



## UNITED NATIONS NON-GOVERNMENTAL LIAISON SERVICE/NGLS

# *Eighth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The eighth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-8) met at UN headquarters in New York from 24 April to 5 May 2000. Chaired by Juan Mayr Maldonado, Colombian Minister of Environment, the commission considered the themes of sustainable agriculture; land resources; and financial resources/trade and investment/economic growth. Preparations for the ten-year review in 2002 of implementation of the outcome of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio+10) were also discussed, as were conclusions and proposals of the final report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF).

Multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions were held from 24-25 April. The high-level segment of the CSD followed, with the participation of 47 ministers and states secretaries from environment, land, development and foreign affairs ministries. It also included experts who introduced thematic discussions on land and agriculture; finance, trade and investment; forests; and preparations for Rio+10.

## **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

During the multi-stakeholder dialogue, representatives of Major Groups (identified in the Rio Summit Agenda 21 action plan) addressed four themes: choices in agricultural production techniques, consumption patterns and safety regulations—potentials and threats to sustainable agriculture; best practices in land resource management to achieve sustainable food cycles; knowledge for a sustainable food system—identifying and providing for education, training, knowledge sharing and information needs; and globalization, trade liberalization and investment patterns—economic incentives and framework conditions to promote sustainable agriculture.

Regarding land and sustainable agriculture, farmers supported land tenure for workers, the establishment of regulatory frameworks for biotechnology, and education and outreach to the general public during discussions on choices in agricultural production techniques, consumption patterns and safety regulations. Trade unions called for the implementation of core labour standards including collective bargaining. NGOs emphasized increased financial resources to support the development of organic agriculture, increased clarity on the liability of farmers using biotechnology, and the development of environmental and socio-economic indicators for sustainable agriculture. Indigenous peoples strongly advocated measures for land tenure including legal mechanisms to protect their lands. Along with other Major Groups, they called for a moratorium on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) until research on their impact is complete.

Industry representatives expressed support for a “needs-driven” participatory approach to innovation. They said that the key to achieving sustainable agriculture was to integrate experience, traditional agricultural practices and modern technologies. They advocated increased productivity on existing land as opposed to the expansion of cultivation into fragile ecosystems and championed the potential role of biotechnology in this regard.

Regarding best practices in land resource management, farmers proposed participatory approaches to identifying and implementing best practices. Indigenous peoples again emphasized the need for mechanisms to achieve land tenure. Industry recommended partnerships among all stakeholders. NGOs suggested an agro-ecology approach to research and development, especially relating to organic farming. Trade unions supported monitoring and reporting efforts by workers, trade unions and employers.

On the question of knowledge for a sustainable food system, indigenous peoples highlighted the importance of indigenous systems and the need to protect their knowledge. They called on governments to ratify legal mechanisms to protect their rights to lands. Farmers supported their position, advocating traditional knowledge as the fundamental basis for scientific research and recommending partnerships for new local knowledge systems to enhance production. NGOs advocated for open and sustainable intellectual property rights (IPR) regimes which included the full

### ***EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT***

#### ***Bureau***

*The CSD-8 was chaired by Juan Mayr Maldonado (Colombia). Vice-chairs were Patrick McDonnell (Ireland), Zvetolyub Basmajiev (Bulgaria), Abderrahmane Merouane (Algeria) and Choie Seok Young (Republic of Korea), who also served as rapporteur.*

#### ***Members***

*The 53 current members of the commission are: Algeria, Angola, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Germany, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States and Venezuela.*

participation of indigenous peoples. Trade unions stressed the importance of education for capacity building. Industry recommended strengthening information flows and agricultural extension services. On the issue of food security, debate focused on how countries could increase food production and provide safer food for growing populations without negatively affecting the environment. Some speakers felt that sustainable food systems could not be created unless consumer choices and agricultural production methods changed.

Regarding globalization, trade liberalization and investment patterns, industry supported fair and open trade to achieve sound and sustainable agriculture, as well as policies to reduce agricultural trade barriers. Some speakers also expressed concern at the reintroduction of protectionism under the guise of "multifunctionality," a concept that agriculture serves a number of functions including production, consumption, social, environmental and economic (see below). Industry also called for a clearer definition of "sustainability" that makes use of science-based indicators and criteria for success against which progress could be measured. NGOs pointed to sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) indicators adopted by CSD-3 in April 1995, and proposed basing an assessment of the impacts of trade liberalization measures on sustainable development based on those. Indigenous peoples emphasized small-scale organic and other ecological systems of agriculture, which they stressed were key to food security and offered the only genuine possibility for sustainable agriculture. Farmers recommended allocation of better lands to small farmers for domestic consumption and food security. Trade unions asked for CSD support for international rules incorporating core labour standards contained in the relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments.

#### HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

The high-level segment, which took place from 26-27 April, was comprised of high-level statements, expert input and dialogue on the four themes: land and agriculture; finance and investment; trade; and preparations for Rio+10. UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchet noted that the high-level segment had become an increasingly dynamic event on the commission's agenda, not least because environment ministers were now being joined in dialogue by colleagues responsible for a range of key portfolios, from trade and agriculture to finance and development cooperation.

Regarding discussions on land and agriculture, the European Union (EU) called for equal access to land and legal security of tenure. The Group of 77 developing countries and China (G-77/China) called for measures to ameliorate the impact of financial volatility on developing countries and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs) and expressed difficulty with the disputed concept of the multifunctional character of agriculture. Argentina, Australia and Uruguay opposed any reference to the concept. Mexico called for a focus on the Biosafety Protocol and deforestation. Other issues raised included the need for comprehensive testing of agricultural biological productions and technology; the role of urban agriculture in achieving food security; and the convening of a consultative forum on SARD.

For the most part, however, discussions centred around the issue of multifunctionality. The EU supported the multifunctionality of land use, with some NGOs agreeing insofar as they felt land should not be used solely for market-driven agribusiness. The G-77/China, however, strongly disagreed. Dirk C. du Toit,

*Greenpeace representative Remi Parmentier, who noted that the high-level segment was occurring at the same time as the month-long review of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), said: "In one room, the rich few will argue that they have no money to spare for sustainable development. In the other, they will struggle to maintain and further develop their multi-billion dollar nuclear arsenal."*

South African Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, said that "the problem is that 'sustainability,' the core concept of sustainable agriculture and rural development of the Rio Declaration, simply does not mean the same thing in different parts of the world....While the developed countries exert pressure to follow their set agenda for multifunctionality, so that all countries can have a beautifully landscaped, aesthetically pleasing countryside, the wretched of the earth are scurrying in the sand to pick up a few seeds of grain to fend off starvation. The developed countries are talking about agriculture and the environment as a matter of lifestyle; the developing countries are talking about agriculture as a matter of livelihood." Mr. du Toit went on to describe the multifunctional character of agriculture as a "technicolour cloak" that needs to be "deconstructed as the neo-colonialism which it is in effect and fact."

During discussions on finance and investment, a number of Northern governments said that insufficient international finance flows in themselves were not the principal barrier to sustainable development. National governments were urged to create a stable, predictable and non-discriminatory environment that attracted domestic and foreign investment. It was noted, however, that foreign direct investment could not be a substitute for official development assistance (ODA). Indian Environment Minister T.R. Baalu said that while global private investment had grown sharply in recent years most of it had gone to a handful of countries, and most had not focused on social and environmental needs. Hence, private investment was not a substitute for ODA, he said, which should be increased. José Antonio Ocampo, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), noted that trends in financing for development had fallen considerably short of the targets and expectations set during the Rio Summit. He cautioned that it was important to avoid investments addressed to sectors that made intensive use of natural resources, which he said was a trend in developing countries. The G-77/China urged donor countries to cancel or reduce debt burdens and to meet their Agenda 21 commitments. The EU emphasized the need to honour financing pledges for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC), as well as to reverse declining ODA and improve its delivery and allocation. Pakistan, while acknowledging the Secretary-General's effort in his report on financial resources and mechanisms (see document E/CN.17/2000/2, 26 January 2000) to explore such approaches, pointed out that "the use of policy instruments including environmental taxes and charges needs to be further studied in order to ensure optimal results. These instruments will have to be tailored to the needs of each country. Moreover, we cannot ignore the fact that such instruments are, to a large extent, a means of dividing the same pie into more pieces. Instead, efforts should focus on increasing the volume of finances."

The Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Mike Moore, addressed the trade segment in a videotaped presentation. He suggested ways in which the organization might contribute to sustainable development through trade agreements with non-trade-discriminatory environmental objectives. He noted that the WTO was not "an environmental protection agency" and added that his organization must remain sensitive to the needs of developing countries, which make up the majority of the WTO. While some speakers felt that trade was one of the best channels to achieve sustainable development, others stressed that this was possible only when the pursuit of trade and environmental policies complemented each other, and environmental measures were not an unnecessary obstacle to trade or protectionist in nature. Nigerian Environment Minister Hassan Adamu expressed concern that environmental requirements in industrial countries, for example, might act as a barrier to goods from developing countries. Martin Khor of the Malaysia-based NGO Third World Network proposed overhauling the WTO's decision-making system and increasing the CSD's capacity to act as an alternative forum on trade, development and the environment. Norway and Ecuador supported the use of sustainability reviews in trade negotiations. The G-77/China called for improved market access for developing country exports. The EU emphasized duty and quota free access for nearly all exports from the least developed countries (LDCs) and recommended that multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and WTO agreements have equal status.

In its advocacy efforts during the high-level segment, the NGO Women's Caucus noted that trade liberalization was not gender-neutral and emphasized that trade policies should ensure gender equality, equity and people-centred sustainable development. The caucus recommended a comprehensive gender, social and environmental assessment of implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements at the local, national and regional levels before undertaking a new round. The Indigenous Peoples' Caucus noted the negative impacts of liberalization, saying that control over their territories had been undermined by the liberalization of investments, which also had destroyed traditional livelihoods and led to privatization of water and indigenous knowledge systems.

Regarding preparations for the 2002 review of progress since the Rio Summit, the commission heard a variety of views as to the venue, nature and desired outcome of the review. The Republic of Korea, Brazil and South Africa asked to be considered as possible hosts. The EU urged ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by 2002. Canada called for a shift away from the practice of negotiating a declaration document. The active participation of civil society, including the business sector and scientific community, was emphasized as crucial for both the review and preparatory process. Speakers recommended that the review focus on poverty elimination and resource and energy efficiency, and include action programmes on fisheries, food, freshwater and forests.

#### DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

A number of issues made negotiations difficult. These included: the concept of the multifunctional character of agriculture and land; good governance; the relationship between multilateral environmental agreements and the WTO; the removal of subsidies in developed countries; references to common but differentiated responsibilities and the precautionary principle; environmental and sustainability assessments; and the inclusion of reference to "legal" security of tenure and "equal access" to land to all people.

In his assessment of CSD-8, Mr. Maldonado said that "planting the seed for Rio+10" was the most positive result of the commission's session. "This is the only way we can achieve the difficult goals necessary to survive on this planet," he said.

#### **Economic Growth, Trade and Investment**

According to the decision on economic growth, trade and investment, the priorities for future work include promoting sustainable development through trade and economic growth; making trade and environment policies mutually supportive; promoting sustainable development through investment; and strengthening institutional cooperation, capacity building and promoting partnerships. Economic growth, trade and investment will be reviewed as part of Rio+10.

The commission called on governments and international organizations to improve the functioning of commodity markets and it suggested that there should be further evaluation of mechanisms for reducing the impacts of price volatility in primary commodities. Developed countries were urged to devise policies and measures to assist developing countries—particularly the least developed countries—to diversify their export base and that take into account existing agreements and arrangements for special and differential treatment for developing countries.

The CSD encouraged governments and international organizations to examine ways and means to promote the indigenous development of environmentally sound technologies in developing countries and their transfer to other developing countries. In this regard, governments were encouraged to implement relevant provisions in the TRIPs Agreement.

#### **Financial Resources and Mechanisms**

According to the decision on financial resources and mechanisms, it is important that all countries take a holistic approach to sustainable development, "taking fully into account the interconnectedness of the trade, financial, economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development." The decision says

*"We wish to see the CSD give a clear signal that relevant multilateral agreements in the areas of trade and environment must contribute to sustainable development. Our concern is illustrated by the debate on the relationship between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the TRIPs [Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights] Agreement on the issue of fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. This debate has been initiated by developing countries, many of which feel that the TRIPs Agreement in its present form is an obstacle to the effective CBD [Convention on Biological Diversity] implementation. This may be a legitimate concern, and should be seen in light of the general need to ensure mutual supportiveness between agreements on trade and environment. If environmental reviews had been undertaken in parallel with the TRIPs negotiations, the potential for conflicts between different types of agreements, including the CBD, would have been reduced."*

—Siri Bjerke, Norwegian Minister of the Environment

that international cooperation efforts need to be strengthened to further reform and improve the international financial system, with a view to preventing recurrence of financial crises and providing better mechanisms for financial crisis management.

The priority areas for the CSD's future work in this area include mobilizing domestic financial resources for sustainable development; promoting international cooperation and mobilization of international finance for sustainable development; strengthening existing financial mechanisms and exploring innovative ones; improving institutional capacity; and promoting public/private partnerships.

Concerning mobilization of domestic financial resources for sustainable development, the commission urged governments to increase cooperation to address capital flight and to consider issues related to capital repatriation; consider ways to integrate environmental considerations into the management of public policies and programmes including public finance; conduct studies and research ways of implementing a range of economic instruments such as application of the "polluter pays" policy as well as fiscal instruments including wider use of environmental taxes and charges; and provide the necessary incentives for sustained private investment including macro-economic, legal, environmental policy and regulatory frameworks that would reduce risks and uncertainty for investors.

The session recognized that highly indebted middle-income developing countries have difficulty meeting their external debt and debt-servicing obligations, and called for concerted national and intentional action to address effectively the debt problems of middle-income countries.

Further research by international organizations, governments and Major Groups is encouraged in areas such as the relationship between foreign direct investment (FDI) and sustainable development; "green" budget reforms as well as implementation of environmental taxes and charges; and innovative international financial mechanisms.

#### **Agriculture**

Concerning agriculture, priorities for future action include implementation of sustainable agriculture and rural development goals, access to resources, poverty eradication, financing for sustainable agriculture and rural development, technology transfer and capacity building, biotechnology, genetic resources, integrated pest management and integrated plant nutrition, desertification and drought, access to land and security of land tenure, emergency preparedness, and water resources.

Among other things concerning sustainable agriculture and rural development, the commission urged governments to develop coherent national policy and legal frameworks for sustainable rural development emphasizing socio-economic diversification, employment, capacity building, participation, poverty

eradication, empowerment and partnerships. Agricultural practices based on natural resource management as well as environmentally sound traditional and local knowledge are to be promoted by governments.

Governments are encouraged to pursue an ecosystem approach to SARD as well as pay particular attention to the social dimension of SARD including the effects of agricultural practices on human health and safety, in terms of both consumption and production.

In the area of biotechnology, the commission urged governments to sign and ratify the 2000 Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to support its effective implementation. It encouraged governments to develop appropriate legal frameworks, administrative and other measures and put into action appropriate strategies for SARD, the protection of biodiversity, and risk analysis and management of living modified organisms. Governments and UN bodies were encouraged to promote only those applications of biotechnology that do not pose unacceptable risks to public health or the environment.

#### ***Integrated Planning and Management of Land Resources***

Priority areas for future work in the area of Integrated Planning and Management of Land Resources include prevention and/or mitigation of land degradation; access to land and security of tenure; critical sectors and issues such as biodiversity, forests, drylands, rehabilitation of mining areas, mountain areas, wetlands and coastal zones, coral reefs and natural disasters; and access to information and stakeholder participation.

The session, which recognized the existence of different national laws and/or systems of land access and tenure, encouraged governments to develop and/or adopt policies and implement laws that guarantee their citizens well-defined and enforceable land rights and promote equal access to land and legal security of tenure, in particular for women and disadvantaged groups. When undertaking land tenure reform, governments were encouraged to include the participation of traditional land owners, land users and the landless.

In addition, they were encouraged to take into account the importance of conserving wetlands and critical coastal zones, including protected areas and other fragile ecosystems. Governments at national and local levels were urged to take into account land-use interdependence between rural and urban areas, and undertake implementation of integrated approaches to their administration. Governments were also urged to promote sustainable development at the peripheries of existing urban areas including informal settlements and urban sprawl.

#### ***CONTACTS***

*Zehra Aydin-Sipos  
Major Groups Focal Point  
Division for Sustainable Development  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations  
New York NY 10017, United States  
telephone +1-212/963 8811  
fax +1-212/963 9248  
website ([www.un.org/esa/sustdev](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev))*

*NGO Steering Committee to the UN/CSD  
website ([www.infohabitat.org/csdngo/steering.htm](http://www.infohabitat.org/csdngo/steering.htm))*

Governments, the international community and other relevant actors were also urged to examine the social, economic and environmental impacts of minerals extraction and metals production and were encouraged to formulate and implement strategies that provide for the rehabilitation of land degraded by mining.

On stakeholder participation, governments were urged to develop and strengthen capacity and institutional frameworks for effective participation of and access to information by all stakeholders in rural and urban land use planning and management including women, land workers, people living in poverty, indigenous and local communities, and young people.

#### ***Intergovernmental Forum on Forests***

A decision on the report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests of its fourth session (E/CN.17/2000/L.9) invites the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the GA to take action on the proposed terms of reference for an international arrangement on forests, as recommended by the forum (see *Go Between* 80). The decision invites the ECOSOC president to initiate, prior to the upcoming ECOSOC substantive session, informal consultations on options for placing the UN Forum on Forests within the intergovernmental machinery of the UN system. In the words of a Canadian delegate, the decision on forests "is one of the most significant in CSD history."

#### ***Preparations for Rio+10***

The commission's decision on Rio+10 (E/CN.17/2000/L.7) emphasizes that the review should focus on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, and other outcomes of the Rio Summit. The decision stresses that Agenda 21 should not be renegotiated, and that the review of progress should result in action-oriented decisions and renewed political commitment for sustainable development, including sources of funding. The commission recommended that steps be taken to establish a trust fund and urged international and bilateral donors to support preparations for the ten-year review through voluntary contributions to the trust fund.

The decision was adopted without a vote. The United States, although supportive of the major review, said it would be unable to pay its share of UN funding for the Rio+10 event as it did not support the convening of any new global UN conferences.

#### ***Day of Indigenous People***

The Day of Indigenous People, which consists of special events during the CSD, included three panels. The first on Trade and Indigenous People addressed the TRIPs review, local food security and food production, and their impact on indigenous people's rights and their ability to benefit from their own knowledge. The second panel on Lessons Learned from Innovative and Meaningful Participatory Mechanisms focused on participatory mechanisms that include indigenous people in the making of sustainable development policies. It also took stock of achievements and obstacles encountered by indigenous people in their work for sustainable development. The final panel on Traditional Knowledge focused on the relationship between traditional knowledge and multifunctionality of traditional agriculture, and the link between indigenous people's land rights and traditional knowledge.

The Day of Indigenous People at CSD-8 was organized by a steering group composed of representatives of indigenous people's network organizations as well as representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the CSD secretariat.

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