



UNITED NATIONS NON-GOVERNMENTAL LIAISON SERVICE/NGLS

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Preparing for the 1997 Agenda 21 Progress Review

INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was set up by the UN General Assembly in 1992 to address sustainable development issues and monitor the implementation of Agenda 21, the action programme adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The CSD was established as an intergovernmental mechanism to address the full range of environment and development issues covered in Agenda 21, as well as any others that may yet arise.

This *E&D File* summarizes the CSD's recent work, areas where more progress needs to be made, and preparations for the General Assembly's 1997 Special Session, which will take stock of proposals made toward implementing Agenda 21, the plan of action agreed at UNCED. Information is also given on preparations of major groups for the review. The text below is based on *CSD Update* (volume 3, issue 2) and other information provided by the CSD secretariat.

NEWS FROM THE CSD BUREAU

The Bureau of the CSD met in New York on 15 July 1996. Bureau members felt that the overall results of CSD '96 were quite positive. This is confirmed by the generally high assessment of the CSD's work in the statements delivered by countries during the 1996 session of ECOSOC, positive references to the CSD in the Political Declaration of the G-7 Summit held in Lyon, and individual contacts with representatives of various governments, organizations and major groups. Such positive assessments raise future expectations, particularly regarding the 1997 Earth Summit review, for which the bureau will have to make special efforts in the coming year.

One of the challenges for the future will be to strengthen the commission's interaction with the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). A real partnership for sustainable development between

the commission, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO is needed. The bureau noted that the Bretton Woods Institutions are actively involved both in providing support to the CSD and in the United Nations system-wide work aimed at the implementation of Agenda 21. The bureau recognized the need to mobilize greater political support from national constituencies involved in the work of international financial institutions and the WTO and their governing bodies. In this context it was suggested that, while the CSD could serve as a forum for political analysis and policy setting for sustainable development and implementation of Agenda 21, the Bretton Woods institutions, together with other organizations of the United Nations system, could provide the necessary means to support national action.

The bureau members noted that the high-level segment of the CSD recognized the need for more attention to addressing the driving forces that impact the sustainable management of natural resources, while at the same time giving more focus to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, including combatting poverty.

The bureau members agreed that the 1997 review provides a good opportunity to examine the respective roles of the CSD and the other subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC in the implementation of Agenda 21. In this context, there is need for a coordinated approach between the 1997 review exercise and ECOSOC's work on follow-up to recent international conferences.

Bearing in mind the discussions during the High-Level segment of CSD4, members of the bureau believed that the special session should focus on implementation of Agenda 21 and result in the adoption of an agreed statement or declaration. The following organizational outline was suggested:

- n the Ad hoc Intersessional Working Group could strive to agree on the format and structure of a final document and the main elements to be included in it;
- n this outline could form the basis for negotiations during the fifth session of the CSD, which could produce the draft final document for the special session;

n the special session could then agree on the final document after clearing any brackets and reflecting any new developments or proposals that might come up in the period between the CSD and the Special Session.

The bureau underscored the need for effective arrangements to allow major groups to contribute to the deliberations surrounding the special session. While specific decisions on the participation of major groups in the session will be taken by the General Assembly itself, a number of activities could be organized during the special session with a view to ensuring effective inputs from major groups and their active interaction with government representatives. In this context, it would be useful to assess and build upon the experience gained during previous special sessions of the GA, in the CSD and in Habitat II as well as other recent intergovernmental meetings.

MEETING OF TASK MANAGERS

A meeting of Task Managers was held in New York from 8 to 10 July 1996, as agreed at the seventh meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development to discuss preparation of the "concise reports" that will assess progress achieved in the implementation of the various chapters of Agenda 21. These reports will form the basis of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report and be submitted to the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the 1997 special session of the General Assembly.

The Task Managers considered the draft outline of the comprehensive report and discussed preparations for the trends report, which will also be submitted to the 1997 special session.

See below for a more detailed description of the various reports to be considered by the special session.

INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Following the meeting of Task Managers, the Interagency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) met from 10 to 12 July to consider issues of inter-agency coordination related to sustainable development and the work of the CSD. The IACSD underscored the importance of preparation for the 1997 special session of the GA that will conduct a comprehensive review of progress achieved since UNCED. The committee expressed its appreciation to the Task Managers for providing an excellent contribution to the preparation of the reports for 1997. The committee was briefed on the types of reports to be submitted in 1997. The IACSD felt that its own role in preparations for 1997 should focus on ensuring that all the substantive material submitted by the United Nations system for 1997 is of the highest quality and credibility. A review of the functioning of the IACSD is in its third phase and will result in a statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to be submitted to the 1997 special session.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKS: 1997 AND BEYOND

by Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), United Nations

The year 1997 is crucial for promoting sustainable development. "Business as usual" has already proved unable to meet even basic, present-day needs for environmental preservation and equitable economic development. The essential message of UNCED is that we need to review practically every area of development policy. Have we done that in the years since Rio? As we begin to take stock of where we stand five years after the Rio Earth Summit, I have a strong sense of pride in what has been accomplished, but an even stronger feeling of urgency about what remains to be done in the years ahead.

We have exceeded expectations in many areas. The Commission on Sustainable Development, a newcomer to the ECOSOC family, established a dynamic institutional identity with a clear focus and a well-defined work programme. It has attracted a growing commitment and involvement of senior policy makers and parliamentarians from many countries. Major Group representatives, NGOs and other sectors of civil society, as well as UN organizations and UN agencies, have been active and enthusiastic partners in the global cause of promoting sustainable development. The work of the CSD has kept sustainable development high on the international agenda and has furthered this idea in a wide array of local, national and regional forums. Significant progress also took place on a number of substantive fronts, including the work programmes on sustainable development indicators, transfer of environmentally sound technology, consumption and production patterns, global water assessment and the work of the CSD's Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, as well as including sustainability in trade policy discussions of other international bodies, such as the World Trade Organization.

Yet there are numerous areas where expectations have not been met. Although there has been a broad-based international dialogue on finance and technology transfer, we have lost some of the ground covered at Rio. The innovative financial methods that are proposed do not yet meet the real challenge: that is, to inject sustainability into all fiscal policies from the local to the international level. Approaches that integrate resource use with economic sectors are also lacking. We do not have fresh perspectives that allow a true integration of sectoral and cross-sectoral areas in project design, implementation and monitoring. Another missing link is private-sector commitment to Agenda 21 implementation. While there are examples of business and industry initiatives for sustainable development, these have not reached the critical mass needed for long-term impact.

The special session of the General Assembly in 1997 will give us the opportunity to take a good hard look at what we have to do to get on and stay on the sustainability track. The opportunity to chart the next five to ten years with an honest acceptance of our shortcomings and a

healthy dose of pride in our accomplishments should not be missed. From such a jumping-off point, we will not only rekindle the "Spirit of Rio", but also move ahead with a new sense of urgency befitting the goals that we adopted at the Earth Summit four years ago. I am confident that the 1997 review will be the next big step in meeting our Earth Summit challenge.

PREPARATIONS FOR 1997: REPORTING PROGRESS

Following the decisions taken by the General Assembly, the preparation of documents for the 1997 review is now in full swing. The following list includes documents officially requested by the General Assembly, the Commission on Sustainable Development or other UN intergovernmental bodies specifically for the 1997 review. Other reports may be initiated by the United Nations system organizations, regional commissions and conventions. The names of the reports are provisional.

- n Comprehensive report of the Secretary-General assessing the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and recommendations for future actions and priorities
- n Concise reports of the Secretary-General on progress achieved in specific chapters of Agenda 21
- n Report of the Secretary-General evaluating progress made and constraints encountered at the national level, based on information received in the country profiles
- n Report of the Secretary-General on application of the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
- n Report of the Secretary-General on the environmental impact of activities that are gravely hazardous to the environment
- n Report of the Secretary-General on ongoing energy-oriented programmes and activities within the United Nations system
- n Report of the Secretary-General on streamlining national reporting requirements
- n Report on main trends in sustainable development
- n Global Freshwater Assessment
- n Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests
- n Report of the Governing Council of UNEP (parts relevant to the 1997 review)
- n UNCTAD report providing a comprehensive assessment on Trade and Environment

It is envisaged that these reports will be out as advance unedited copies by the end of 1996.

Concise Reports of the Secretary-General on Specific Chapters of Agenda 21

The Task Managers of each chapter of Agenda 21 will lead the preparation of the respective reports of the Secretary-General on progress achieved in their specific chapters.

Each report of the Secretary-General will consist of the following elements: (i) key objectives of the chapter; (ii) analysis of success in implementing the key objectives; (iii) promising changes; (iv) unfulfilled expectations; and (v) emerging priorities.

In the preparation of these reports, the Task Managers are encouraged to undertake extensive consultations. They may request additional information directly from intergovernmental bodies or major group organizations, or may organize special meetings with governments, intergovernmental bodies, major groups or other experts, depending on the information needed.

The Task Managers for the respective chapters of Agenda 21 are:

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Chapter 7: Human Settlements

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Chapter 20: Management of Hazardous Wastes

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Chapter 21: Management of Solid Wastes

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Chapters 23-32: Role of Major Groups

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Chapter 33: Financial Resources

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Chapter 37: National Mechanisms and International Cooperation for

Capacity-Building in Developing Countries

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Chapter 38: International Institutional Arrangements

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Chapter 39: International Legal Instruments and Mechanisms

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Chapter 40: Information for Decision Making

Human Development, Institutions and Technology Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, DPCSD, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/963 8792, fax +1-212/963 1267

Report on Main Trends in Sustainable Development

The trends report will be a short, non-technical report on medium and long-term trends in key socio-economic and environmental issues and their implications for policy making over the next decade.

The objective of the trends report is to keep sustainable development high on the international agenda. It will provide a clear perspective on where we have been, where we appear to be going and, based on past experience, the most promising policy options for achieving a more sustainable future. An equally important aim will be to help shape the policy agenda of the CSD after 1997. In this regard, the trends report will have important links to the comprehensive report.

The trends report will cover key issues for achieving sustainable development: population growth and distribution; economic growth, energy and material use; agriculture and food supply; water use; environmental quality (focusing on air and water quality); and human welfare. It will be forward looking by providing a conventional development scenario based on current leading projections and forecasts by exploring the possible impacts of alternative policy interventions in the future.

The trends report is being prepared as a joint venture and involves the input of many different partners, coordinated by DPCSD. The core team on the project involves representatives of DPCSD, DESIPA, UNEP and UNDP. A larger advisory group, comprising a wide range of experts from developed and developing countries, in environment/development policy making and from the technical field of trend assessment, will also be involved.

Comprehensive Report of the Secretary-General and Recommendations for Future Actions and Priorities

The comprehensive report will draw on the concise reports, the trends report, national information, and various other sources. It will include the following elements:

- I. overall assessment of the economic, social and environmental situation five years after UNCED and prospects for the future;
- II. main achievements after UNCED;
- III. main problems in Agenda 21 implementation and unmet expectations of UNCED;
- IV. main challenges and priorities for the period after 1997—this part will seek to identify new approaches in the work of the CSD after 1997; and
- V. suggestions on institutional changes after 1997, including the role and methods of work of the CSD.

The report will be prepared by the Division for Sustainable Development, in close cooperation with the other task managers.

For more information contact Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development, DPCSD, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/963 5949, fax +1-212/963 4260, e-mail <vasilyev@un.org.>

Major Groups

The 1997 Guidelines for Major Groups as well as a slightly revised Survey on Major Groups were sent out by mail in August to all major groups contacts. The guidelines and the survey are available on the Internet (at <http://www.un.org/dpcsd> or at igc.apc.org under conference name 'un.csd.doc's'). The guidelines describe how major groups can contribute to the 1997 preparations and provide the relevant dates and deadlines for making inputs to the reporting process, submitting

results of independent assessments, responding to the survey and participating in the official meetings.

The deadline for providing inputs for the reporting process was 15 October 1996. Major group organizations that are accredited to ECOSOC and wish to send representatives to the meetings of the CSD need to contact the DPCSD NGO section as follows:

- n To participate in the Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group meeting of the CSD (starting on 24 February 1997), please inform the NGO Section by 3 February 1997.
- n To participate in the fifth session of the CSD (starting on 7 April 1997), please inform the NGO Section by 17 March 1997. The DPCSD NGO Section can be reached at fax +1-212/963 4968.

For further information on major group-related issues, contact Zehra Aydin, Major Groups Focal Point, Division for Sustainable Development, telephone +1-212/963 8811, fax +1-212/963 1267, e-mail <aydin@un.org.>

MAJOR GROUPS IN ACTION: PREPARING FOR 1997

The following are only a sample of on-going major group activities in preparation for the five year review of Agenda 21.

News from Rio+5 Preparations

The DPCSD hosted a meeting of the Design Team for Rio+5 in New York on 28 June 1996. Partners from Major Groups, UN organizations and representatives from the Earth Council participated in the meeting. The CSD Secretariat briefed the participants on the steps of the ongoing intergovernmental preparation process. The meeting focused on the objectives, scope, methodology and media strategy of Rio+5.

Rio+5 is an initiative launched by the Earth Council to enable civil society contributions to the 1997 review of UNCED by a special session of the General Assembly. The initiative involves consultations among all major group sectors at the national, regional and international levels as well as the involvement of the National Councils for Sustainable Development. The culminating event will be a week-long meeting of up to 450 individuals invited from Major Group organizations, governments and international organizations, scheduled to take place from 13 to 19 March 1997 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAJOR GROUPS

The CSD Secretariat would like to be informed of meetings, consultation processes or projects that you or your partners have launched to generate contributions to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly to review Agenda 21 implementation. Please send such information to Zehra Aydin, Major Groups Focal Point, Division for Sustainable Development, 2 UN Plaza, 22nd floor, New York, NY, 10017, telephone +1-212/963 8811, fax +1-212/963 1267, email <aydin@un.org>

<100640.3551@compuserve.com>

Earth Summit Review: A Business Input

United Nations Environment and Development-United Kingdom (UNED-UK) and the International Chamber of Commerce office in the United Kingdom (ICC-UK) are jointly organizing a meeting to focus on the impact of the ICC Business Charter for Sustainable Development on implementation of Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom. The meeting took place in London on 17 October 1996. The programme includes case-studies on experiences of small, medium and large companies, stakeholder responses from a range of Major Group sectors, and conclusions focusing on future directions.

The Business Charter for Sustainable Development was developed by the ICC in 1991 as a contribution of business and industry to the Earth Summit in 1992. ICC has been monitoring adoption of the Charter by companies around the world.

For further information, contact UNED-UK, c/o United Nations Association, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL, UK, telephone +44-171/930 2931, fax +44-171/930-5893.

Global Cities 21: Local Agenda 21 for Sustainable Communities

This meeting is organized as part of the Second European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns (Lisbon, Portugal, 8-9 October 1996). The event is a joint celebration of Local Agenda 21 initiatives around the world.

The aims of the meeting include evaluation of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) initiatives taken up between 1992 and 1996; gearing up local authorities for the 1997 review of Agenda 21 by the General Assembly; launching of the second phase of LA21 initiatives in the context of Habitat II follow-up; and reporting on the Global Action Plan and LA21 Model Communities Programme.

The meeting is jointly organized by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the Global Action Plan (GAP) and the Earth Council.

For further information, contact the European Secretariat of ICLEI, European Secretariat, Eschholzstrasse 86, D-79115 Freiburg, Germany, telephone +49-761/368920, fax +49-761/36260, e-mail <100757.3635@compuserve.com>

MAJOR MEETINGS IN 1997

- n Ad Hoc Intersessional Working Group of the CSD, 24 February-7 March 1997, New York
- n Fifth Session of the CSD, 7-25 April 1997, New York
- n Special session of the General Assembly, 9-13 June

Among the primary objectives for this event are conducting an assessment of progress since Rio in a manner that can help further operationalize sustainability; identifying which approaches will make a change; providing an opportunity for civil society participation in the 1997 GA special session by producing a "civil society statement"; and mobilizing civil society actors to do critical assessments of implementation activities.

The International Advisory Committee of Rio+5, which is currently being formed, will take up further organizational issues. The Committee will be assisted by an International Steering Committee, composed of 10 members from among Major Group organizations and the Earth Council. This Steering Committee is also working with the Brazilian Host Committee for practical arrangements.

For more information, contact the Earth Council Liaison Office, 777 UN Plaza, 6th Floor, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/682 5998, fax +1-212/682 6040, e-mail <earthc@unpd.org>

Sustainable Development Indicators for Youth Project

Rescue Mission: Planet Earth, an international youth organization with members in over 100 countries, has launched the second phase of the Youth Indicators project. The first phase was conducted as part of the Youth Intersessional activities prepared for CSD4. It produced, among other things, a report on the first testing of the Sustainable Development Indicators for Youth (SDIY) and a colorful Indicators Pack for use by youth leaders and educational institutions around the world. At CSD4, Rescue Mission members challenged the attending Ministers to get 10 schools in each of their countries to use the Indicators Pack.

Over 3000 copies of the Indicators Pack have now been distributed in English, French and Spanish in 39 countries. Among those that have shown an interest in using the Indicators Pack are Ministries of Education in several West African countries and the Governments of Argentina, Canada, Columbia, Finland, India and South Africa.

Rescue Mission has also initiated a major media campaign, partly due to the frustration of its members with the lack of public awareness about Agenda 21. The campaign focuses on publicizing the Agenda 21 follow-up process and the progress made since the Earth Summit in 1992. A component of the media campaign involves young people identifying and recognizing the efforts of those who made a sustainable future more possible.

Further information as well as copies of the Indicators Pack can be requested from Rescue Mission, The White House, Buntingford, Herts SG9 9AH, UK, telephone +44-1763/274459, fax +44-1763/274460, email

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