



UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Fifteenth session
30 April -11 May 2007
United Nations Headquarters
New York

Background note on the ministerial dialogue with organisations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations

During the High-level Segment of CSD-15, there will be a ministerial dialogue with heads of UN organizations and other relevant international organizations. This dialogue session, focusing on the follow-up to the CSD policy decisions, provides Ministers and heads of organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations, a further opportunity to have a focused, yet informal, discussion on how to expedite progress in implementation.

At the request of the Chairman of CSD-15, the Secretariat has prepared a background note on the dialogue session, including a few questions, to facilitate discussions. Ministers and heads of organizations may choose to address any of these questions and should not feel obliged to address all of them. Ministers and heads of organizations may also address any aspects of the issues they think relevant to the discussions.

The dialogue session will be informal and there will be no delivery of official statements. Interventions will be limited to 3 minutes to encourage interactive discussions.

Background Note
Ministerial dialogue with heads of UN organizations
and other relevant international organizations
(10 May 2007, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm, Room 4)

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development has considered the thematic cluster of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change at its 14th and 15th sessions. At its 14th session held last May, which was a review session under the Commission's multi-year programme of work, the Commission identified obstacles and constraints in the thematic areas. At this 15th session, which is a policy session, the Commission will take policy decisions on policy options and possible actions to overcome these barriers and constraints. This dialogue session, focusing on the follow-up to the CSD policy decisions, provides Ministers and heads of organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations, a further opportunity to have a focused, yet informal, discussion on how to expedite progress in implementation.

The Commission's review on energy for sustainable development and industrial development has raised a number of points, including the following:

- Improving access to modern energy services is crucial for alleviating poverty, achieving sustainable development goals, and achieving all of the MDGs. Delivery of modern energy services in developing countries, particularly in Africa, needs to be strengthened and supported. While the public sector has borne the primary responsibility of providing energy services to the poor in the past, the role of the private sector has become increasingly important. Innovative public/private partnerships may provide models to improve and scale up modern energy service delivery in the developing countries.
- Improved dialogue, partnerships and initiatives can effectively address need for stable energy markets. The interdependence in global energy markets has been highlighted by their recent volatility, and improved market stability can have a positive impact on sustainable development prospects in developing countries, in particular on energy importing LDCs and SIDS.
- Greater diversity in the energy mix can contribute to achieving sustainable development goals in developed and developing countries.
- Governments and industries in industrialized and in newly industrializing countries need to devise and implement policies that create a growing market for energy efficient products and services and promote the use of advanced and cleaner technologies, including renewable energy technologies. Active promotion of energy efficiency can stimulate industrial development, technological progress and the creation of new job opportunities in both industrialized and in developing countries. Increased international cooperation can facilitate technology diffusion and deployment and international trade in energy efficient products.
- Sustained industrial development has been a major contributor to economic growth and poverty reduction over the past half century, notably in Asia, but it remains elusive in many developing countries. Limited supplies of human capital, poor infrastructure, weak government institutions and high investment risk have been important constraints to industrial development.
- Globalization of industrial production networks has given prominence to multinational corporations and large developed-country retailers. Their global supply chains provide an important avenue for

transfer of technology and know how across borders, including sustainable product and production technologies, improved labour standards, and strengthened environmental management practices.

- Corporate environmental and social responsibility and accountability policies inform managerial decision making of leading companies, but it is still unclear how wide and deep the commitment is and how responsive CSR measures are to the concerns and priorities of developing countries.

On air pollution and climate change, the Commission's review has raised, among others, the following points:

- A comprehensive long-term strategy to mitigate climate change requires integrated and coherent policies that encompass all the critical sectors of the economy, including finance, energy, transport, water, agriculture, forests and health. The response to climate change thus needs to be firmly positioned in the broader context of sustainable development.
- The natural systems, as emphasised in the IPCC reports, are already being affected by climate change, with adverse impacts on the sustainable development efforts of developing countries.
- Significant resources will therefore be needed to enhance adaptive capacities of developing countries, in particular LDCs, SIDS and African countries. Yet recent estimates suggest that currently less than one per cent of ODA and concessional lending is allocated to adaptation.
- The transfer of clean and climate-friendly technologies is essential in order to enable developing countries to effectively mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts.
- The carbon market is expected to play an increasing role in reducing greenhouse emissions.
- Indoor air pollution in both rural and urban areas is a leading cause of illness and mortality for women and children in developing countries. Policies and actions are necessary to accelerate the access to cleaner fuels for heating and cooking, particularly in Sub-Sahara Africa.
- Transport emissions are a major source of carbon dioxide emissions globally, and of air pollution in urban areas, particularly in fast-growing cities in developing countries. Innovative policies and incentive measures are required further to reduce vehicular emissions, including through the use of cleaner fuels, development of new technologies, enforcement of emission standards, and support for public transport systems.
- Regional cooperation to address trans-boundary air pollution proved successful in some regions, notably Europe and North America through emissions trading and regional environmental agreements.

These points emerging from the thematic discussions help provide the context for the dialogue. Indeed, organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations have to varying extent programmes and projects aimed at addressing the various issues highlighted above. Ministers and heads of UN organizations and other relevant international organizations are therefore invited to address any of the following questions:

1. Poverty eradication and economic growth are the overriding priorities of developing countries. What measures and actions can the UN system and relevant international organizations take to help ensure

that measures to combat climate change and to achieve other sustainable development goals are compatible?

2. How can the UN system and relevant international organizations effectively help mobilize financial resources, including through increased ODA and market-based mechanisms, and scale-up investments to meet the urgent need for modern energy services in developing countries including, in particular, Sub-Sahara Africa?
3. How can the UN system and relevant international organizations effectively address the special needs of energy importing developing countries especially the LDCs and SIDS?
4. Despite a great deal of research, vulnerability assessment and policy development, there is a sense in many quarters that real action on adaptation is lagging. What concrete actions and policies can the UN system and relevant international organizations take to help accelerate implementation of adaptation measures?
5. How can the UN system and relevant international organizations effectively support developing countries in diversifying and upgrading industries of developing countries?
6. What specific types of capacity building your organization intends to undertake in support of developing countries in making real progress on the ground in the areas of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change?

There will be no list of speakers and no delivery of written statements during the dialogue. Ministers and heads of UN organizations and other relevant international organizations are invited to speak candidly to encourage interactive discussions.