

CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF CSD-11

Introduction

The High-Level Segment of the 11th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was held from 28 to 30 April 2003. The Segment included Ministerial statements on **Visions for the CSD** (the future modalities and work programme of the Commission); three inter-active High Level Roundtables with Government, Major Group and Agency representatives on the theme **Priority actions and commitments to implement WSSD outcomes - Who does what, when and how?** ; and five Regional Implementation Forums on **Initial steps taken in regions to implement the JPOI**. Ministers and Agency Heads also participated in two informal sessions.

The High-Level Segment attracted a large number of ministers from different sectors in addition to the environment, senior officials, Heads of Agencies and representatives of major groups. The Roundtables and Regional Forums involved an active exchange of views among the participants. Delegations expressed support for scheduling the High-Level Segment at the beginning of the Session.

The Commission's future programme of work

General

Participants reaffirmed the unique role and mandate of the CSD as the only high-level UN body to facilitate accelerated implementation of sustainable development. The primary role of the CSD remains that of monitoring, reviewing and co-ordinating implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Participants stressed the importance of political ownership and involvement in the new work programme of the CSD. The CSD is well placed as a forum for co-ordination and integration and will be able to add value to the implementing organs and agencies in the UN system.

The Commission should also take into account the ongoing dialogue in the General Assembly on the integrated and co-ordinated follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

Delegations from member states renewed their commitment to ensure a more integrated approach to implementing sustainable development at country level and highlighted the mutual benefit of an improved, more action-oriented CSD work programme and better integration at country level. They also resolved to ensure that the CSD sends out a strong message to governments in this regard and to request the Secretary-General to promote a more integrated approach to sustainable development implementation with heads of state and government in all relevant forums.

The importance of national strategies for sustainable development that integrate economic, social and environmental issues was highlighted. WSSD agreed that these must be implemented in all countries by 2005.

Ministers from different sectoral portfolios should engage in these national strategies, as well as in the CSD, depending on the particular focal area of the CSD at the time.

Discussions on issues

The WSSD theme of Sustainable Development for Poverty Eradication should remain as the over-riding theme for the Johannesburg decade and guide the work of all the CSDs in this period. Participants reaffirmed the importance of addressing sustainable consumption and production patterns, the means of implementation, sustainable use of natural resources, and health, as cross-cutting issues throughout the future programme of the CSD, and in relation to each issue and focal area discussed. Special attention must also be paid to the issues of Africa, SIDS and LDCs in each cycle.

There was emphasis on good governance at all levels, with good governance at the domestic level complemented by multi-lateralism and the strengthening of the United Nations, as well as good governance and corporate responsibility in global business and financial institutions. A people-centred approach to sustainable development should be maintained.

An overarching focus for each two-year cycle would be important to make the work of the CSD meaningful to all relevant ministers, as well as to ensure most effective results of CSD meetings. The overarching focus should not be a narrow sectoral approach, but rather deal with a cluster of related issues. This would enable CSD to deal with the focus for each cycle in an in-depth manner, addressing all cross-cutting issues and linkages with other themes that are relevant to the theme under discussion in order to get tangible results.

Such focus should avoid the trap of relegating the other targets in the JPOI to the background. All the targets and decisions in the JPOI are important. The work programme of each cycle will also ensure that in addition to the core focus area, progress in all other areas of the JPOI and Agenda 21 will be monitored and reviewed in each cycle. The reporting format and system will need to enable this to happen in the most constructive manner. There will also be sufficient flexibility in the design of the future programme of work to enable the CSD to deal with urgent and important issues as they emerge.

The discussion converged around suggestions for the focus areas for the next two cycles. It was also proposed that CSD 11 make an indicative suggestion about the third cycle and that CSD12 confirm the third cycle and be indicative about the fourth cycle, and so on.

The suggestion for the first cycle was the overarching theme of Water. It was recommended that this incorporates a cluster of water and sanitation issues including water resource management and the target for Integrated Water Resource Management plans by 2005, the targets on access to water and sanitation, water and agriculture, water and health as well as water and land issues.

In addition there would be a discussion of the cross-cutting issues with respect to water and sanitation. This would include means of implementation (in particular financing and resources for implementation), capacity building, technology transfer, gender related issues, governance as well as legal and regulatory frameworks and policy coherence. The definition of institutional arrangements within the United Nations for these issues would also be a key outcome. Further, the discussion would be in the context of poverty eradication, changing patterns of consumption and production, and protecting the natural resource base of economic and social development.

Many delegations suggested energy as the over-arching focus for the second cycle of the CSD work programme. This could include a cluster of issues such as access to energy, energy efficiency, enhancing industrial productivity, climate change, diversification of energy supply, natural resource management and renewable energy. The cross-cutting issues would be a core component of the agenda.

These focus areas underpin poverty eradication and sustainable production and consumption of natural resources. Dealing successfully with these themes during the first two cycles would also send a positive message to governments and the world's poor that the Johannesburg Summit is delivering real results to the benefit of all humanity.

The discussions focused on the linkage between unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, and poverty. Education and awareness are crucial for changing attitudes and behavior, and research and technology are integral to driving change. The issue of natural resource management was highlighted by many delegations, given its over-arching role in poverty eradication, and the dependence of the majority of people in developing countries on these resources for their livelihoods.

The need to establish a clear link between the goals and targets for sustainable development and the means to implement them was highlighted. The financial requirements of attaining sustainable development exceed the resources available to many developing countries. A significant increase in the flow of financial resources, including a doubling of ODA flows, as well as private investment and partnerships is also required. There was support for the work of the UNDP around the development of a proposal to establish the World Solidarity Fund agreed to in Johannesburg.

There was a high level of consensus among delegations from developed and developing countries of the crucial importance of increased market access to mobilize resources, including the removal of trade distorting and environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies in developed countries.

The Commission's organization of work

The work cycle

There was agreement on the concept of a two-year work cycle. The first year of the cycle will focus on a review of progress in the implementation of commitments, targets and goals related to sustainable development. This will be called the Review Year. The second year in each cycle should focus on decisions on how to overcome constraints,

obstacles and barriers to the implementation process. This will be called the Policy Year.

The work cycles should be structured in a simple, effective and efficient manner, avoiding the proliferation of unnecessary meetings. The organization of work proposed in the report of the Secretary-General could be simplified and the timing of meetings clarified.

Monitoring implementation

Good monitoring, indicators and reporting mechanisms are essential for assessing progress. This will enable the identification of constraints and bottlenecks, emerging issues, opportunities and threats, and focus on appropriate action. There was strong emphasis on the need to use the CSD as the global forum to exchange knowledge and experiences as well as best practice.

The High Level Segment

The high level segment of the CSD was considered important to ensure government leadership and commitment at the highest level, as well as to set the political tone for the sessions. The segment should be interactive and focused, leading to action-oriented recommendations that would enhance the process of implementation. Multi-sectoral participation was considered to be key to promoting policy coherence in implementation at the country level and in policy-making in the Commission. The participation of the Heads of UN agencies and programmes, Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO was considered very important.

Implementation at regional and sub-regional levels

Participants supported increased attention to the regional level and to the involvement of regional organizations in the work of the Commission. There was support for the concept of Regional Implementation Forums. Regional Implementation Forums offer an opportunity for building relevant partnerships that can be replicated and monitored to deliver the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the MDGs. Discussions at the Regional Implementation Forums of CSD-11 emphasized the need to promote a fruitful exchange of experiences and to catalyze actions that will advance implementation of sustainable development.

Some delegations expressed concern that the existing UN regions are somewhat restrictive to initiatives from some groups of countries to implement sustainable development. In building the regional dimension of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, flexibility between regional and sub-regional initiatives is important.

Role of major groups

There was a strong call for strengthening the engagement of civil society in the Commission. The contributions of the scientific and educational communities in the Commission needed to be encouraged. Interaction between Ministers and high-level representatives of major groups was considered very valuable. Better balance in representation of major groups from North and South is needed.

It is also important that the major groups increase their participation at the CSD. Future CSDs must also ensure high levels of representation by major groups. Donor countries and agencies should be encouraged to assist in this regard. The need for gender focus in poverty eradication strategies in all focus areas was echoed by many interventions.

Partnerships

The Commission should serve as a focal point for discussion on partnerships, as complementary instruments to enhance implementation of intergovernmental commitments or agreements. The partnership segments of future CSDs should extend beyond registration of partnership initiatives to include reporting on progress of existing initiatives.

The Bali guidelines were endorsed in general, but the Commission may further define their parameters for action. There should also be a mechanism to ensure the partnership initiatives are not concentrated on some areas or regions.

Coordination within the UN system

Synergies among United Nations agencies and programmes are critical. The work of the different agencies must ensure an integrated and co-ordinated approach to delivery, and the United Nations must provide a coordinated response to Agenda 21, WSSD outcomes and the MDGs.

The Commission should improve its cooperation with United Nations agencies, Bretton Woods Institutions and WTO, and the agencies need to have a more active role in future sessions. It should provide ECOSOC, on a regular basis, with recommendations for sustainable development themes for consideration by the Council. The High Level Segment was encouraged by the report that the UN Task Manager system was being reviewed by the Chief Executives Board in the context of the implementation of the WSSD outcomes.

Conclusion

The deliberations in the High-Level Segment were positive and enthusiastic. The proposals made were constructive, practical, action-oriented, forward looking and above all focused. There was a strong commitment to the JPOI expressed by all participants. The High Level Segment clearly fulfilled its mandate of providing political direction and setting the tone for the rest of the CSD-11.