

Concept Note on the Ministerial Dialogue with the Policy Research Community
17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development
12 May 2009
3:00 pm – 5:15 pm
Conference Room 6

With regard to the practical modalities and programme of work of the Commission, the following issues should be considered:

(c) Give greater consideration to the scientific contributions to sustainable development through, for example, drawing on the scientific community and encouraging national, regional and international scientific networks to be involved in the Commission; (JPOI, Section XI, paragraph 149)

One day prior to the official opening of the High-level Segment of CSD-17, there will be a Ministerial dialogue with experts from the sustainable development policy community, including representatives of Major Groups and the UN. This dialogue provides an opportunity for a focused yet informal discussion on CSD-17 thematic issues, as well as on longer term issues relevant to sustainable development.

Format and Focus

The dialogue session will be informal and there will be no official statements. The session is open to Ministers or their designated representatives, Major Groups' representatives, and UN staff.

Opening remarks: 15' max

The session will be opened with general remarks by the Chairperson (5'); followed by opening remarks by Mr Jomo Kwame Sundaram, DESA Assistant-Secretary-General; followed by chairperson introducing the ground rules for session (2').

Part I: approx. 50 minutes

In the first half of the session, two SD policy experts will lead off the discussion by presenting reflections from an expert meeting held on margins of the CSD, "the Future of sustainable development":

Presentation 1 (10 minutes): 22 years of sustainable development: whither the SD agenda?

Presentation 2 (10 minutes): How can the SD community better contribute to sustainable development policy outcomes, and especially to the CSD?

This will be followed by 30 minutes of discussion moderated by the Chair, including responses from Ministers, Major Groups and representatives of UN entities. Interventions will be limited to 3 minutes.

Possible Questions for Discussion

Ministers, Major Groups and UN entities may consider the following questions:

- The world is confronted by a multiplicity of crises today—poverty, the food crisis, the energy crisis, climate change, biodiversity loss, depletion of non renewable resources. How could a sustainable development framework help in producing integrated solutions?

- Where are the areas where the thinking as well as action within a sustainable development framework has advanced the most since Rio and Johannesburg? What are the domains where challenges remain?
- What kind of barriers obstruct progress? Have the challenges become more intractable, or has action been hindered by inadequate analysis, insufficient political will, or weak institutions?

Part II: approximately 55 minutes

The second half of the session will be devoted to Sustainable Development Challenges related to CSD17 thematic issues: Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Drought, Desertification and Africa. Two SD experts will be invited to give short (10 minute) presentations to start the discussion.

Presentation 1 (10 minutes): Are we heading for more food crises?

Presentation 2 (10 minutes): International standards for biofuels: should it be done, how?

[Other potential topics:

3 - How to best support adaptation of farming systems to climate change?

4- How to achieve sustainable rural development, beyond the agriculture sector?]

The presentations will be followed by a discussion with the audience, guided and moderated by the Chair, including responses from Ministers, representatives of Major Groups and representatives of UN entities. Interventions during discussion will be limited to 3 minutes.

Possible Questions for Discussion

To facilitate the discussions, Ministers, Major Groups and UN entities may consider the following questions:

- How can we achieve a sustainable green revolution in Africa, and how can we ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability?
- Besides increase in agricultural R&D commitment, what is needed to be most efficient in terms of the outcomes of R&D?
- How can we promote models for biofuel production that ensure favourable outcomes for small-scale farmers as well as food security and environmental sustainability?
- How can the transfer and diffusion of good agricultural practice and technologies be accelerated to reach all farmers, including small-scale farmers in remote rural areas? What concrete measures should be taken to strengthen the link between farmers and extension services/workers?
- How can major groups and governments work together to promote better integration of small scale farmers into local, national or international markets?
- What are the opportunities and challenges for agriculture and farmers in relation to the climate change negotiations and financing mechanisms?

Part III: approximately 10 minutes

The last part of the session is reserved for closing remarks by the Chairperson.