

**UNITED NATIONS NON-GOVERNMENTAL LIAISON SERVICE/NGLS***Serving the UN system and NGO community for 22 years*

## *CSD Ad Hoc Intersessional Working Group*

**INTRODUCTION**

The Ad hoc Intersessional Working Group of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) met in New York from 24 February-7 March 1997 to begin preparations for a special session of the UN General Assembly to be held from 23-27 June 1997. The special session, dubbed "Earth Summit +5," will conduct a review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, the 40-chapter action programme adopted with the Rio declaration by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The review will seek to assess progress made and areas where progress is lacking in the implementation of the Rio declaration and Agenda 21. In doing so, governments will not seek to renegotiate Agenda 21, but to revitalize the concept of sustainable development and to recommit themselves to its realization by taking necessary collective action. They will identify gaps in issues, and institutional mechanisms and policies that need to be addressed.

**BACKGROUND**

The Commission on Sustainable Development is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). CSD was set up by the UN General Assembly in 1992 to oversee the implementation of Agenda 21 and to encourage and monitor action by governments, UN agencies and major groups, such as business and industry, NGOs and other sectors of civil society. The commission, made up of representatives of 53 governments elected for a three-year term, held its first meeting in 1993 and meets annually at UN headquarters in New York. During CSD-4 from 16-26 April 1996, the commission reviewed the chapters on atmosphere and oceans and completed its first round of a comprehensive review of all 40 Agenda 21 chapters.

**"PROPOSED OUTCOME" PRODUCED IN THE WORKING GROUP**

On 7 March 1997 the Ad hoc Intersessional Working Group of the CSD ended its work with a draft text entitled Proposed Outcome of the Special Session. It was prepared by working group co-chairs Ambassador Celso Amorim (Brazil) and Mr. Derek Osborn (UK) on the basis of detailed discussions held during the meeting. The document will serve as the starting point for negotiations during the fifth session of the CSD (CSD-5), to take place in New York from 8-25 April 1997.

Delegates were repeatedly reminded that this is "not a negotiated text," which means they are not bound by the language as written but can add to it and improve it at CSD-5. A number of areas, indicated in the report in italics, are left for further discussion and negotiation at CSD-5. These include a political Statement of Commitment; sections on forests and small island developing states (SIDS); the future work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development; and measures related to the streamlining of national reporting.

**MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP**

The working group session opened on 24 February with introductory statements by the newly-elected co-chairs and Mr. Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD). Presentations on results of relevant intergovernmental and intersessional meetings followed, with Elizabeth Dowdsell, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), reporting on the recent 19th session of the UNEP Governing Council; the council is set to resume on 1 April to complete its work (see *Go Between* 62).

The Netherlands reported on the Fourth Expert Group Meeting on Financial Issues of Agenda 21. The group's meeting, which was chaired by Dr. Lin-See Yan (Malaysia), met from 8-10 January 1997 in Santiago (Chile) to assess progress in mobilizing financial resources for sustainable development since 1992. It also considered unresolved issues related to traditional and innovative international and domestic financial mechanisms. (For a report of the meeting, see E/CN.17/1997/18.)

Norway reported on the Workshop on Sustainable Production and Consumption, held in Brasilia (Brazil) from 25-28 November 1996, which worked on the development of a CSD work programme on this topic. Austria presented the findings of the Expert Workshop Fostering the Linkage between Energy and Sustainable Development within International Institutions, held from 22-24 January 1997 in Vienna (Austria). Belgium presented the results of the second International Workshop on Indicators of Sustainable Development, held in Ghent (Belgium) from 20-22 November 1996, and Canada reported on the second Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Management, which met in Ottawa (Canada) from 10-14 February 1997.

General discussion, which started with the implementation of sectoral issues and strengthening the role of major groups, began on the afternoon of the same day. The discussion, which included government delegates, UN agencies, NGOs and observers, addressed implementation of cross-sectoral issues, emerging priorities and institutional issues. It also focused on the format and substantive content of the final outcome of the special session.

The outline of a draft final document of the special session, prepared by the co-chairs on the basis of proposals made in the course of discussion, was reviewed during the following week. It resulted in an agreement on the format and structure of the final document of the special session. In accordance with the practice of the CSD and its subsidiary bodies, many NGOs coordinated their positions and comments on the overall text, while NGO caucuses made more detailed comments on sections of the draft in their areas of expertise.

Throughout the session, participants were urged to think in terms of concrete actions and measures to implement specific recommendations. "The special session," said Ambassador Ismail Razali (Malaysia), President of the General Assembly, "must transform the conceptual analysis and political commitment of the past five years into action and working programmes that make a tangible difference." However, NGOs and other participants noted that there are few actual targets in the draft, and where targets are mentioned, the draft often calls for targets and time-lines to be set rather than actually setting them.

On the basis of further discussions, the co-chairs produced a draft text on Proposed Outcome of the

Special Session, which was presented to the working group on the final day of the session. It will be studied by governments during the period between meetings of the ad-hoc working group and CSD-5.

#### OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED OUTCOME

The draft proposed outcome contains the sections described below.

*I. Statement of Commitment:* The draft proposed outcome does not yet include draft text for what is to become the central message of the special session, nor have governments decided whether it should take the form of a preamble or a self-standing, concise declaration. The text remains to be drafted and negotiated in CSD-5. The co-chairs' draft suggests that the statement should be forward-looking, highlight main achievements, and have a strong focus on implementation and commitments. Poverty, global partnership and international cooperation are to be stressed in the statement, as well as the need for changing consumption and production patterns.

*II. Assessment of Progress Reached After Rio:* This section highlights the phenomenon of globalization and its economic and social impacts, including those identified as positive (such as large inflows of private capital to some developing countries) and negative (such as worsening income inequality both within and among countries). Worsening trends in the global environment are cited, as well as achievements of governments, major groups and organizations of the UN system.

*III. Implementation in Areas Requiring Urgent Action:* This section identifies three areas, each equally important, which are to be implemented in a "balanced and integrated" way. Section A on the Integration of Economic, Social and Environmental Objectives encompasses the issues of eradicating poverty; changing consumption and production patterns; making trade, environment and sustainable development mutually supportive; population; health; and sustainable human settlements.

Section B on Sectors and Issues addresses freshwater; oceans; forests; energy; transport; atmosphere; chemicals and wastes; land and sustainable agriculture; desertification and drought; biodiversity; sustainable tourism; small island developing states; and natural disasters.

Section C on Means of Implementation covers financial resources and mechanisms; transfer of environmentally-sound technologies; capacity building; science; education and awareness; international legal instruments and the Rio declaration; and information and tools to measure progress.

*IV. International Institutional Arrangements:* This section addresses the need for greater coherence in

various intergovernmental organizations and processes, strengthening of inter-agency cooperation in the UN system, and effective arrangements to strengthen regional and sub-regional organizations. A subsection on the role of relevant organizations and institutions of the UN system addresses UNEP; UN Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); work on trade and environment via the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Trade and Environment, UNCTAD and UNEP; and international financial institutions. The document closes with subsections on the future role, programme, and methods of work of the CSD.

#### SELECTED ISSUES OF NGO FOCUS

Some of the issues that were of particular focus for NGOs and NGO caucuses participating in the working group are described below.

##### *Finance*

A major issue addressed in the draft under "means of implementation" is the question of financial resources and mechanisms. Many consider this to be the main failure of the preceding five years: namely that the central compact of UNCED ("new and additional resources" in return for new, difficult and expensive measures) to protect the environment and establish sustainable development has not been fulfilled. This is despite the hard-won agreement reached in Rio on the need for new and additional resources to enable developing countries to implement the measures required to promote sustainability. It is also despite the annual focus on the question of finance by government-organized meetings and the Intersessional Working Group on Finance and Transfer of Technology. And new and additional financial resources aimed at UNCED implementation in developing countries have not materialized despite concerted efforts each year to reach meaningful and effective agreements on this question in the CSD itself.

Since 1992, financial flows to developing countries have become dominated by private capital flows, which have seen dramatic increases. However, these increases are not well-distributed among developing countries—only 12 countries receive about 80% of total flows and they are not necessarily aimed at investments that promote sustainable development. The draft proposed outcome points out that enhancing the contribution of private flows to sustainable development depends mainly on "sound and predictable domestic policies, including policies that internalize environmental costs," and that appropriate policies should be determined to attract private foreign capital while reducing its volatility. Further studies are also called for on how host countries can maximize the positive impacts of foreign direct investment by strengthening social and environmental policies and regulations.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), which is jointly administered by the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP, provides grant and concessional funds for projects and activities that aim to protect the global environment. GEF was recognized at UNCED as a means toward a more secure, environmentally-sound future for the planet. However, it only addresses a small range of so-called "global" issues, and its paid-in capital of US\$2 billion is dwarfed by the funding needs for measures outlined in Agenda 21. The draft proposed outcome suggests doubling the funding of the GEF and consideration of increasing the scope of issues that can be financed by it.

Of concern to many governments and NGOs is the fact that official development assistance (ODA), far from increasing in recent years, has stagnated or dropped from a total of US\$62 billion in 1992 to around US\$53 billion in 1995. This is particularly grave for poorer countries, who rely heavily on official development assistance and are not likely to attract foreign direct investment. The draft document notes that, at this stage, official flows cannot be replaced by private flows. It suggests that developed countries reaffirm their commitments, including the target of 0.7% of gross national product (GNP) to be dedicated to ODA, and at a minimum should return to 1992 ODA-shares of GNP within five years.

NGOs called for an intergovernmental panel on finance to be set up under the CSD with the aim of moving from expert-level consideration of finance-related questions to political decision making and commitment. They called for the 0.7% target to be met by the year 2002 and urged countries that are prepared to respond positively not to be inhibited by "an unconstructive solidarity" with unwilling ones.

The discussion of innovative financial mechanisms, which includes proposals such as the taxation of international financial transactions or aviation fuel to finance sustainable development, drew a strong negative reaction from the United States. It says international taxation represents an unacceptable infringement on national sovereignty. The draft paper invites "appropriate organizations, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)," to conduct studies on innovative financial mechanisms that could then be taken up in the CSD and in "other relevant intergovernmental meetings." In their common position paper, NGOs called for "negotiations to start on an international aviation fuel charge, the revenue from which should be channelled into mechanisms such as the GEF and UNDP's Capacity 21." Capacity 21 is a UNDP initiative launched at UNCED to assist developing countries with implementing measures called for in Agenda 21.

The removal of environmentally-damaging subsidies was taken up in a variety of areas during the working

group session. The draft section on financial resources and mechanisms calls for further national and international research to "assist governments in identifying and reducing subsidies that have trade-distorting and environmentally-damaging impacts," while considering any potentially regressive effects of such action. NGOs cited the "myriad subsidies for activities that cause environmental damage—intensive agriculture, energy production and consumption, forest exploitation, unsustainable fisheries, and more"—and called for their elimination.

### **Trade**

The section of the draft proposed outcome dealing with trade calls for "macro-economic conditions in both developed and developing countries...enabling all countries to benefit from globalization." It also calls for an approach to trade and sustainable development that combines trade liberalization, economic development and environmental protection in a balanced and integrated manner. It says possible adverse economic effects on developing countries arising from the Uruguay Round Agreements should be mitigated, and disguised or unnecessary restrictions on trade resulting from environmental measures should be avoided. According to the draft, further analysis of environmental effects of the international transport of goods is warranted, and it draws attention to the role of positive measures in multilateral environmental agreements; the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises in the trade and environment interface; regional-level trade and environment issues; and environment and sustainable development issues in the context of domestic and foreign direct investment, including in relation to possible multilateral agreements on investment.

NGOs called for a better balance between concerns expressed over the potential negative effects of environmental concerns on trade liberalization and the potential negative effects of the trade liberalization process on the social and environmental goals of sustainable development articulated in Rio and in other recent major UN conferences. NGOs also called for a subsidiary body of the CSD to undertake a review of the environmental impact of the Uruguay Round Agreements as a necessary complement to the existing Committee on Trade and Environment of the WTO. "We feel," said the NGOs, "that the CSD has the competence, which WTO does not, to examine the sustainable development impacts of trade." They called for the convening of a Conference of Trade and Environment Ministers in advance of the next ministerial meeting of the WTO, and for transparency and effective opportunities for NGOs and other major groups to observe and contribute to both meetings.

### **Consumption and Production**

The issue of consumption and production is an overarching concept running throughout sustainable development. Agenda 21 states that, "The major

cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production patterns, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances." At its third session in 1995, the CSD adopted a work programme on changing production and consumption patterns. The draft proposed outcome restates the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and calls for policy making at both international and national levels "applying the polluter pays principle and encouraging producer responsibility." It also includes measures such as internalization of environmental costs and benefits in the price of goods and services; evaluation of the environmental effectiveness and efficiency of policy measures (especially in developed countries) to identify best practices; adoption of targets and timetables for energy and material efficiency; encouragement of governments to take the lead in their own consumption patterns including procurement, management of public facilities, and further integration of environmental concerns in national policy making. The document encourages the use of eco-labelling and using the role of media, advertising and marketing to shape consumption patterns.

NGOs called for a variety of measures to change consumption and production patterns, from "cradle-to-grave" eco-labelling to commitments to national targets for re-use, reduction, refusal and recycling. The Youth Caucus stressed the negative role of pervasive and aggressive advertising as part of a culture of consumerism, which is opposed to sustainable development. It also called on governments to eliminate subsidies and increase taxation on advertising.

### **Freshwater**

Questions involved in the use, management, distribution and protection of freshwater have gained great prominence in the CSD and are viewed as one of the major areas where new work is required. Freshwater issues are, among others, drinking water, sanitation/sewage, industrial use (including mining), agriculture, pollution (including coastal marine pollution), human health and labour, ecosystem health (including desertification, erosion, biodiversity of freshwater-dependent ecosystems), flooding and flood control.

A major report of the Secretary-General, Comprehensive Assessment of the Freshwater Resources of the World (E/CN.17/1997/9), indicates that, as global demand rises, water resources are being rapidly degraded. It is estimated that as much as one-third of the world's population lives in countries suffering from moderate-to-severe stress in terms of water use relative to water availability. By the year 2025, as much as two-thirds of the world's population could be living in water-stressed countries.

The draft proposed outcome notes an urgent need for policies and programmes for integrated water

management "including issues related to pollution and waste, the interrelationship between water and mountains, forests, upstream [and] downstream users, biodiversity and the preservation of aquatic ecosystems, land degradation and desertification." On this matter, the caucus of NGOs representing indigenous peoples recommended that such policies and programmes take into consideration existing indigenous water management systems. The draft also calls for recognizing water as an economic good and gradually implementing pricing policies, which the Group of 77 developing countries and China, and the NGO Indigenous Caucus had reservations on.

Delegates debated the need for an intergovernmental process to be established on water issues; some supported the idea but preferred greater emphasis on bilateral or regional agreements. NGOs supported negotiations on a global agreement or arrangement on freshwater by 1998.

### **Energy**

The draft proposed outcome notes that, "Current patterns of production, distribution and use of energy are not consistent with the pursuit of sustainable development." As a response, it suggests international cooperation for the provision of energy to unserved populations; that all countries develop comprehensive energy policies and systematically increase use of modern renewable energy sources to improve energy efficiency; increased investment in renewable energy technologies both nationally and internationally by the energy sector, institutions and governments; and the development of a common strategy to better coordinate energy-related activities in the UN system.

Perhaps the most controversial but also most substantive proposal in the draft text calls on governments and the private sector to "move towards energy pricing that reflects full economic and environmental costs, as well as social benefits, including consideration of elimination of environmentally-damaging subsidies for energy production consumption, especially for fossil and nuclear energy, within ten years, while taking into account specific conditions of countries."

A number of governments expressed discomfort with the reference to eliminating subsidies for energy production and consumption, which are US\$250-US\$300 billion per year for conventional energy systems, according to a UNDP report on *Energy After Rio: Prospects and Challenges*. Also stressed were technology transfers and financial support to enable developing countries to use renewable energy sources.

The NGO Energy Caucus pointed out that renewable energy technologies, such as solar, wind and fuel cells, are already cost-effective, especially if current subsidies to fossil fuel and nuclear energy are calculated, as well as health and environment costs

associated with conventional energy. Therefore the caucus strongly supported energy pricing that reflects full economic and environmental costs and the phase-out of subsidies to fossil fuel and nuclear energy. The Energy Caucus is also calling for an energy audit of the UN itself as a part of an overall "Green the UN" campaign.

### **Transport**

The draft proposed outcome notes the damaging impacts of current levels and patterns of fossil energy use in transport and calls for an array of measures to resolve the problem. They include integrated transport policies that consider alternative approaches; integration of land use and urban/rural transport planning; improved energy efficiency in transportation and related sectors; guidelines for transport and targets for reducing emissions and phasing-out of lead additives in motor gasoline within the next ten years; and partnerships at the national level, involving governments, local authorities, NGOs and the private sector, on transport infrastructure and development of innovative mass transport schemes.

NGOs cited the dangerous phenomenon of what they called Mad Car Disease, which manifests itself in an ever-greater dependency on the private automobile in all parts of the world. They appealed to delegates to consider not only the issue of atmospheric emissions but other effects, such as urban congestion, physical danger, health hazards and encroachment on agricultural land and biodiversity habitats. They also pointed out what they called the hypocrisy inherent in seeking to prevent expansion of the use of automobiles in developing countries, while developed countries do little or nothing to reverse car-dependent habits and lifestyles in the North.

The NGO Transportation Caucus called on governments to "give priority to the allocation of road space for public and non-motorized transport, support car-free areas in cities, apply the 'polluter pays' principle to transport to reflect the true social costs of motorized travel, and promote land-use planning which reduces the need to travel by car."

### **Land and Sustainable Agriculture**

Implementation of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the Plan of Action, adopted at the World Food Summit in November 1996, was the main thrust of the section on Land and Sustainable Agriculture in the draft proposed outcome. It notes the urgent need to reverse the worldwide acceleration of soil degradation and integrate land and watershed management. It recognizes the need for involving all stakeholders, including women, small-scale food producers, indigenous peoples and community-level NGOs in an integrated approach to land-use management. Also required are comprehensive rural policies to improve access to land, combat poverty, create employment and reduce rural migration.

The NGO Sustainable Agriculture Caucus noted limited progress in the past five years toward more ecological agriculture. The caucus said that today's dominant industrial model of agricultural production "degrades the fertility of soils, intensifies the effects of droughts, and pollutes water." It said that besides being energy-intensive and chemical-dependent, industrial agriculture "causes salinization and compaction of soil, destroys genetic resources, wastes fossil fuel energy, contaminates the food supply, and contributes to climate change." The caucus called for giving priority to improving marginal lands, where most small-scale, resource-poor farmers are located, and strengthening local sustainable food systems through a participatory approach focused on small-scale food producers. NGOs also called for a reallocation of existing funds to support ecological agriculture; a global facility for urban agriculture; and giving priority to integrated pest management.

### ***Institutional Arrangements***

The draft proposed outcome says the basic institutional framework described in chapter 38 of Agenda 21 and in General Assembly resolution 49/191, which set up the Commission for Sustainable Development, remains "fully valid." Within the framework, a number of goals and objectives are outlined for the coming five years: greater coherence in various intergovernmental organizations and processes is desirable, both via more consistent positions of governments in the fora dealing with interrelated aspects of sustainable development and through greater collaboration among the secretariats of the different bodies. It also says the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the task manager reporting system should be strengthened.

The draft proposed outcome urges the relevant organizations and institutions of the UN system to "give more emphasis to action at the country level, ensure greater support to community-driven initiatives and promote more active involvement of major groups." It highlights UNEP's role as the leading environmental authority in conformity with the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, and it asks UNDP to strengthen its contribution, particularly in promoting capacity building in cooperation with other organizations. It says UNCTAD's role should continue to examine the linkages between trade, investment, technology, finance and sustainable development; the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment, UNCTAD and UNEP should advance coordinated work on trade and the environment; and the contribution and commitment of international financial institutions to sustainable development should be strengthened with substantial replenishments for the International Development Association (IDA) and the GEF.

### ***Future of the Commission on Sustainable Development***

A major focus of the five-year review is to assess the functioning of the CSD over its first five years and

make any necessary adjustments. During this period, the CSD continued the innovative and dynamic tradition of UNCED in many areas. It undertook to review all 40 chapters of Agenda 21, which were divided into nine clusters with "cross-sectoral" chapters reviewed annually. The proposed outcome suggests that in the future, the CSD should focus its deliberations on issues that are of major significance to achieving the goals of sustainable development; promote policies that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability; and provide for integrated consideration of linkages between sectors and between sectoral and cross-sectoral aspects of Agenda 21.

Detailed discussions on the future work programme of the CSD will be held during CSD-5. The draft proposed outcome suggests a number of measures to improve the CSD's methods of work. It says the CSD should: attract greater involvement of ministers and policy makers in specific economic sectors in addition to development and environment ministers; consider more effective modalities for reviewing national-level progress in the implementation of commitments made in Agenda 21, including commitments related to means of implementation; develop a better regional focus and link more closely to regional initiatives; establish closer interaction with international financial institutions including the GEF and the WTO; and explore further ways to involve the representatives of major groups in its work (including the business community) with a view to enhancing their contribution and accountability in the implementation of Agenda 21.

The draft proposed outcome says ad hoc intersessional working groups can be used to effectively and productively organize the work of the CSD, as well as arrangements such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and government-hosted intersessional expert meetings. It recommends greater interaction between the CSD and the High-Level Advisory Board. The text proposes CSD officers be elected at a time that enables them to preside over the preparations for the CSD session they will serve, rather than preparing the session for their successor. It also proposes that the next comprehensive review of progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 take place in the year 2002.

On institutional issues, NGOs called for greater coordination and integration of the follow up to major UN conferences and proposed holding joint high-level sessions of the relevant commissions, including the CSD, to address similar and related issues under consideration in each of them. They also suggested the establishment through DPCSD of an integrated comprehensive framework—to make effective use of modern information and communications technology—for systematic monitoring of implementation of all the Rio agreements, as well as the agreements of other recent global conferences. NGOs supported the revised election-schedule of the CSD bureau and

called for a special session of the General Assembly in 2002 to hold the next comprehensive review.

#### ADDITIONAL NGO POSITIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Other NGO priorities, some not reflected in the official draft document, include: calling for an agreement at the meeting in Kyoto (Japan) in December 1997 on a legally-binding commitment to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 20% below 1990 levels by the year 2000; adopting a ban on anti-personnel land mines by 1999 and a global, legally-binding ban on the production and use of nuclear weapons by 2002; establishing a subcommission of CSD to enact mechanisms to ensure significantly greater accountability of business and industry, especially transnational corporations; establishing a permanent forum for indigenous peoples to coordinate all international initiatives on indigenous peoples; and concluding a legally-binding global instrument on persistent organic pollutants (POPs), with industrialized countries assisting developing countries in the acquisition, development and/or production of substitutes.

Over 200 NGOs were represented at the working group, which is a substantial number considering the organizational nature of the session. However, Northern NGOs far outnumbered those based in developing or transition-economy countries. The CSD secretariat, assisted by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), provided NGOs with a meeting room, a copy machine and a computer and printer, as well as official CSD documents in all six UN languages and a daily calendar called *CSD Today*.

NGOs produced a daily newsletter called *Outreach*, which contained NGO position papers and comments and observations on the process unfolding before them. They also organized briefings with governments and groups of governments. Several caucuses were formed, including an Indigenous Caucus, Youth Caucus, a caucus on energy, a Transport Caucus, and a caucus on sustainable agriculture. A women's linkage caucus sought to address women's issues throughout the commissions working on implementation of major UN conferences.

Two commissions working on implementation of major UN conferences met simultaneously with the CSD working group: the Commission on Population and Development, in follow up to the 1994 Cairo conference, addressed questions related to migration; and the Commission for Social Development, following up the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, addressed questions related to employment and sustainable livelihoods. In daily strategy sessions organized by the CSD-NGO Steering Committee, NGOs reported on developments at the official meetings, discussed government and NGO positions and planned their input to the session. The

steering committee also provided a framework for the production of several NGO position papers covering all issues under consideration in the working group (and some that were not). A media taskforce worked to inform UN-based reporters about the special session and the positions of NGOs.

The CSD-NGO Steering Committee consists of regional and issue focal points among the hundreds of NGOs throughout the world that have regularly monitored CSD sessions. Steering committee focal points, acting as a bridge between international and local initiatives following UNCED, commit to facilitating information exchange on CSD-related work in their country, region or issue-area.

*For further information, or to contact the NGO focal point in your region, contact the NGO Steering Committee co-chairs:*

*Esmeralda Brown, UNMUNO, 11th Floor, 777 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/682 3633, fax +1-212/682 5354, e-mail <unmcgbm@undp.org>.*

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#### PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION IN JUNE

At the closing session of the working group, GA President Razali outlined the organization of work for the special session in June, including a provisional agenda and the formation of speaker lists, with provisions for heads of state and government. The arrangements are pending adoption at the beginning of the special session.

He proposed the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole to complete preparation of the final document for adoption by the plenary. The plenary will begin its debate on 23 June and end on 27 June at the latest. There could be over 240 speakers who wish to address the special session. For this reason, a time-limit of seven minutes has been suggested;

*Accredited NGOs wishing to send representatives to the upcoming special session in June should submit the list of their delegation to Ms. Farida Ayoub, Chief, NGO Section, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA, fax +1-212/963 4114 or to the CSD secretariat at fax +1-212/963 1267. This list must be submitted on the official letterhead of the NGO concerned. Please note that accreditation in this context means having obtained formal consultative/roster status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Accreditation obtained to participate in past international conferences does not apply.*

further measures to accommodate speakers may be needed.

On the question of NGO participation in the special session, Ambassador Razali suggested that NGOs be given the opportunity to address the plenary following "arrangements to alter the formal nature of the proceedings." In addition, NGOs and others would be able to address the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole if time constraints prevent them from addressing the plenary.

NGO participation in the special session has raised problems for some delegations, despite repeated and frequent assurances from all sides on the importance of contributions of NGOs and major groups to sustainable development. These problems centre on the possible precedent that some governments fear will be set by allowing NGOs to participate in a UN General Assembly body.

At the 50th GA, a proposal to allow NGO access to the special session failed. One year later, the 51st General Assembly, still unable to reach consensus on NGO participation, invited GA President Razali to propose appropriate modalities for "the substantive contributions to and active involvement" of major groups, including NGOs, in the special session (resolution 51/181). He is currently holding consultations on the details of such arrangements.

NGOs attending the intersessional working group issued a statement calling on governments to "ensure that the arrangements for the UN GA Special Session are based on the new arrangements for consultation with NGOs in UN Conferences contained in Part VII of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31." Under these arrangements, NGOs are able to address the plenary and submit written statements.

#### INFORMATION SOURCES

Following are sources of information on the special session.

##### **DPCSD Web Site**

The Division for Sustainable Development of DPCSD has launched an Earth Summit +5 web site (<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/earthsummit>). The site includes general information; participants and their initiatives with links to major groups, UN agencies and government sites; Agenda 21 "success stories;" official UN reports prepared for Earth Summit +5; and a calendar of meetings relating to it. Official

documents are also posted on the apc conference <[un.csd.docs](mailto:un.csd.docs)>.

##### **CSD-Gen Listserve**

If you would like to receive NGO communications and position papers related to the special session, you can subscribe to an electronic distribution list called CSD-Gen. The <[csdgen@undp.org](mailto:csdgen@undp.org)> mailing list has been set up for exchange of information related to preparations for the Commission on Sustainable Development and the special session of the General Assembly. In order to subscribe to the mailing list, send a message to <[majordomo@undp.org](mailto:majordomo@undp.org)> (with the one line message: `subscribe csdgen`).

##### **CSD Update Newsletter**

*CSD Update*, a newsletter of the Division for Sustainable Development, contains valuable information for NGOs on CSD-related events, announcements and arrangements. It is available on the DPCSD web page (<http://www.un.org/dpcsd>). It is also available in hard copy for NGOs that do not have access to electronic communication technology. To receive the *CSD Update* via airmail, contact: Tarcisio Alvarez-Rivero, Coordinator, Room DC2-2252, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/963 5708, fax +1-212/963 1267, e-mail <[alvarez-rivero@un.org](mailto:alvarez-rivero@un.org)>.

##### **Earth Negotiations Bulletin**

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* is produced daily during sessions of the Earth Summit +5 preparatory process. It reports on the conference room discussions and negotiations and is available online (<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>).

##### **E & D File and Go Between**

The UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service reports regularly on the Commission on Sustainable Development and related meetings, including preparations for the GA special session. Past issues of NGLS publications related to sustainable development are available on apc conference <[npls.news](mailto:npls.news)>. If you would like to subscribe to NGLS' newsletters and publications, which are distributed to NGOs free of charge, contact NGLS, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland, fax +41-22/788 7366, e-mail <[npls@unctad.org](mailto:npls@unctad.org)> or NGLS, Room 6015, 866 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA, fax +1-212/963 8712, e-mail <[npls@nywork2.undp.org](mailto:npls@nywork2.undp.org)>.

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