

Informal Comments by the United States
Commission on Sustainable Development Informal Consultations
New York, March 26, 2003

We are encouraged by the willingness of delegations to engage in intensive discussions of the details of the Secretariat's paper on the future of the CSD. We believe there is clearly a consensus that the main task now facing the CSD is to promote actions that enable implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

We believe it is crucial to think anew about how we define the "outcomes" we hope to see from a revitalized CSD and to recognize that, in many respects, we have entered an "experimental phase" in which we should be willing to try new ways of doing business that might be conducive to achieving such outcomes.

Clearly the overarching objective and key outcome that we all hope to achieve is implementation of sustainable development. When we think about how we can reach this goal, it's important to think about what types of specific outcomes the CSD can and should provide.

Over the course of each two-year cycle, we would hope that the CSD might promote implementation through a number of specific outcomes, such as:

1. Increased capacity for implementation
2. Increased stakeholder participation
3. Mobilizing resources for sustainable development
4. Enhanced donor coordination and complementarity
5. A rich source of information on implementation
6. Policy guidance
7. Enhanced and additional partnerships and initiatives

We are pleased to see that many of suggestions in the Secretariat's report could promote these sorts of outcomes. For example, paragraph 73 of the Secretariat's paper suggests that multi-stakeholder dialogues could be spread throughout CSD sessions. We very much like this suggestion and, perhaps, this type of approach could obviate the need for continuing the type of traditional one or two-day "multi-stakeholder dialogues" that a number of commentators have suggested have been less than satisfying.

Likewise, we commend the Secretariat for its initiative to create a "learning center" during CSD 11, as this represents an important step toward achieving what we believe is another important type of "new CSD" outcome: increased capacity for implementation.

We also very much appreciate and support the Secretariat's organization of a "partnerships fair" for CSD 11. Again, bearing in mind the need for us to embrace the

challenges of this “experimental phase” we’re now in, this partnerships fair could be a significant step toward achieving one of the outcome of promoting new and enhanced partnerships and initiatives.

Speaking of partnerships, yesterday we had a very useful discussion about the importance of encouraging partnership activities. We are ready to accept the “Bali guidelines,” but we are not prepared to re-negotiate them. Also, we appreciate Canada’s caution against coming up with onerous, prescriptive reporting requirements that could, in effect, discourage the willingness of implementation actors to engage in new partnerships and initiatives. This means developing flexible and transparent procedures to enable and encourage voluntary self-reporting by partnerships. We do want to hear from them about what is working and why and – just as important – what may not be working and why.

As for the future work program, we believe it must be focused tightly on high priority areas. So, the issue before us is: what will we choose to focus on as priorities. Rather than try to address multiple themes, we think each cycle should focus on one main theme, not two or three. And, leaving aside the question of whether “WEHAB” should be the basis for the thematic content of future CSDs, in our view, the issues of water and energy are fundamentally linked to issues of poverty eradication and sustainable development and, therefore, hold promise as possible overarching themes for the next two CSD cycles.

Among the areas of convergence here, we are encouraged by what we perceive as a growing willingness to consider a variant of “option 3” that some have referred to as “option 4.” We would be comfortable with an approach in which we might define themes for the next two or three CSD cycles, and leave it to future CSD “policy sessions” to define themes for subsequent cycles.

Moreover, we believe the substantive issues are already sufficiently complex, and that we need not complicate matters further by coming up with CSD processes that are themselves overly complex. Based on our consultations with U.S. stakeholders, we are concerned that a complex process could so onerous that it hinders the willingness of key actors to participate. With the hope of having a streamlined process, we have proposed some minor modifications to the Secretariat’s proposed superstructure so that we might have a straightforward process that truly keeps to a two-year cycle. That process would have four basic meetings:

1. An opening "Global & Regional Review Session" in Feb./March of the first ("Implementation") year;
2. "Experts Forum" in May/June of the same year;
3. "Action Forum" in Feb./March of the second ("Policy") year; and,
4. A concluding "Policy Session" in May/June of the second year.

Finally, yesterday’s discussions included consideration of the program of work for CSD 11. Given that the shape of the non-ministerial segment will be driven largely by

the nature of the decision document we are to adopt at CSD 11, we wish to reiterate our view that CSD 11 should adopt a single concise document that:

1. Defines the themes for the 2004-05 and 2006-07 CSD cycles and sets the basis for defining subsequent themes during future "Policy Sessions."
2. Identifies the basic superstructure of meetings to be organized, for both the "Implementation Year" and the "Policy Year" components.
3. Lays the foundation for the Secretariat to ensure effective multi-stakeholder participation, capacity building, facilitated dialogues, and activities that promote new and strengthened partnerships and initiatives.
4. Enables the Secretariat to establish flexible and transparent mechanisms for voluntary self-reporting by partnerships.

In sum, we very much appreciate the willingness of delegations and the Secretariat to re-think how we define successful "outcomes" for the CSD and to consider new ways of doing business that could ultimately strengthen the CSD's role as a catalyst for action in carrying out Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. We look forward to working closely with you in the coming weeks so that CSD 11 might truly mark the start of what Chairman Moosa called a "new CSD" for a new decade in sustainable development.

Attachment: Proposed Structure for Future Work Cycles

Proposed Structure for Future Work Cycles

	2003	2004 Implementation Year	2005 Policy Year	2006 Implementation Year	2007 Policy Year	2008 Implementation Year	2009 Policy Year
January							
February		Review Session Theme 1 (Global and Regional)	Action Forum: Theme 1	Review Session Theme 2 (Global and Regional)	Action Forum: Theme 2	Review Session Theme 3 (Global and Regional)	Action Forum: Theme 3
March							
April	CSD 11: Decision on Program of Work						
May		Experts Forum: Theme 1	Policy Session: Theme 1	Experts Forum: Theme 2	Policy Session: Theme 2	Experts Forum: Theme 3	Policy Session: Theme 3
June							
July							
August		Implementation Report: Theme 1		Implementation Report: Theme 2		Implementation Report:Theme 3	
September							
October							
November							
December							