

Note of the CSD-16 Bureau on its First Meeting

1. The Bureau of the 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) held its first meeting on 19 December 2007 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Minister Francis Nhema, Chairman of CSD-16, chaired the meeting. Minister Juan Mario Dary, Vice-chair (Guatemala), attended the meeting from Guatemala City via video-link. Ambassador Daniel Carmon, Vice-chair (Israel), Mr. Tri Tharyat, Vice-Chair (Indonesia), and Mr. Sasa Ojdanic, Vice-Chair (Serbia), attended the meeting in New York. Senior officials and advisors from the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations, from the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations and from the Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe to the United Nations, as well as from the Ministry of Environment of Guatemala (via video-link), also attended the meeting. The Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Sustainable Development (CSD Secretariat), and staff from the Secretariat, participated in the discussions of the meeting.

Introductory remarks by the Chairman

2. Minister Nhema started the meeting by extending a warm welcome to the Vice-Chairs and to the Secretariat. He congratulated Vice-Chair Tri Tharyat and Vice-Chair Sasa Ojdanic on their nominations to the Bureau and endorsements by their respective regional groups.
3. Minister Nhema shared with the Bureau recent activities he had undertaken as Chair of CSD-16. He attended a meeting of the chairpersons of functional commissions (10 July 2007, Geneva) on the contributions of functional commissions to the work of the ECOSOC. In September, he attended COP8 of the UNCCD in Madrid and shared with fellow Ministers priorities of CSD-16. Also in September, in New York, on the margin of the Secretary-General's High-level Event on Climate Change, Minister Nhema met with the elected Bureau members for an informal consultation, which helped highlight the important milestones in the preparatory process of CSD-16. In November, he attended the Asia-Pacific regional implementation meeting hosted by the Government of Indonesia in Jakarta. Prior to that, a senior Government official delivered opening remarks on his behalf at the African regional implementation meeting.
4. Minister Nhema further noted that while in New York in September, he had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. Mr. Sha expressed his full support for the important work of the CSD.

Updates by Bureau Members on their activities

5. Vice-Chairs briefed the Bureau on their recent activities. Minister Dary reported on the outcome of the regional implementation meeting of the Latin America and Caribbean region and informed the Bureau that the outcome document of the RIM would be issued shortly. Minister Dary also mentioned his participation in COP8 of the UNCCD in Madrid, as well as the informal consultation convened by the Chair in September in New York.
6. Ambassador Carmon reaffirmed his commitment, as Vice-Chair, to the successful outcome of CSD-16. He shared with the Bureau the numerous initiatives his Government had launched in support of CSD-16, including the special panel discussion during WATEC, organized as an inter-sessional event of CSD-16, as well as a capacity-building seminar on desertification. He highlighted the importance of the thematic issues on the agenda of CSD-16 and in particular, the need for supporting Africa and other developing countries, including in the area of agricultural technologies, as highlighted in a recent resolution before the General Assembly.
7. Vice-Chair Tri Tharyat briefed the Bureau on the outcome of the regional implementation meeting of the Asia-Pacific region, which was attended by some 120 participants. He expressed his appreciation

for the Chair's participation and informed the Bureau that the report of the RIM had been finalized and an advance unedited text would be made available soon.

8. Vice-Chair Sasa Ojdanic expressed his appreciation for having the opportunity to serve on the Bureau. He highlighted the commitment of his Government to sustainable development and its recent initiative of formulating a national sustainable development strategy. He indicated that the preparation of NSDS had been a participatory process, with active involvement of towns and municipalities. Regarding the preparation of CSD-16, he noted that he had shared with member States of the Eastern European group the draft proposal on the organization of work of CSD-16.
9. At the request of Minister Nhema, Ms. Kathleen Abdalla, OIC of the CSD Secretariat, reported on the discussions and outcome of the regional implementation meeting of Western Asia.
10. The Bureau noted with appreciation the important role of regional commissions, as well as contributions of United Nations Funds and Programmes, specialised agencies, other relevant entities and international, regional and sub-regional organizations, in ensuring the successful outcomes of regional implementation meetings. The Bureau further noted the active participation of Major Groups in some RIMs.

Updates on preparations for CSD-16:

11. The Bureau had before it a draft proposal on the organization of work of CSD-16, which outlined arrangements for day-to-day discussions. Following the introduction of the proposal by the Secretariat, the Bureau considered in detail various aspects related to the organization of work.
12. The Bureau emphasized that CSD-16 affords an important opportunity for examining the inter-linkages among the thematic issues and cross-cutting issues, as defined by CSD-11. It was therefore proposed that in addition to issue-based discussions, some thematic sessions be set aside to facilitate a joint review of a number of thematic issues, such as agriculture and rural development, drought and desertification.
13. In view of the close links among the thematic issues, a proposal was made on preparing one unified report. In this connection, the Secretariat referred to a resolution on Agenda 21 and the outcomes of WSSD currently before the General Assembly.
14. The Bureau highlighted the importance of national reports for thematic discussions at CSD-16 and recommended that member States that have not done so submit their national reports as soon as possible so that national information can contribute to thematic discussions. In this regard, the Bureau discussed the usefulness of preparing a Matrix, to highlight case studies and lessons learned in implementation in relation to the thematic cluster. Reaffirming that the Matrix serves as an information tool and not an official outcome document, the Bureau invited the Secretariat to collect case studies from member States, UN organizations and Major Groups implementation actors in order to help identify barriers and constraints, lessons learned and best practices, in a user-friendly Matrix, to be used as an information tool in the preparation of CSD-16 and during thematic discussions at CSD-16.
15. The Bureau also considered the options of organizing the review of CSD-13 water and sanitation decisions, keeping in mind paragraph 4 of the decision of CSD-13 on the monitoring and follow-up of the implementation of decisions on water and sanitation and their inter-linkages (E/2005/29;E/CN.17/2005/12). The Bureau decided to organize the review of CSD-13 water and sanitation in the second week of CSD-16.

16. Following an explanation by the Secretariat on the integrated participation of Major Groups in the work of the CSD, the Bureau considered a proposal for an additional dedicated dialogue with Major Groups. The Secretariat also forwarded to the Bureau a letter from the CSD-16 Major Groups Organizing Partners (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm>). The Bureau was informed that there would be a meeting between the Chair of CSD-16 and the Organizing Partners prior to CSD-16.
17. At the request of Minister Nhema, the OIC of the Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the preparations underway in documentation, planning for Partnerships Fair, Learning Centre and Side Events, as well as the SIDS Day. She informed the Bureau that the Secretariat is in the process of finalizing the Secretary-General's reports, which have benefited from inputs from FAO and other entities. The Guidelines for the Partnerships Fair, Learning Centre and Side Events have all been posted on the CSD website (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm>). She also introduced to the Bureau the Secretariat team working on these activities and would make available their contact details on the CSD website to facilitate communications with member States.
18. The OIC of the Secretariat also brought to the attention of the Bureau the importance of having a diverse, balanced selection of panellists to stimulate thematic discussions at CSD-16. The Bureau agreed to invite member States to submit recommendations of panellists to the Secretariat as early as possible to facilitate arrangements for their participation in thematic discussions.

Future Bureau meetings

19. The Bureau considered the possibility of holding its next meeting on the margin of the Beijing International Conference on Combating Desertification (22-24 January, 2008), which will be convened also as an inter-sessional event in contribution to CSD-16. The Bureau decided to continue consultations on this matter in the coming weeks.
20. The Bureau also decided to give a briefing to member States on the preparation of CSD-16 at a future date, which should be sufficiently ahead of the start of CSD-16.