

Informal summary

Coordination Segment 2009 Economic and Social Council

Panel discussion on “*Toward a UN comprehensive response to the challenges of climate change*”

14 July 2009, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

- Chair:** H.E. Mr. Somduth Soborun, Vice-President of ECOSOC
- Panelists:** H.E. Mr. Mohammad Khazae (Iran), Chair of UNDP Executive Board;
H.E. Ms. Gerda Verburg (Netherlands), Chair of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development;
H.E. Mr. Armen Martirosyan (Armenia), Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women;
H.E. Maria Nazareth Farani Azevêdo (Brazil), Chair of the ILO Governing Body;
Dr. Miloslav Hettes (Slovakia), Vice-chair of the Chair of the Commission for Social Development

Background:

At its April 2008 session, the Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) decided to concentrate their efforts on coordinated response to the global challenges on a number of issues, including science and technology, agriculture, transport, forestry and disaster risk reduction. A number of UN agencies were assigned to assume responsibilities in their respective focus areas. The panel discussion focused on how the inter-governmental process could help in advancing the implementation of the UN system’s initiative through CEB, in particular its approach to climate change.

Panel Discussion:

Mr. Mohammed Khazae, Chair of UNDP Executive Board, noted that the issue of climate change was a top priority for the international community. Considering climate change in the context of sustainable development was the only solution.

The UN system should continue efforts for transparency of existing financial resources based on needs and priorities of countries because the lack financial resources, institutional capacity and access to efficient clean technology are among the major problems that hinder the advancement of developing countries. Multi-dimensional measures that address climate change, promote sustainable development and strengthen the efforts of developing countries to achieve MDGs should be demand-driven, tailored to the needs of developing countries. They should also be result-oriented.

He emphasized that the UN needed to coordinate internally to successfully fulfill mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology aspects of the Bali Action Plan, which would help to strengthen the institutional arrangements and management between the UN and the Member States.

Climate change was intrinsically linked to poverty reduction, as agricultural production and food security, access to water resources and employment, highlighting the multi-dimensional aspect of the solution to extreme poverty and hunger. He stated that UNDP works with other operational agencies to assist developing nations, and is conducting an inventory of UN mainstreaming methodologies on climate change for international and domestic guidance.

UNDP was preparing countries to have “direct access” to international resources, helping to discover more finance and investment, providing technical support for development and facilitating technology transfer, working for a collaborative approach, such as multi-donor trust funds and creating innovative financial solutions. He explained that UNDP had an innovative analysis function for long-term sustainability.

UNDP has also been engaged in developing a knowledge platform, the “One-UN Training Service Platform on Climate Change,” to provide support for UN agencies and Member States interested in designing and delivering effective and results-oriented training for climate change mitigation activities.

The Chairperson of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17), **Ms. Gerda Verburg** said that CSD-17 recognized agriculture as part of the solution, and no longer part of the problem, since it is at the heart of poverty reduction, sustainable development and the climate change agenda. The CSD-17 outcome document contained 278 policy measures and actions, focusing on the opportunities and challenges faced by the global agricultural system, especially in efforts to reduce poverty and hunger. Enhancing the agricultural productivity and food security through public and private investments in sustainable agriculture was a key element of CSD-17, along with the transfer of innovative technology, training and developing human capacities, sharing and further developing good agricultural practices and investing in extension services.

CSD-17 suggested the international community give special attention to creating a sustainable green revolution by combining science and farmers’ knowledge. Investment in adaptation was key for a green revolution to be possible. It also called for the promotion of integrated land and water management, improving access to land, and sustainable and integrated land use by including principles of sustainability.

Regarding the focus of this panel discussion, she noted that the goal was to make agriculture and food production more climate friendly and useful for combating climate change and improving the lives and incomes of farmers. Some reports suggest that the agricultural sector could be broadly carbon neutral by 2030 if sustainable management practices were widely adopted. She pointed out that globally, mitigation potential could be realized at low cost. The challenge was how to unlock that potential while sustaining food production capacity.

Other opportunities included improved agriculture advice and training services, ensuring long-term interest of land managers in sustainable land management, access to credit, coordinated regional agriculture mitigation programmes and proactive analysis of traditional practices to enable change.

Involvement of stakeholders on all levels, especially civil society, was needed to promote partnerships for sustainable development, including public-private partnerships, to advance integrated management of natural resources.

Ambassador Armen Martirosyan, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), discussed the Commission's work in stressing the importance of identifying and addressing gender equality issues in relationship to environmental management and climate change. CSW called for action to mainstream a gender perspective into the ongoing research by the academic sector on the impact of climate change and encouraging the application of research results in policies and programmes. Gender analysis of all budget lines and financial instruments for climate change was needed to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programmes for adaptation, mitigation, technology and capacity building, especially at the local level.

Mr. Martirosyan stated that women in developing countries were primarily responsible for the production of food, mostly through subsistence forms of production, and were therefore highly exposed to the risks that came with drought and uncertain rainfall. Women should be viewed as effective agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation, despite being under-represented in decision-making processes on climate change, and there needed to be an increase in recognition of the importance of involving women fully in efforts to combat climate change.

Challenges to be addressed include a lack of sex-disaggregated data necessary for forming policy responses and a lack of systematic mainstreaming of gender perspectives into the work of the UN on climate change. Many important intergovernmental level agreements did not make specific references to women and climate change, so a strengthening of efforts was needed to ensure that gender perspectives were included in key processes and outcomes.

The representative of International Labour Organization (ILO) Governing Body, **Ambassador Maria Nazareth Farani Azevêdo** spoke about the importance of labor-related issues within the context of climate change. Labour markets were affected by the creation and consolidation of greener patterns of production and consumption. The international community must ensure that the transition to a low-carbon world offered new economic opportunities instead of hindering the job field. Workers should be trained to perform innovative environmentally sustainable jobs, employers should offer access to greener technologies, and governments should share experiences and best practices related to the promotion of decent work in an environmentally sustainable economy.

Environmental protection and economic growth were complementary. The economic crisis imposed the need to create jobs and offered an opportunity to build new and more sustainable production and consumption avenues. The need to enhance and create green jobs and increase the investment in green technology has been recognized by the "Global Jobs Pact" as part of the strategy leading to sustainable recovery. The Pact, together with "The Green Jobs Initiative"- an instrument to discuss and promote concerted efforts and coherent policies leading to a green economy with decent work for everyone, will create jobs that will help to cut consumption of energy, reduce the waste of raw materials and water, diminish greenhouse gas emissions and restore biodiversity.

Examples of successful sectoral cooperation included the production of bio-fuels in Brazil, which have a prominent role in the creation of green jobs in the agricultural and energy sectors. The “German Alliance for Work and Environment” worked to retrofit and replace obsolete equipment in buildings and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, creating thousands of green jobs in the construction sector. South Africa was conducting a project to upgrade housing while reducing energy demand and emissions.

Dr. Miloslav Hettes, Vice-Chair of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD), explored the theme of social integration. Climate change may be the defining social justice issue of the current generation as it produced complex social responses that magnify migration, conflicts, crimes and violence into catastrophic measures. Climate change threatens many existing jobs, yet it provides opportunities for the development of new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

It was CSocD’s view that the international response to the global crises should contribute to a fairer globalization, a greener economy and development that would more effectively create jobs and sustainable enterprises, respect workers’ rights, promote gender equality, protect vulnerable people, assist countries in the provision of quality public services and enable countries to achieve the MDGs.

The key to counteracting social consequences of the crises was implementing large-scale internationally coordinated fiscal stimulus packages that were mutually reinforcing and consistent with sustainable development goals while strengthening national and international political commitments to integrated economic and social policies. The international community must also use political momentum to initiate and adopt a new green and social compact for public spending on health and education.

The international community also needed to capture the environmental enthusiasm of the new generations and give them the skills and opportunities to make a difference. Tapping into young people’s green conscience may also be useful for employment as with the right training, young people will be able to find employment in the rapidly growing green jobs sector.

Mr. Hettes posed three questions: How will people’s lives change as a result of climate change? What policies should be put in place to help people cope? What can and must the UN do? The UN system should assist countries in socio-economic cost-benefit analysis, strengthening national capacities to improve integrated policy with respect to climate change, collect, systematize, analyze and disseminate good practices and knowledge, and enhance regional cooperation on adaptation.

Interactive Dialogue:

Delegations expressed great concern for the issue of climate change and its impact on the process to achieve MDGs. Many stated that strengthening the UN efforts and abilities was the only way to eradicate the problem. The UN must better facilitate the transfer of resources and

technology, and assist in creating institutional stability. It must work with organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, among others, to be a bridge for resource transfer and information sharing.

Delegations realized that one of the main challenges was to increase food production while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. Some believe that political determination at the global and national levels to cooperate and create win-win situations, such as combining new technologies with traditional knowledge, would help to establish successful and best practices for sustainability.

Public-public alliances and public-private cooperation efforts were needed for financial, technological, mitigation and adaptation efforts to be productive. Holistic approaches to mainstreaming policies and regulations to solve the climate change and financial crises, which were inevitably linked together, could prove most productive.

Many agreed that the developed community, being those responsible for the current crises, should pay for the mitigation and adaptation efforts, instead of leaving the costs to be borne by those less or not responsible. Some delegations questioned the avenue of repayment, whether developed countries should aggressively reduce emissions and/or work for eradication of poverty and economic and social development of developing countries. It was generally stated that a shared responsibility, stabilization of resources and production, and cooperation efforts would benefit everyone through financial assistance, technology transfer, free markets and removal of subsidies. The responsibility should be shared by those who were most able to pay, proportionately to their emissions and contribution to climate change and the financial crisis.

Delegations believed that taking steps toward the creation of a post-Kyoto Protocol was necessary now, instead of waiting for 2012. Some also suggested that waiting until the December negotiations in Copenhagen will only continue to harm the most vulnerable and that immediate action was therefore necessary. Stakeholders at all levels must work immediately to mitigate the effects of climate change so that the vulnerable, especially women and children, did not continue to suffer disproportionately from the rest of the population. Openness to green technology and economy will help increase financial assistance, employment and help to stabilize the current systems.