

Note on the Fourth Meeting of the Bureau of the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

(25 March 2009, The Hague, Netherlands)

Introduction

1. The fourth meeting of the Bureau of the 17th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17) took place on 25 March in The Hague, Netherlands.
2. The meeting was chaired by the Chairperson of CSD-17, H.E. Ms. Gerda Verburg (The Netherlands). The following Vice-Chairs attended the meeting: Ms. Ana Bianchi (Argentina); Ms. Tania Raguž (Croatia); Mr. Javad Amin-Mansour (Islamic Republic of Iran); and H.E. Dr. Kaire M. Mbuende (Namibia). The Secretariat (DSD/DESA) was represented by Mr. Aslam Chaudhry, Chief of Global Policy Branch, Mr. David O'Connor, Chief of Policy Analysis and Networks Branch, and Ms. Ling Wang. Ms. Vivian Pliner, Senior Political Officer, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management represented the Technical Secretariat. The Chairperson was assisted by some senior officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality of the Netherlands.

Agenda Item 1: Updates by the Chairperson and Bureau Members on their recent activities

3. Minister Verburg opened the meeting and informed the Bureau that she attended a meeting of the European Council last week, where she met with the Ministers of Agriculture of European countries and briefed them about CSD-17. She invited and encouraged the Ministers to actively participate in CSD-17, especially in the interactive Ministerial roundtables to be held during the course of the high-level segment.
4. Dr. Kaire M. Mbuende informed that he held a meeting with one Major Group (Youth) in New Jersey, together with a representative of the Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations, to brief them on the preparation of CSD-17 and to seek their inputs to the process.
5. Mr. Javad Amin-Mansour stated that he took part in the Asian group meeting and explained to the group about the organization of work of CSD-17. He also received some comments from the Mission of Indonesia, the coordinator of G77 and China, on agriculture.

6. Ms. Ana Bianchi informed that she was in contact with delegations from GRULAC and G-77 and China on matters related to CSD-17.

7. Ms. Tania Raguž said that she communicated with the group of Eastern European Countries on the work of CSD-17.

Agenda Item 2: Updates by the Secretariat

8. Mr. Chaudhry briefed the Bureau about the status of preparations for CSD-17. Major activities undertaken since the conclusion of IPM included: briefing to EU by Mr. Tariq Banuri, Director of DSD; briefing to the Chair of G-77 and China; establishment of teams within the Secretariat to support the negotiation process, partnership fair, learning center and other activities; consolidating comments received on Chair's text; contacting the potential panelists for the Ministerial roundtables; and other outreaching and advocacy activities.

Agenda Item 3: Organization of Work for CSD-17

(i) Negotiation Process

9. The Bureau discussed sheparding the negotiation process and decided that:

- Dr. Kaire M. Mbuende and Ms. Tania Raguž will co-chair working group 1 on agriculture, rural development, inter-linkages, cross-cutting issues and means of implementation, including preamble section.
- Mr. Javad Amin-Mansour and Ms. Ana Bianchi will co-chair working group 2 on land, drought, desertification and Africa.

10. Primary responsibility of the co-chairs will be to guide and facilitate the negotiation process. Furthermore, they will attend where possible activities related to Major Groups, partnerships fair, learning center and as the Rapporteur, on as and when required basis.

11. Minister Verburg informed the Bureau that the Chair's negotiating text has been posted on the CSD website, taking into account only one factual comment in paragraph 9(b). This text will be the basis for negotiation during CSD-17.

12. To maintain transparency in the process, the Bureau decided to post the comments made on Chair's negotiating text on the CSD website. These comments could include those: (i) made by the delegates at the final session of

the IPM, and (ii) received in writing from various delegates after the IPM. The Bureau also decided that amendments to the text, as proposed and/or agreed by delegates during the negotiation process, will be made/shown live on the screen. During the negotiation process, each theme will be addressed separately.

(ii) *Dialogue of Ministers with Major Groups and Policy Research Community*

13. The Bureau is introducing a number of innovations in the organization of work of CSD-17. In this regard, *inter-alia*, Ministers can participate in two dialogues on “implementing sustainable development”--one with the Major Groups and the other with the policy research community. The Secretariat is developing a concept note elaborating the scope and modality of these dialogues, issues to be discussed, and possible panelists.

14. The Bureau suggested that these events should be highlighted in the organization of work, and the Ministers being invited for the high-level segment should be informed about these events. This will enable the Ministers having special interest in these events to come one day earlier to New York and participate in these dialogues.

(iii) *Exchange of Views on the High-Level Segment, Outcomes and Deliverables*

15. Minister Verburg expressed her determination to organize an impressive opening session of the high-level segment. In this regard, she is reaching out to various eminent persons to invite them for delivering remarks at the opening session. Those who might speak during the High Level Segment include the Secretary-General, the Prince of Orange, Mr. Kofi Anan, and the President of ECOSOC, among others. It was agreed to invite also Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso (former President of Brazil), Prof. Mohammad Younas from Bangladesh, and Ms. Wangari Maathai from Kenya. She also asked the Bureau members to provide names of eminent persons who could be invited as keynote speakers both for the opening session and the Ministerial roundtables, particularly those from the developing countries. Following this invitation, Dr. Kaire M. Mbuende (Vice-Chair from Africa) proposed the name of Prof. Ruth Oniango from Kenya. Furthermore, the Bureau decided to encourage an interactive dialogue in the parallel roundtables of the High-level segment, and to avoid the reading of statements by the delegates. The results from the Ministerial Roundtables will be summed-up in a shared vision on the last day of the High level Segment.

16. The Bureau supported the idea of organizing an informal dialogue of Ministers with the heads of UN agencies and chairs of Executive Boards/ Governing Councils of UN organizations. This is the first time such a tripartite

dialogue is being planned within the framework of CSD organization of work. To provide sufficient time for the dialogue, the Bureau decided to expand the discussions to two breakfast sessions (8:30 to 10:00 am) on the first two days of the high-level segment.

17. The Bureau had extensive discussions on the themes for the Ministerial roundtables. In this regard, proposals received from various groups (EU, G-77 plus China and Eastern European countries) were reviewed. Minister Verburg emphasized the need to closely align the roundtables themes with the thematic issues of CSD-17. She mentioned that the selected themes should contribute towards addressing the pressing development challenges of our times. The Bureau agreed on the following three themes:

- Responding to food crisis through sustainable development
- Realizing sustainable green revolution in Africa
- Integrated management of land and water resources for sustainable agriculture and rural development

18. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that a number of renowned experts have already been approached to determine their availability to speak at the Ministerial roundtables. In response to Bureau's question, a detailed briefing was provided about the experts contacted so far, including their professional background and expertise. Given the fact that themes of the roundtables have now been agreed upon, the meeting emphasized the need to finalize the list of panelists as soon as possible. Minister Verburg said that she would prepare a short list of panelists before April 15, while asking the Bureau members to provide additional names, if they wish to do so.

19. While explaining the intent of summing-up session of the high-level segment, Minister Verburg explained that this session should really focus on developing a "shared vision on the way forward" on thematic issues under consideration by the commission. Such a vision should emanate from the discussions that will take place in three Ministerial roundtables.

Agenda Item 4: Other Business

20. The Bureau discussed the possibility of having a two-year Bureau to coincide with the CSD two-year cycle, and decided to consult further on this issue with the regional groups.

21. The Bureau decided that representatives of regional commissions should be briefed about the preparations for CSD-17, so that they could brief their respective constituencies accordingly. While organizing such a briefing, the

Secretariat should check with the Bureau members if they would like to participate in the teleconference as well.

22. The Chair informed the Bureau that the fifth meeting of the Bureau will take place on 3 May 2009 in New York, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm. This will be followed by a meeting of the Chair and other Bureau members with the representatives of Major Groups.

23. The Bureau discussed the request from the President of COP 14 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on an informal Ministerial meeting on climate change in the evening of the second day of the high-level segment of CSD-17. The Bureau has no objections to this request, since the meeting is planned to take place outside the official programme of CSD-17.

24. Ms. Tania Raguž informed the Bureau that the 18th International Conference on Health and Environment will be held on April 16 in New York in which Dr. Hiram Larew, Agricultural Advisor, the US Department of State, will be one of the speakers at a roundtable on Children's Health Policies. He is also programmed to speak about the US Government's participation in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

Summary of Key Decisions

- Shepherding of the negotiation process of CSD-17
- Finalization of the Chair's negotiating text
- Revised organization of work for CSD-17
- Agreement on the three themes for Ministerial Roundtables of the high-level segment
- Agreement on briefing by representatives of regional commissions to their constituencies on the preparations of CSD-17