

UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Highlights of Side Events

4 May 2009

Reconciliation as a key to sustainability

To achieve sustainability, more attention should be paid to the connection between peace and development, and to the balance among economic growth, social equality and environment protection. Unsustainable development is not only the result of conflicts, it also causes conflicts. Although science and policy are important and have long been affecting the world, human behaviours need to be further changed to achieve a social transformation to sustainable development. Reconciliation is a key to sustainability.

Examples in Palestinian territories were given to describe the results of lack of reconciliation. Meanwhile, the values of religious beliefs and the spiritual encouragement to help mobilize actions should be realized. The United Religious Initiative at the UN introduced a 3 steps practice: first, building personal relationship; then, building the trust in the community; finally, creating the culture of peace. In this way, small actions can make big difference. Last but not least, music also serves as an important way to achieve reconciliation.

Defining and Practicing Sustainable Consumption and Production: Food and Agriculture

Based on an introduction of the history and the background of sustainable development agenda and the 10-year framework programme, together with the sharing of success stories about sustainable bio-fuels production in Africa, and about sustainable household consumption of food, many tools and models that can be used to promote sustainable consumption and production from food and agriculture point of view were discussed.

Round Table of Sustainable bio-fuels shows that women farmers in Africa are active in bio-fuel related issues, and play crucial roles on bio-fuel considerations. Not only do women want to have organized participation of the planning and managerial decision making process, but they can also give inputs. For example, benefits of bio-fuel must be linked with benefits for household daily lives; improved gender equity serves as a key element in assessing potential benefits and impacts.

Starting from the conclusions from the book *Hungry Planet*, some examples of how much food a family consumes from around the world are showed, thus raising the discussion on finding ways to achieve sustainable household consumption of food. Suggestions included: to put all parts together so as to see the whole picture of the entire food chain; to monitor, learn and adapt; to find a leverage point to start; to charge tax for food with high CO₂ footprint or for unhealthy food; to consider Life Circle Assessment during policy making process; and to introduce an integrated food labels.

5 May

Delving into a Deep Green Revolution: Responding to the Food Crisis and Climate Stresses with Pro-Active Risk management

Experience and challenges from many countries and organizations were shared. The challenges faced for a sustainable development and the work on livestock were highlighted.

Main challenges include: some of the resources, such as water, are becoming less and less, making it difficult for adaptation; some policies are not implemented, or not in a form for easy participation; there are security problems due to the conflict within community caused by mere resource; lack of market and pricing mechanism; knowledge obstacles should also be overcome.

To achieve sustainability, live stocks, being more than a way of poverty reduction, should be comprehensively considered for its interaction with climate change, human beings and environment. It is necessary to integrate live stocks into policy process, to make investment on live stocks, to generate demand development, and to promote live stocks value chain. All these can be achieved by scaling a business model and looking at lessons in some regions. Immediate steps that can be taken are: creating the platform to enhance cooperation; taking the advantage of discussion of climate change; recognizing the expertise among farmers and bring the expertise into policy making process.

Global Rangeland Assessment

Rangelands are a vast global resource that not only provide goods and services such as water storage and filtration, they also facilitate carbon storage. But rangelands are always neglected due to lack of data and are under-valued. Lessons were shared from the U.S.A., Australia, South Africa, Argentina and Inner Mongolia experience.

It was recommended that international cooperation should be further promoted; that large scale survey or monitoring should be conducted; and that assets should be reflected in traditional economic accounts. The use of criteria and sustainability indicators for rangeland management will be helpful to achieve the goal. Among these, socio-economic conditions of the people and their welfare will continue to be the most important indicator. Now, better data and better dialogue are needed so as to achieve better decisions. Some factors would be essential for a successful solution, such as understanding the causes of grassland degradation, experience and data sharing, adaptive management, well targeted additional funding, and willingness to accept imperfection and to compromise.

6 May 2009

The Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)

The Marrakech Process experience and lessons from many regions and organizations are shared. It is realized that the added value of Marrakech is from consumption perspective, and that life cycle method is important.

Consumption, which not only includes products, but also includes service and infrastructure development, is crucial for the success of SCP. Consumers have the right to make decisions, and they also have the right to take the responsibility. Most consumers concern, but they just do not know what matters and what to do. So consumers should be given more instruction.

The success stories show that the following parts are essential: put labeling so that it is easier for public choice; encourage green government procurement; educate local government officials to adopt SCP concept and combine it with city development.

What need to be further strengthened are: to develop common understanding on how to apply SCP; to set up a regional SCP plan with priority; to encourage more national and international efforts with an involvement of the business, governments and NGOs; to add mobility and food into considerations; and to realize the role of voluntary partnership.

7 May

Changing World and Water Management Adaptation Strategies

The side event started with an introduction of the main findings of the United Nations World Water Development Report, a joint effort of UN-Water under the coordination of its World Water Assessment Programme. The report highlights the central role of water for sustainable development and emphasizes the role of water in addressing the myriad of challenges the world faces.

The outcomes of the 5th World Water Forum were introduced by the World Water Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, highlighting the importance of the follow-up process of the in-depth discussion during the political process of the forum. The discussion centered on translating the commitments made during the forum to actions on the ground.

The World Water Forum organizers are linking the outcomes of the forum to UN processes and are working, among others, with cities and parliamentarians to ensure that the outcomes of the forum are put into practice. A key issue, emerging from the discussions, where the need to get water issues higher on the agenda in the intergovernmental discussions.

Bioenergy and Food Security – contradictory or mutually reinforcing?

The Coordinator of the Bioenergy and Food Security Project (BEFS) informed that the FAO is involved in four projects related to Bioenergy, namely BEFS, BEFS Plus, SBD and Best Practices. He then moved on to present briefly the BEFS project, involving four countries: Cambodia, Peru, Tanzania and Thailand. The speaker stressed that its objective is to mainstream food security concerns into national and sub-national assessments of bioenergy potential, developing analytical framework and guidance, assessing the bioenergy potential and food security implications, and strengthening institutional capacities through the creation of multi-sectorial task forces.

The representative of Peru presented the context, development of bioenergy and actions and challenges related to the BEFS Project in her country. The representative from Tanzania introduced the advances of BEFS Project

highlighting that Tanzania has the right conditions for biofuels development in terms of land, climate, geographical location, political and social stability. The representative from Thailand presented the present state of the jetropha production in Thailand, focusing on the activities of the Agricultural Cooperative that represents the farmers and the Jetropha School.

8 May

Securing Women's Rights to Land and Livelihoods /Desertification, climate Change and Land: Key Issues and Challenges in Policies to Women's Livelihoods

The panelists focused their presentations on Nigeria, which was presented as one of the 25 poorest nations in the world, where 2/3 of the population is poor, both in rural and urban areas, and 2/3 of the displaced citizens are women. Despite of the fact that women are half of the farm labour force, they don't hold land rights and don't possess the means to secure access to land and water.

It was stressed that the main issue in women's right to land is the "triad land ownership system", formed by Constitutional and national laws, Islamic laws and Traditional laws. The first state that both men and women have equal rights to land by purchase or inheritance. On the other hand, Islamic laws allow women to inherit half of the land and the traditional system favour men's rights to land.

In the past years, multiple campaigns have been promoted to raise awareness of gender issues, particularly education and access to land. Furthermore, the Nigerian Government had adopted several pieces of legislation and initiatives related to land tenure and land rights. The most recent one, "Vision 20:2020", reflects a ten year strategy to reduce poverty in Nigeria and to find the means of implementation of the already existing framework. In this context, women have been invited to participate in the decision-making process, in order to include the gender perspective in the Strategy.

11 May

Overcoming Barriers to Regional Coordination: The Pacific Invasives Partnership and the Cooperative Islands initiative as Model Approach.

The side event highlighted invasive species as one of the key threats to sustainable development in Pacific Small Island Developing States. The fragility of island ecosystems was also highlighted with islands making up only 3% of global terrestrial habitats, but represent 64% of species extinctions and 45% of endangered species globally. Due to geographical isolation and small sizes, regional cooperation mechanisms and partnerships have been proven crucial to the management of invasive species in Pacific Small Island Developing States.

Presentations provided examples of many initiatives carried out under the partnerships arrangements and reinforce the importance of working together. The Pacific Invasive Partnership (PIP) strengthens the cooperation between three programmes currently providing support to Pacific islands in the management of invasive species; Pacific Invasives Initiative, Pacific Invasive Learning Network, and the Working Group on Invasives for the Round Table on Nature Conservation. Within the context of the PIP, a workshop will be held around April 2010 as part of the

celebrations of the International Year of Biodiversity, and to explore the best practices and lessons learned from the PIP that could be applied to other regions.

CSD-17 and Dryland Policies: which opportunities to proceed from words to action

Countering degradation requires that local organizations and communities living in drylands should be at the heart of the work. However their involvement in the national and international arenas is often very low key. By directly reaching out to local groups, Drynet intends to redress the current imbalance.

Policy frameworks such as UN Convention to Combat Desertification and its national Action Plans are designed to ensure political and financial attention for drylands. Their success however remains limited to a few examples. Civil Society Organizations(CSOs) that know the local realities must play a crucial role in getting drylands higher on CSD agenda. Yet CSOs often lack the necessary coordination and cooperation to carry out this agenda setting. Drynet works to ensure that CSOs are able to become structural partners of both public and private sectors.

12 May

Food Security: Will the next revolution be more sustainable?

Increasing food energy efficiency provides a critical path for significant growth in food supply without compromising environmental sustainability. Seven options for improving food security were proposed:

Short-term

- To decrease the risk of highly volatile prices, price regulation on commodities and larger cereal stocks should be created to buffer the tight markets of food commodities and the subsequent risks of speculation in markets.
- Encourage removal of subsidies and blending ratios of first generation biofuels, which would promote a shift to higher generation biofuels based on waste (if this does not compete with animal feed), thereby avoiding the capture of cropland by biofuels.

Mid-term

- Reduce the use of cereals and food fish in animal feed and develop alternatives to animal and fish feed.
- Support farmers in developing diversified and resilient eco-agriculture systems that provide critical ecosystem services (water supply and regulation, habitat for wild plants and animals, genetic diversity, pollination, pest control, climate regulation), as well as adequate food to meet local and consumer needs.
- Increased trade and improved market access can be achieved by improving infrastructure and reducing trade barriers.

Long-term

- Limit global warming, including the promotion of climate-friendly agricultural production systems and land-use policies at a scale to help mitigate climate change.
- Raise awareness of the pressures of increasing population growth and consumption patterns on sustainable ecosystem functioning.

A Model for International Cooperation for Sustainable Development.

The cooperation programme between the Governments of Italy and Austria and the Governments of Pacific SIDS provides financial support to renewable energy projects in support of livelihoods in Pacific islands. The two modalities of delivery are: (i) “direct access”, whereby the Pacific islands themselves prepare proposals and submit them directly to the Italian Ministry of Environment, and (ii) involves IUCN-Oceania to provide technical support to Pacific SIDS in submission and implementation of proposals under the supervision of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A few of Pacific SIDS under the latter modality involving IUCN-Oceania presented progress of their projects and placed a lot of emphasis on the efficiency and flexibility of the process enabling them to see activities on the ground in very quick time. There was no information available on the progress and therefore efficiency of the “direct access” modality. Pacific SIDS nevertheless expressed strong concern that compared to the bilateral processes under this cooperation programme, most UN and multilateral financial mechanisms are too bureaucratic and complex, resulting in inefficiencies and frustrations in accessing financial support.

13 May

Land and Water Management for Adaptation to Climate Change

In recognition of the fundamental importance of land and water linkages, the Dialogue on Land and Water Management for Adaptation to Climate Change has been conducted, initiated by the Danish Ministry of Foreign affairs / Danida in collaboration of with international and national partners.

The primary aim of the Dialogue has been to increase resilience among the most vulnerable in developing countries with particular emphasis on agriculture and water resources management, and to enhance the voice of developing countries in the international climate negotiations.

The poor in the developing countries are the most exposed and vulnerable, with Sub-Saharan Africa, the Asian deltas and coastal cities and the small island developing states identified as “hot spots” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Guidelines for Sustainable Land Use

The Side Event organised by the German Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection discussed the pros and cons of international guidelines for sustainable land use against the background of the ongoing development of criteria for sustainable biofuel production. The Key Speaker made it clear that concentrating on biofuel standards could lead not only to leakage of carbon but also to unwanted side effects such as the displacement of food production and detrimental effects on biodiversity.

The panel of delegates from Switzerland (Federal Office for Agriculture), NGO members from the Seychelles (IFAP), Nigeria (Friends of the Earth) and the Philippines (Third World Network), representatives from the FAO and the members of the auditorium that participated in the discussion agreed that it was necessary to have internationally agreed guidelines but that they should leave room to take regional and local needs into account. The term “land use” was interpreted in the broadest sense and taken to cover agricultural, forestry and ecosystem use as

well as land management such as ownership and tenure rights. The discussion participants felt that the FAO could be the right organisation to take the lead in the development of such guidelines.

14 May

The Role of Farmers in Combating Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought

Land is a multidisciplinary issue of global significance. Sustainable land management is important for poverty reduction, food security and climate change. Experience from organizations such as UNCCD was shared.

Speakers mentioned that farmer's involvement is important, and that some degradation comes from climate factors which can be decreased by reducing carbon emission and by anticipating drought. It was recognized that key ways to solve related problems include the upscale of innovative methods, the record of success stories, the empowerment of local communication, and international cooperation.

UN initiative for land addresses a 10 year strategy 2008-2018 with aims to forge a global partnership to mitigate the effect of droughts, to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability, to provide global framework, and to encourage global responsibility and local actions.

Sustainable Bio-energy Development: the Global Bio-energy Partnership's Contribution

Bio-energy has been discussed since it is closely related to energy security, deforestation, food production and land use. Experience from organizations such as UNEP, Global Bioenergy Partnership Task Force on Sustainability (GBEP) was shared.

It was stated that bio-fuels are the only near term alternative to petroleum for transportation sector, that resource use efficiency in bio-energy production, conversion and distribution should always be kept in mind.

UNEP's approaches to bio-energy include: to organize researches, to set up tools for information and guidance, to create market to promote business models that provide development benefits. Based on these approaches, a series of reports have been published: Towards Sustainable Production and Use of Resources, Assessing Bio-fuels, and Assessment.

GBEP regards as crucial to build consensus between national governments, and to develop global science based criteria and indicators. A straightforward, detailed methodology has been developed to quantify emission benefits.

15 May

Information for Governments on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

Panelists stated that land use changes are an essential component of strategies to mitigate climate change, effectively limiting greenhouse gases by reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation and sequestering carbon through reforestation and agroforestry activities.

It was mentioned that land-based carbon activities also have exceptional potential to deliver additional benefits. When sensitively designed, they can:

- help local people by creating sustainable livelihoods, e.g. by diversifying agriculture, protecting soil and water resources, generating direct employment, and enabling use and sale of forest products;
- conserve biodiversity by restoring and protecting natural ecosystems necessary to save threatened animal and plant species from extinction and maintain productive natural live-support;
- assist adaptation to the effects of climate change by building the capacity and resilience of vulnerable communities and species.