

**Summary of the High-Level Interactive Discussion with Ministers and Major Groups
New York, 11 May 2006 – 11.30 am -1.00 pm – Conf. Room 4**

Major groups, Ministers and others participated in an interactive discussion on “Making a difference” during the high-level segment, on the morning of 11 May 2006. The segment was organized into three blocks of 30 minutes each, comprised of short presentations from three major groups followed by discussion among major groups and Ministers.

The vital role of all major groups in setting policies and ensuring successful implementation of the goals and targets related to the thematic cluster was affirmed by every speaker in the course of the discussion. Ministers encouraged and supported major groups’ engagement at all levels, and noted that major groups help to ensure that Governments carry out their responsibilities in attending to the social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Several Governments also highlighted the importance of incorporating the various roles of major groups, especially women and youth, in CSD-15 policy decisions. Major groups expressed their willingness to work together in partnership with Governments to implement sustainable development practices and policies.

Although agreement exists on the urgent need to improve access to clean and affordable energy services, especially to the poor and those in rural areas, a divergence of views persists on appropriate energy sources for sustainable development. Many participants opposed a continued reliance on fossil fuel, nuclear and large-scale hydro sources, which are capital intensive and centrally driven approaches that do not support sustainable development. Others asserted that a mix of all available and feasible technologies is needed to meet the world’s rapidly growing energy demands, acknowledging that all sources must implement appropriate regulatory measures to address safety issues. Most recognized the need for a shift to renewable energies such as wind, solar, geothermal, biodiesel and ethanol, which provide needed energy services, mitigate effects of climate change, uplift rural and poor communities, provide employment, and ensure ecological sustainability. A number of Ministers reported on progress in reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Bio-based fuels and renewable on-farm energy resources have long been promoted by farmers as ways to mitigate climate change and foster energy security. Rural communities, especially women and youth, can benefit from generation of new markets and jobs, but alliances between local and national leaders and policies must be supported. Governments should ensure that implementing new measures for appropriate technologies will have beneficial effects on food production and community development. National sustainable development strategies could measure progress in providing renewable energy, and assessments could be produced by the CSD Secretariat to show real costs of all forms of energy. To support renewable energy projects, funds could be redirected through the IFIs.

Recognizing that a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach is needed in energy policy planning and implementation, Governments were encouraged to—and largely supported—the need to ensure women’s access to and ownership of clean and affordable energy sources, develop capacities of energy institutions to engage with gender issues, support business

ownership by women, and collect and use gender-disaggregated data in all aspects of energy policymaking. Responding to a proposal for a champion of energy issues at the international level and a summit to address the energy crisis, a WHO representative linked energy, air pollution, and climate change to health strategies, and called for such links to be strengthened, especially with regard to women, youth and trade unions, who face risks in the workplace and the home due to old and harmful technologies.

The business and industry sector, in partnership with other stakeholders, is developing long-term enabling frameworks to attract investments and support innovation in the energy sector, reduce environmental impacts, and promote corporate social responsibility. The private sector is willing to work with Governments to steer action-oriented frameworks and investments that maximize environmental, social and economic returns, and meet the challenge of investing US\$ 17 trillion in energy services over the next five years to meet agreed goals and targets. However, market-based solutions should not supersede international collaboration, and Governments must set standards and enact measures for corporate social responsibility.

The CSD was urged to show leadership in industrial development policy and recognize the negative impacts of privatization of energy services. Governments and industry can do more to recognize fundamental ILO labor rights, support sustainable production and consumption, define and facilitate local economic development, address environmental and occupational health issues, and invest in a more skilled workforce. Sustainable production and consumption also demands downsizing of extractive industries. To meet commitments on greenhouse gas reduction and sustainable land use, local governments require support from national and sub-national Governments to enhance their legislative authority, implement strategic decisions on climate change policy, and become more engaged in the reform of global trade regimes.

The need for enhanced funding for research and development as well as capacity building efforts in science, engineering and technology must be addressed with urgent priority. It is disturbing that observational networks are declining, North-South cooperation in capacity building is stagnating, and government investments in renewable energy resources are dwindling. The scientific and technological community is addressing these obstacles by launching the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) along with an International Science Panel on Renewable Energies in 2006, and organizing an International Conference on Engineering for Sustainable Energy in Developing Countries in 2007. Ministers supported enhancement of research and development, technological investments coupled with global cooperation and networking, and international approaches to capacity building and innovative financing, with UNDP playing a key role.

Many participants called for increased attention to the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, including a coherent strategy for implementation at the national level, informed by ecological ethics and fundamental cultural values.