

CSD 11

Friday 9 May 2003

Comments to the Future Programme, Organisation and Methods of Work of the CSD

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Major Group: Local Authorities

THE CONCEPTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY VS. EXPERTS, AND THE LOCAL LEVEL

Mr. Chair, let me address two issues: the various efforts to define the non-national-government realm of society, and the role of the local public domain versus globalisation.

If you take the subway in New York, or have your appendix operated in a City Hospital, are you dealing with an NGO, with Civil Society or with a Major Group at the local level? But if you see a doctor at a state university hospital in the same city, are you being treated at the national level, by the government, by the scientific community, or by the Major Group Scientific Community?

The concepts of Major Groups, Civil Society and stakeholders, or “other stakeholders” are being used without a common understanding of their contents – except for the Major Groups as defined in *Agenda 21*, of course. Adding to the confusion now are “experts”, “scientific experts” and the “scientific community”. What sets the “scientific community”, as mentioned in para 2 (c)(iv), 17, apart from the Major Group “Scientific Community,” as an example? Are representatives of Major Groups not experts?

A process has been put in place for the accreditation of NGO’s and other major groups that were accredited to the WSSD – certainly also including a number of organisations representing the scientific community. At the same time, who gives accreditation to the “experts,” “scientific experts” and “other stakeholders?” And, in addition to specialists, don’t we also desperately need generalists, because we know that one of the challenges of sustainable development is integration?

We have been happy to learn that the so called “Cardoso Panel of Eminent Persons”, nominated by the UN Secretary General, will soon resume its work on the future role of Civil Society in the UN system. As part of its task, we hope that the Panel will give a list of definitions to clarify the different concepts.

THE LOCAL LEVEL

Mr. Chairman, let me continue about the difficulty to match concepts and images. What is the local level? Is it small communities and picturesque villages? Or megacities, many of which are many times bigger than the country where I come from?

The undeniable consequence of globalisation is that the role of cities, of the local level in general, has continued to gain more significance. The contemporary “biodiversity of governance” means that we’ll have to learn how to deal with the controversies among simultaneous systems of governance at different levels. Against this background it is difficult to understand why every single reference to the local or sub-national level was deleted from the final text. – This does not mean that the cities won’t intensify their work to implement the JPoI, but in many parts of the world it means that they’ll be left alone and without support.

Finally, enhancing the role of Local Authorities is also about taking the principle of participatory governance from the local to the global level. Today's documents won't make it happen now or tomorrow, but it will happen one day soon, sooner than we think.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and travel home safe.