added.

The reports, some of which were released today at an international gathering of environment ministers taking place in Jeju, the Republic of Korea, have been compiled by UNEP’s Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities or GPA and UNEP’s Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA).

One, a booklet called UNEP and Small Island Developing States: 1994-2004 and Future Perspectives, estimates that since the early 1990s the levels of plastic wastes on small island developing states (SIDS) has increased five fold. It points out

that problems of rubbish and litter are part of a wider waste crisis.

The new reports will be formally presented to ministers attending a key SIDS conference, called Barbados Plus Ten, taking place on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius later in the year.

“Pollution of water supplies is potentially region-wide, due to inadequate treatment of domestic waste water and inadequate solid waste disposal,” says one GIWA report.

“A short walk along any coastline close to human habitation in the Pacific Islands will reveal many example of inappropriate waste disposal, even in areas where there is a municipal collection system such as the city of Suva (Fiji),” says the report.

The report says that despite annual clean ups on islands, social attitudes appear to be unchanging with the same amount of rubbish and wastes quickly piling up.

Another report by GIWA says that “the most critical issue for the States in the region is the growing problem of solid wastes”. In the Comoros, collection and disposal of wastes is “virtually non-existent and are often found scattered throughout the city and in both public and village areas”. In Madagascar, over half of the population dispose of their wastes “anywhere convenient” including on or near beaches and in mangrove swamps.

A growing problem is the dumping of wastes at sea which adds to marine debris and the pollution of coastlines near and far. As a result islands, such as the World Heritage Site of Aldabara, are now suffering from high levels of rubbish washed ashore.

The report argues that improper disposal of rubbish and wastes is encouraging vermin, including rats, which in turn carry diseases such as plague, scabies and other tropical diseases. Poor disposal of wastes, especially containers, is also generating increased risk of malarial infections especially in Madagascar and the Comoros. The containers, ranging from old plastic bags to paint tins, accumulate still rain water - an ideal breeding ground for the disease carrying insects.

Renewable Energy Position Papers

Stakeholder Forum carries out the overall preparation and coordination of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue for the International Conference for Renewable Energy in Germany in June.

The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue International Advisory Group (IAG) is in the process of producing stakeholder position papers, which will be used to identify the areas of convergence and divergence between stakeholder groups. 12 papers will be submitted for the following stakeholder groups: women; NGOs; local authorities; regional authorities; trade unions; business the finance sector; the scientific and technological community; farmers; private consumers; renewable energy manufacturers and suppliers (including renewable energy associations); and actors in development and poverty alleviation.

The template for the stakeholder position papers will follow the following format: context; opportunities; challenges; recommendations; and case studies. If you would like to input into to these papers please contact the relevant IAG member. See www.stakeholderforum.org/practice/renewables/iag.pdf

CSR

Sustainability Reporting : The Path to 'Clearly Better' Performance

At the CSD session in April 2002, a new sustainability initiative was launched here at the United Nations. Known as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), this was a multi-stakeholder attempt to encourage all organisations – business, government and civil society – to measure and communicate their own contribution to sustainable development. So what has happened in the intervening two years? What contribution has GRI made to sustainable development?

The first thing to recall is why the GRI was developed and why it remains revolutionary.

- **Triple Bottom Line** : Until the advent of the GRI, there was no coordinated effort to bring together the economic, social and environmental aspects of an organisation's performance. Existing codes, guidelines and standards usually referred to only one or two of these, but did not bring all three together in the one place. The GRI *Sustainability Reporting Guidelines* enable all organisations to assess, measure and report their performance in these three areas.
- **Multi-stakeholder** : Before the creation of the GRI, sustainability indicators were either left undefined, or were defined at the national or sectoral level. This meant that they were not globally relevant, or not legitimate in the eyes of other sectors of society (who were not involved in their development). By contrast, the GRI process is one of engaging the main non-government sectors of society – business, service providers, labour organisations, NGOs and academics – in a multi-stakeholder process to agree globally-relevant and comparable indicators.

Five years ago, only a handful of companies reported on anything more than their financial performance. Now, thousands report on some aspect of their non-financial performance using some form of sustainability indicators. Over leading 400 companies in 43 countries around the world use the GRI Guidelines, and the number is rising rapidly (see www.globalreporting.org). The GRI has become what some have called the 'gold standard' for sustainability reporting. This is because it has been officially recognised : by the 2002 UN Summit on Sustainable Development; by UNEP (it is an official 'UNEP Collaborating Centre'); and by the UN Global Compact which has designated it as the preferred reporting framework. It has become the market leader, used alike by both reporters and report users, such as banks and investors.

In short, it has helped embed the concept of sustainable development into everyday operations of mainstream life. Its products – such as the GRI reporting guidelines are available freely for use as a 'public good'. Its governance, based on multi-stakeholder participation by NGOs, business and others – as equals – encourages balanced universal participation.

Why Report, and to Whom?

By using the GRI Guidelines, organisations can begin to understand what 'sustainable development' means in practice. But that still leaves the question, why a company should report on its non-financial activities. After all, non-financial reporting is not mandatory?

Over the last decade, several distinct stakeholder groups, and their interests, have clearly emerged in the field of sustainable development.

- **Employees** : want information about how their company is

performing, about plans for expansion or plant closures, and about health and safety issues. In brief, they mainly want information about anything that affects their jobs, families and local communities. If a company is to be able to attract and retain employees, it needs to be trusted and its goals and practices supported. *Here, sustainability reporting can be a powerful tool to communicate with staff and engage them in collective efforts to improve performance.*

- **Customers** : want information about products and related production processes. The quality of the product and, increasingly, how it was produced, are factors that are taken into account – along with price – in purchasing decisions. As numerous NGO campaigns have illustrated, human rights and environmental issues have become central to demands for increased transparency. *Sustainability reporting can be used to brief customers on performance, and in so doing build trust, gather ideas for improvements, and reduce the risk of boycotts and other brand-tarnishing attacks.*
- **Investors** : want any information that may affect the security of their investment. Shareholders and fund managers, large and small, need a wide range of information. In the past, much of this was contained in financial reports. The series of celebrated financial collapses in the first part of this decade undermined public trust in corporate management and in traditional financial reporting. *Sustainability reports are now widely used to meet the needs of investors look for greater transparency about a corporation's governance and management, financial situation, labour practices, strategic thinking and plans for the future. In the USA, a number of ethical investor groups have been bringing shareholder actions over the last few years calling on companies to report using the GRI framework.*
- **Rating and Benchmarking Agencies** : play an increasingly important role in shaping investment behaviour. They require detailed information on a wide range of aspects of the financial and non-financial performance of a corporation. This interest can be witnessed in the rise of questionnaires which these agencies, together with fund managers, now send routinely to companies. *The fact that several leading investment houses now encourage reporting based on the GRI framework underlines the point that the market is looking for more information than national laws or stock market rules require.*
- **Regulators** : need to strike a balance between stakeholder demands for extensive and detailed information, and corporate concerns about excessive costs and concerns about commercial confidentiality. Governments and market regulators respond to shifting interests and definitions of what is 'material' information, and attempt to find a compromise that ensures the healthy functioning of markets. As the U.S. Sabanes-Oxley legislation demonstrated, legislators can move quickly to address perceived shortcomings in corporate transparency. *In several countries (e.g. France, UK), legislation already requires some form of reporting on social and environmental policies. Also perhaps marking a new trend, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange requires all companies listing to prepare sustainability reports, and recommends use of the GRI.*
- **NGOs** : civil society organisations frequently perform a watchdog role, highlighting and responding to issues that they believe are not receiving due attention. The UN now lists over

2,350 NGOs which have formal consultative status with its Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the body responsible for, among other things, sustainable development issues. Several leading NGOs now call for laws on corporate accountability. *GRI-based sustainability reports, which contain NGO inputs, provide a credible basis for reporting and long term NGO engagement.*

But is there a business case?

Sustainability reporting seems set to assume an ever greater importance for organisational management. There is an imperative for well-managed organisations to be transparent to themselves as well as the outside world.

- **Management** : needs accurate and comprehensive information about such things as emerging market trends, consumer and client interests, emerging national policies, internal production performance, employee attitudes and suppliers. Any information affecting performance, brand and reputation is material to management. *Sustainability reports can be used to improve internal information management and performance monitoring systems.*
- **Suppliers** : need clear information about customer policies and expectations in order to perform efficiently. In a world where out-sourcing has become commonplace, optimisation of transparency within supply-chains has assumed greater importance. Global brands know that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Their reputation is now built around components whose production they do not directly

control. *Sustainability reporting is one tool for ensuring product quality along the supply chain.*

There is increasing evidence that companies that are more transparent about their activities and policies are rewarded in the marketplace. Among the benefits of higher levels of public disclosure are lower share price volatility; lower cost of investment capital; higher average share price; and higher management reputation.

Increased transparency tends to lower the risk that investors will be surprised by new developments, and increases trust in the quality of management. Companies that have good internal and external information gathering and communication systems are better placed to identify both risks and opportunities, which can mean greater responsiveness to changes in the market-place and improved performance.

Conclusion

Sadly, the challenges of sustainable development will become worse before they get better. Business has a vital role to play, but it cannot play this role without communicating its commitment and performance to all its stakeholders. Indeed, all organisations need to look at their contributions : sustainable development is everyone's business. The GRI sustainability reporting framework is playing a historic role in encouraging continuous improvement by all organisations and in forging new partnerships for progress.

Paul Hohnen, Director for Strategic Development, Global Reporting initiative (GRI)

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

Future Wave

"Over the bleached bone of numerous civilisations are written the pathetic words. Too Late!"

Martin Luther King

John Elkington of Sustainability made a very interesting presentation at the UNEP Industry consultation in October last year, which I have developed a little, to try and put a little perspective into where we are and what might be the challenge ahead for us.

Elkington produced a diagram of upturns and downturns or waves and down waves for the past thirty to forty years:

The first wave John argues is the Limits to Growth wave. This is highlighted by Rachel Carsons Silent Spring (1962) which exposed the hazards of DDT, and questioned humanity's faith in technological progress setting the stage for the environmental movement. Another significant milestone was the Limits to Growth Report from the Club of Rome (1972) itself which shocked the general public as it was authored by reputable scientists, business people and politicians from around the world. The wave peaked around the 1972 Stockholm Human Environment Conference shortly followed by a recession triggered by the 1973 Oil Crisis.

The second wave John calls the Green Consumer wave. I think he is right about the growing understanding of the damage being done to the environment by the way we consume. I think of it more as the regulation wave. From 1972 to 1992 something like over 200 international regulations and agreements were made between governments on environment issues. Perhaps the struggle over ozone depletion and the Montreal Protocol

highlights this best and the cluster of regulation developed around Rio. Rio birthed not two but ultimately six legally based Conventions. This second wave peaked around the 1992 Earth Summit. Again it was followed by a recession in part triggered by the fall of Eastern Europe. We are still waiting for the promises made in Rio to be achieved as far as financial commitments something like \$125 billion a year promised in Rio a doubling of the Aid flows of that year. Many of the problems of today would be well on their way to being dealt with if that had been delivered.

The third wave John calls the Globalisation and Governance wave. Seattle, bad corporate activity, highlights this as does the development of the World Social Forum in response. This peaked around Johannesburg and was followed by a recession in part triggered by the incoming Bush administration economic policies, the impacts of 9/11 and a feeling in the world of a greater insecurity..

Before moving on to the fourth wave I would just underline that after each wave that wave's principal focus isn't lost as the next wave comes along but is actioned and we might argue how effectively at times. I haven't made a comment on the Governance side of the third wave I have been an advocate of the stakeholder approach over the past ten years. Rio recognised the governments alone couldn't deliver sustainable development and for the first time in a UN document recognised in the nine chapters roles and responsibilities for stakeholder groups. Rio+5 gave us the Multi-stakeholder Dialogues helping governments make better informed decisions and 2002 was about Multi-stakeholder partnerships - that stakeholders working together have a role in implementing the global agreements. This analysis though does not go far enough Stakeholder Democracy is in essence a political approach to counterbalance economic

liberalism with forms of transparency, accountability and democracy.

Dick Morris a former advisor to President Clinton argues in his book 'The New Prince' that we are moving from Madisonian Democracy (representative) to Jeffersonian Democracy (participatory). Although he is, I believe, right in the direction he doesn't adequately address where we are. This stage of Stakeholder Democracy can really enrich local, national and international governance processes. It is too early to see how successful it might be but what I would say for the international institutions is it isn't just an add on. Governments are clearly in the lead as they have a mandate from the people but in this complicated world we now live in stakeholders can strengthen this. It was President Clinton who called government 'the great facilitator' and if Rio was about anything it was about recognising that sustainable development needs everyone to help to ensure we can address the challenges.

The fourth wave I am calling the environmental/human security wave. In 2001 Maurice Strong argued that Johannesburg should be about this area of work and perhaps in retrospect he was right.

This is of course a relevant conversation for us today because

water is one of the issues that would be at the forefront of such a discussion. As are population growth, degraded ecosystems, forced migration, resource depletion, global health issues such as pandemic diseases as well as governance, human rights, globalisation and the challenges to our cultures.

As we have said in Outreach, 2005 offers a chance for some of the key agendas to come together.

In the early part of 2005 we have the proposed conclusion of the Doha Development Round of WTO in the mid point of 2005 the report of the Secretary General on Reform of Peace and Security in September we have the MDG+5 Review possible Summit and then a GA debate on a possible UN Environmental Organization triggered by the French Government initiative this last September.

2005 offers a chance to engage creatively in addressing the new wave – if that is what it is – or again to be "Too Late."

"Today our concern must be the future. For the world is changing. The old era is ending. The old ways will not do."

John F Kennedy

Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum

STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES

The Population and Sustainability Network at CSD 12

The Population and Sustainability Network is running a UN Partnership Event in tandem with UNFPA in New York at CSD 12 on April 27th 2004 at 10 am in Conference Room 6

The Network is an advocacy group which aims to bring together development, environment and reproductive health NGOs, government departments, academics and others, to increase leverage on population issues. The Network has been registered as a Type 2 Partnership at the UN (commitment to partnerships was one output from WSSD 2002).

It endeavours to provide a 'neutral space' in which different constituencies can learn from and share with each other. It is hoped that such increases in understanding of the issues will inform the organisational strategies and activities of Network members.

The Network is UK based, but it has links with a broad range of overseas organisations, and is seeking to promote closer co-ordination among these.

The overarching concept of the Network is the Population Coin: On one side – unsustainable population increase and its social, economic and environmental effects in the majority world; On the other side – unsustainable over-consumption of resources in the minority world and its effects on the development of sustainability.

It is unrealistic in many cases to argue for no population growth at all, certainly in the short run. However there is a rate of increase, varying with circumstance, above which key development goals of poverty alleviation, per capita productivity and investment in healthcare and education become significantly compromised. The economy at local level is unable to support such increase, with high resultant unemployment, emigration to towns, urban squalor. An equally relevant aspect of "unsustainability" in population increase relates to its impact in a

finite physical environment – causing degradation of land, pollution and loss of biodiversity.

The Aims of the Network:

1. To highlight the negative impact of unsustainable population increase on economic development, poverty alleviation and the natural environment;
2. To ensure better opportunity for investment in healthcare and education, especially in respect of women's rights and the need for more effective programmes against HIV/AIDS.
3. To promote better understanding of the problems caused by unsustainable consumption (particularly in the rich minority world) – including pollution, pressure on finite resources, on biodiversity and on climate change.

The title of the event is Population, Environment and Sustainable Development: ICPD at 10.

There will be four speakers on the following themes:

- (i) Unsustainable population growth and its impact on economic development and the environment – Toby Aykroyd, member of the Network steering group
- (ii) Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements and Reproductive Health – Marta Benavides, International Institute for Co-operation between Peoples, El Salvador and Daisy Owomugasho, African Women's Economic Policy Network, Uganda
- (iii) ICPD and the Millennium Development Goals – Francois Farah, Chief of the Population and Development Branch, UNFPA, New York

The short presentations will be followed by a discussion from the floor.

Catherine Budgett-Meakin

Water Matters

Water matters to the plant science industry. A renewable, but scarce and precious resource, it is the lifeblood of every crop and

the key to successful food production, poverty eradication and public health. As an ever increasing world population puts more pressure demand, it is imperative that water supplies are used more efficiently. Equally the quality of water must be protected. Future forecasts predict a 20% increase over the next 30 years in the number of irrigated hectares. Agriculture accounts for 70% of all water use, making it our duty and responsibility to protect and preserve this vital natural resource.

The plant science industry is well placed to address the water challenge. As part of its commitment to sustainable agriculture a range of agricultural technologies are being developed that help improve water use efficiency in crop growth. Industry also promotes improved land management systems that play a major role in enhancing water use efficiency and protecting water quality, such as low- or no tillage land practices, which are often enabled only through the use of herbicides. Farmers throughout the world have already seen the benefits of these systems. In Europe industry has now partnered with the EU to study the beneficial effects of conservation tillage on water quality there.

Herbicides increase a crop's access to water by reducing weeds that compete for scarce water resources? resulting in more crop per drop. In the Philippines, new rice production systems enabled by innovative weed control have reduced water consumption by one-fifth. This is particularly critical as rice is one of the most water intensive crops worldwide.

Promotion of good agricultural practices and product stewardship is fundamental. By engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships, industry seeks to ensure its stewardship activities are also successful in protecting water quality by reducing soil erosion, avoiding run-off of crop protection products, and increasing wildlife habitat as part of a holistic farm or land management approach. Throughout Europe, for example, industry has teamed up with farmers and water utility companies to protect water areas and inform farmers regarding application timing, amount, and choice of crop protection products.

Industry Research is carried out on new products that address farmers needs while at the same time protecting essential water resources. One programme currently in the discovery phase is an effort to identify genes that might provide drought stress tolerance with the potential to substantially improve a crop's water utilization, resulting in less water consumption.

Industry is stepping up to the water challenge by developing innovative strategies for sustainable water management in agriculture. However, progress can only be made when all stakeholders are involved in the process it is vital that the private sector, the public sector and civil society work together in partnership to preserve our world's natural resources.

A publication highlighting examples of industry's contribution to water protection and conservation by CropLife International will be available in April. In the meantime, some case studies, facts and figures on water, agriculture and the plant science industry are already available on CropLife International's website (www.croplife.org).

Promoting the Social Life Cycle of Rainwater

The International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) is a membership-based collective open to all parties interested in the field of rainwater harvesting (RWH). It was created during the

Johannesburg Summit. The Secretariat is located at Geneva Environment House.

Throughout history, civilizations have developed RWH practices as a simple but effective way of obtaining water for drinking and other purposes. Realizing that all sources of fresh water - rivers, lakes, wetlands and groundwater reserves - face the twin challenges of overexploitation and pollution, there is a growing need to harvest and conserve rainwater where it falls. Rainwater as a public good is accessible to all and is a key resource to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods in many regions of the developing world.

Many regions with water scarcity, rapid population growth and sinking groundwater, are facing food insecurity and depletion of natural water resources. Such areas are vulnerable to risks justifying mainstreaming of rainwater harvesting (RWH) as a development option in semi-arid and dry lands, small islands – and even in areas subject to flooding - and as a complementary option in other regions where drinking water is scarce, poorly managed and improvement in quality standards are needed.

Rain is the original source of all fresh water systems. It has the highest social value and is a complementary solution to food security strategies in most regions of Africa.

IRHA is calling upon governments, after the Addis Ababa Ministerial conference on Water, December 2002, to encourage RW planning and management within Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) frameworks, to use rain where it falls and to facilitate the means to supply safe drinking water at the lowest cost.

Rain, as a public good, represents a major freshwater supply option for poverty reduction, conflict prevention and gender equity. There are many good practices around the world to confirm the figures above. They all show the urgent need to put RWH in the first row of development priorities.

As an essential component of IWRM rainwater harvesting should improve cross-sectoral planning, facilitate better institutional coordination and preserve traditional water-saving knowledge. IRHA is thus engaged in building the Social Life Cycle of Rainwater in demonstrative projects to mainstream this option in development agendas and to implement a forceful capacity building strategy in selected countries in the south.

Mainstreaming RWH in development agendas should now permit to concretize implementation of principles and declarations adopted in major global events in Rio, Dublin, Bonn, Johannesburg, Kyoto, Jeju and CSD 12. The statement below has been included as a result of the intervention of the Secretariat of the IRHA with UN DESA during the CSD 12 preparatory process:

“Due to the increasing financial and environmental costs of developing new sources of water, it is generally more cost-effective to increase the effective water supply by reducing leakages and losses. Another cost-effective approach to improving water supplies is rainwater harvesting, which has been neglected as a source of drinking water partly because of water quality concerns. It is now gaining popularity in many developing countries in Asia, including China, Thailand, India and Sri Lanka, as it provides a sustainable solution to water scarcity. Desalination of sea water is used to provide water for drinking or other high-value uses in some water scarce West Asian countries and SIDS, but the high cost limits the application of desalination as a source of water in poor countries or for relatively low-value uses such as irrigation.”

