

## **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): A Tool for Mainstreaming Sustainable Development into Development Planning**

The course was presented by Professor Maria Rosario Partidario from the Technical University of Lisbon and it focused on the use of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in sustainable development decision-making. Prof. Partidario presented some useful case studies, and she promoted interactive discussions and role playing in small groups. SEA is no doubt relevant for the CSD process as it provides a cross-cutting perspective that looks at interlinkages among themes, such as those of CSD-15, while promoting a strategic and integrated approach among the three pillars of sustainable development. It is also timely given that more and more practitioners around the world today acknowledge it as a useful tool in development planning and strategies.

SEA intervenes strategically throughout various stages of decision-making, focusing on a few relevant decision factors at a time. Although no recipe exists to do an SEA, Prof. Partidario offered a framework for an approach which included the definition of SEA context and critical factors; the analysis of existing trends, driving forces and possible futures; the assessment of opportunities and risks; and a follow-up programme and institutional setting for good governance. So far, SEA has been applied in the planning and implementation of national sustainable development strategies (NSDS); country assistance strategies; energy policy reforms; poverty reduction strategies; and fiscal reforms among others. The case studies presented—which are also available on the UNU-SEA website—show that SEA allows stakeholders to be strategic in their progress towards sustainable development.