

Note on the First Meeting of the Bureau of the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development¹

1. The first meeting of the Bureau of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17) took place on 1 December 2008 in New York. The Chairperson of CSD-17, H.E. Gerda Verburg (the Netherlands), chaired the meeting. The following Vice-Chairs attended the meeting: Ms. Ana Bianchi (Argentina); Ms. Tania Valerie Raguz (Croatia); and through tele-link, Mr. Javad Amin-Mansour (Iran). The meeting was also attended by Mr. Tariq Banuri, the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (the CSD Secretariat), other staff from the Secretariat and senior officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality of the Netherlands, as well as senior officials from the Permanent Mission of Namibia and the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands.

Introduction

2. In her introductory remarks Minister Verburg shared with Bureau members her vision for CSD-17. She highlighted the continuing food crisis, the ever rising trends in energy and water consumption, and climate change. She pointed out that the world has neglected agriculture too much for too long. Increased attention to agriculture and rural development in developing countries in terms of policy commitment and investments will be crucial to poverty reduction. The CSD is uniquely placed to address these interlinked challenges and the relevant cross-cutting issues. CSD-17 could focus on measures and action in the field of productivity improvement, enabling environment, sustainable value chain development, and market access, among others. CSD-17 should be a forward-looking and action-oriented session. She pledged to take the lead in mobilizing broad-based ministerial participation, engaging Ministers of relevant portfolios such as agriculture, environment, and development cooperation to provide guidance on policy options and actions. She invited the Bureau to work as a team and the Secretariat to provide support for the work of the Bureau.
3. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Bureau members in turn made their introductory remarks and expressed their commitment to a forward-looking and results-oriented outcome of CSD-17. It was emphasized that CSD-17 need to make real progress in addressing issues identified at the review session, including those identified by the regions.

Preparations for CSD-17 and its IPM

4. The Bureau considered a draft proposal on the organisation of work for CSD-17 and its intergovernmental preparatory meeting (IPM), guided by CSD-11 decision and the recent General Assembly resolutions on sustainable development. The Bureau had before it a number of background materials, including those on Major Groups, Partnerships Fair, Learning Centre, Side Events, as well as the unedited versions of the recent General Assembly resolutions on sustainable development.
5. In its review of the proposed organization of work for CSD-17 and its IPM, the Bureau emphasized the importance of adopting an integrated approach, addressing in a balanced manner the thematic issues, the inter-linkages, cross-cutting issues and means of implementation. It was further emphasized that the in-session activities of CSD-17 and its IPM, such as the Partnerships Fair, the Learning Centre, and the Side Events, should all support and contribute to the successful outcomes of CSD-17. The Bureau also took note of the request of member States to have the Chairperson's draft negotiating document made available prior to the beginning of CSD-17.

¹ Prepared by the CSD Secretariat

6. After specific amendments by Bureau members, the Bureau agreed on the proposed organization of work for the IPM and also decided to schedule the High-level Segment of CSD-17 for 13-15 May 2009. The Bureau decided to continue its discussion on the organization of work for CSD-17, including the division of themes over working groups and the number of working groups, the specific programme of the High-level Segment, as well as the Bureau's shepherding roles for the Partnerships Fair, Learning Centre and Major Groups, at its next meeting.
7. The Bureau was advised of two inter-sessional meetings in support of CSD-17. The two meetings are scheduled to take place on 28-30 January 2009 in Bangkok and on 9-10 February 2009 in Windhoek. The two meetings are expected to complement each other and to feed into the policy discussions and negotiations at the IPM and CSD-17.
8. The Secretariat also briefed the Bureau on the status of documentation for CSD-17. Preparation of Secretary-General's reports, in accordance with General Assembly's guidance, is proceeding according to schedule and advance unedited versions will be made available to member States shortly to facilitate early preparations for CSD-17 and its IPM .
9. The Bureau was further briefed on Major Groups' participation in CSD-17 and its IPM. The Bureau had before it a letter from the organizing partners on funding support to Major Groups and a draft proposal on urban-rural partnerships for food security.
10. The Secretariat also briefed Bureau members on the ongoing planning for Partnerships Fair and Learning Centre – to be organized only during CSD-17 – and Side Events, which will be featured during both the IPM and CSD-17.

Outcomes and deliverables of CSD-17

11. The Bureau held an initial exchange of views on the outcomes and deliverables of CSD-17 and on the High-level Segment. Bureau members highlighted the importance of the CSD in adding value by focusing on inter-linkages among thematic issues, cross-cutting issues and means of implementation and by adopting policy decisions that are concrete, specific, built on the review session and addressing the real situation on the ground.
12. To this end, Bureau members stressed that CSD-17 should not seek to restate problems but should focus on finding real solutions and deliverables and should mobilise further concrete and tangible action to expedite implementation. Minister Verburg emphasized the importance of improving productivity by supporting farmers to be more competitive and providing them with seeds, fertilizers; by creating an enabling environment both through infrastructure and policy incentives; and by promoting access to markets. Crucial future challenges are food security, energy security and water security.
13. Also underscored in this context was the need for the international community to reaffirm the global commitment to sustainable development – Agenda 21 and JPOI and to reinvigorate its long-term sustainable development vision. The CSD should play a leadership role in this undertaking.

Future Bureau meetings

14. The Bureau considered holding its next meeting in January 2009. A possibility could be on the margin of the inter-sessional meeting in Bangkok, to be followed by a third meeting in February 2009 before the intergovernmental preparatory meeting. The proposed full schedule for the next meetings of the Bureau will be sent around to the members of the Bureau as soon as possible.