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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL discusses report of the fifteenth session of the Commission on SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meeting in the General Segment on 23 July adopted a decision on the dates of the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development during its 2008/2009 cycle, in which it decided that the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development should take place from 5 to 16 May 2008. In another decision, the Council took note of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifteenth session and approved the provisional agenda for the sixteenth session of the Commission.

In the course of the general discussion, countries mostly raised issues with regard to the report on the work of the Committee on Sustainable Development, including that sustainable development and related issues were becoming more compelling and immediate challenges in today's world. Therefore, it was important that each country should take practical actions on national, regional and global levels to ensure environment protection and sustainable development. The challenge of environmental degradation and climate change was huge and clearly beyond the capacity of the developing countries to address on their own. Innovative new economic instruments would become increasingly important, not only in the area of water management, but also for biological diversity and the climate.

Speaking in the general discussion on CSD report were representatives from Pakistan (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Portugal (on behalf of the European Union), Switzerland, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Barbados, Kenya, Belarus, Bolivia, Russian Federation, Indonesia, Ecuador, Samoa, China, Turkey, Benin, United States, Argentina and Guyana.

### **Action on Decisions and Resolutions**

In a decision on the dates of the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development during its 2008/2009 cycle, contained in document E/2007/29, and adopted without a vote, the Economic and Social Council, decides, inter alia, that there should be an intervening period of at least two weeks between the closing of the sessions of relevant intergovernmental bodies and the beginning of the session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and decides that the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (review session) should take place from 5 to 16 May 2008, the intergovernmental preparatory meeting for the seventeenth session of the Commission should take place from 23 to 27 February 2009 and the seventeenth session of the Commission (policy session) should take place from 4 to 15 May 2009.

In a decision on the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifteenth session and provisional agenda for the sixteenth session of the Commission, contained within the same document and adopted without a vote, the Economic and Social Council takes note of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifteenth session and approves the provisional agenda for the sixteenth session of the Commission

### **General Discussion**

FARHAT AYESHA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, said that, this year in May, the Commission on Sustainable Development during its fifteenth session had concluded the second implementation cycle of its programme of work on the thematic clusters of energy for sustainable development; industrial development; air pollution/atmosphere; and climate change. The critical importance of these four clusters in the context of the global development agenda for sustained economic growth and sustainable development was well recognized. That poverty was rampant globally and on the rise in some countries and regions only lent greater urgency for seeking sustainable and development-oriented solutions to the challenges faced. The challenge of environmental degradation and climate change was huge and clearly beyond the capacity of the developing countries to address on their own; working together was therefore an important and indispensable principle to adhere to.

MIGUEL CRUZ SILVESTRE (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union reiterated its deep regret for the fact that the fifteenth annual session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development was unable to agree on an ambitious text on energy, climate, air pollution and industrial development and therefore to deliver an agreed outcome. The two-week session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which took place last May in New York, also marked the end of a two-year implementation cycle, which dealt with some of the major challenges of today, such as climate change, energy for sustainable development, industrial development and air

pollution/atmosphere. Acknowledging that these areas required strengthened and more ambitious international policy commitments, the European Union considered nonetheless that the solutions proposed by the draft decision submitted by the Chair of the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development fell short of addressing these impending challenges and would not have provided an adequate and timely response neither to the aspirations of the European Union nor to the expectations of the outside world.

The European Union remained, however, strongly convinced that global challenges could only be addressed through multilateral discussions and that the Commission on Sustainable Development, as a rather unique multi-stakeholder forum, could play an even more critical role in promoting sustainable development in an integrated manner at the global level. In this sense, the European Union was also of the opinion that it was critical to find ways to ensure that future Commission cycles, within the existing policy mandate of the Commission, achieved progressive, clear and action orientated outcomes necessary for pursuing the common goal of sustainable development with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The European Union would like to take this opportunity to renew its constructive and unambiguous engagement to this common endeavour.

THOMAS GASS ( [Switzerland](#) ) said the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development provided a unique opportunity to discuss and implement political solutions on climate change, energy for sustainable development, air pollution/atmosphere, and industrial development. Access to energy and energy services in particular were essential for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and notably insofar as the eradication of poverty was concerned. Despite two weeks of lively debate and intense negotiations between the delegations, it had not been possible to adopt the final draft document. This non-result should serve as a warning and encourage the international community to breathe new life into the Commission.

Innovative new economic instruments would become increasingly important, not only in the area of water management, but also for biological diversity and the climate. The seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests had adopted two documents, and the work programme was a significant step forward. If the international community were to successfully address the question of the financial means needed to achieve sustainable management of the forests, it would be important to begin by forming alliances in order to avoid the risk of failure.

ZHANAR KULZHANOVA ( [Kazakhstan](#) ) said that sustainable development and related issues were becoming more compelling and immediate challenges in today's world. Therefore, it was important that each country should take practical actions on national, regional and global levels to ensure environment protection and sustainable development. Kazakhstan supported the leading role of the United Nations in promoting sustainable development of the world community based on outcomes of the Johannesburg summit of 2002 and Millennium Development Goals. The main objective in this direction should remain the advancement of the three fundamental components of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environment.

While experiencing high economic growth and being one of the major oil-producing countries, Kazakhstan realized that the transition of its country to sustainable development was a vital necessity. The policy of Kazakhstan was directed towards taking further steps in lowering irrational energy consumption by the national economy, improving the environment in the Central Asian region, and strengthening measures along with international efforts to prevent climate change. Kazakhstan was an active member of the process of "Environment for Europe" and "Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia". Sustainable development process and all the related issues were thoroughly considered in Kazakhstan at the highest level.

MUHANNAD M. ALMIAHI ( [Iraq](#) ) said the Government of Iraq supported the United Nations efforts and those of the specialized agencies to promote sustainable development. All economic planners knew that sustainable development only produced economic growth when all benefits were shared equally between all social groups. Development should build on the environment, rather than detract from it. Sustainable development should empower the population, not detract from it. Iraq had adopted sustainable development as a concept, and had participated in various international conferences with that in mind. Its legislation and developmental strategies underscored the principle of sustainability of development, as well as integrated environmental management.

All projects should incorporate an environmental dimension. However, the economic and social aspects remained important. It was absolutely necessary to achieve all developmental goals, including the elimination of poverty and violence, fertile breeding grounds for terrorism. Sustainable development plans could only be implemented in a safe and reliable environment of democracy for all. The United Nations should play an enhanced role in Iraq, introducing all agencies and bodies, aiding Iraq to promote more decent economic conditions. These conditions would only be met if there was action within the country. The return of the United Nations and the specialized agencies was a pressing need to ensure consolidated democracy and to implement the programmes with regards to energy and others.

SELWIN HART ( Barbados ) said that Barbados attached great value to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Commission was the intergovernmental follow-up mechanism for implementation of and follow-up to commitments on small island developing states, including those contained in the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation. While Barbados was disappointed that the Commission did not agree on a negotiated outcome at its fifteenth session, this failure was not a failure. The issues before the fifteenth session of the Commission, particularly climate change and energy, were as complex as they were critical. The absence of a negotiated outcome unfortunately overshadowed the emerging global consensus that business as usual on energy and climate change was no longer an option.

For Barbados as a small island developing state, the need for an urgent and coordinated global response to climate change could not be overstated, he said. The Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community had expressed grave concern over the threat posed by global climate change to the sustainable development and future existence of the countries of the region. They had highlighted that the priorities of the region in a post-2012 regime were the achievement of substantial and legally binding emission reductions in the shortest timeframe possible and significant increases in the level of resources available to developing countries, particularly small island developing countries, to assist them in adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change.

PHILIP RICHARD O. OWADE ( Kenya ) said the issues under consideration, including sustainable development, the environment, human settlements and forests were of great importance to the global development agenda. It was quite disappointing that the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifteenth session had not reached a conclusive outcome - these issues were critical if the world was to address the problems of poverty eradication and the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals among others. Climate change remained a major challenge to the international community. It was now recognized as a global sustainable development challenge, with strong socio-economic and environmental dimensions.

SVETLANA MOSCHINSKAYA ( Belarus ) said it was important that developing countries had access to environmentally clean resources. It was necessary to arrange international cooperation in this field, to ensure alternate and diversified resources of energy. Matters of fuel were important and the United Nations needed to take this issue into consideration. Belarus wanted to reduce energy consumption and increase the share of renewable resources. Bilateral and multilateral mechanisms had to be utilized to ensure stability of prices. All countries had to undertake efforts for environmental protection. On the item on environment, Belarus considered environmentally clean resources as very important. That was because Belarus had tried to overcome the consequences of the biggest catastrophe ever in this regard – at Chernobyl. Belarus had joined the Kyoto Protocol and was determined to make its contribution for the protection of the environment.

SORKA COPA ROMERO ( Bolivia ) said the global environment was deteriorating further and further due to the indiscriminate use of natural resources and a lack of attention to the negative consequences for human beings. The international community should recognize that the planet, although it had alternatives for increasing production, did not have unlimited resources. Decision-making in one country affected the environmental balance in other countries, and they were therefore of a transboundary nature. Actions to promote the environment should be focused primarily on sustainability. The environment and development were indissolubly linked.

The relationship between man and nature could be seen as an unending struggle for dominance. Man's attempts to control the environment had finally resulted in uncontrolled effects on nature. The basic premise, based on long-term millennium traditions, was to take only what was needed from the Earth. Individuals and society together should understand the complex nature of the environment and the complex nature of that link, Bolivia underscored. In the developed countries, environments were affected by different levels of pollution; in the developing countries, there were other negative factors, such as a lack of services, with environmental effects. The international community should work for sustained integrated development, harmonious and compatible, and accompanied by protection for the environment.

D. MAKSIMYCHEV ( Russian Federation ) said the Commission on Sustainable Development was the fundamental link in the United Nations system for ensuring effective implementation of decisions of global forums in the field of sustainable development. It was disappointing that a negative precedent had been set at the fifteenth session. That was unsatisfactory. At subsequent sessions, the necessary conclusions should be drawn from that. There should be a real determination of all countries to take into account the realities in promoting balanced approaches by all to the negotiation process. The Russian Federation supported the efforts of UN-HABITAT in various fields, including improving quality of life, preserving the environment in human settlements, and many others.

M. SOEPRAPTO ( Indonesia ) said Indonesia associated itself with the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The need for sustainable development was clear. More than 1 billion people were still surviving on incomes of less than \$1 a day, with no access to basic services such as health care, education, water and

sanitation. The world was shrinking virtually through technological advances, but its population continued to multiply. By 2050 the Earth would have to support another 3 billion people. Most certainly, the growing population's environmental footprint would have an increased impact as demand for natural resources such as oil, wood and water increased. For that reason, future development could not simply follow the path of "business as usual". Resources needed to be used more sustainably. Cities and towns needed to be built without exceeding nature's carrying capacity.

On the issue of urbanization and poverty, which were central objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, Indonesia recalled that today half of the world's population lived in cities and towns. By 2050 that proportion would increase to two thirds, with most of the growth taking place in the developing countries. At the same time, the correlation between urbanization and natural resources management needed greater emphasis. It was significant that a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and a multi-year programme of work of the United Nations on Forests had recently been concluded. Being a rainforest nation, Indonesia welcomed the adoption of those instruments at the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests and it stood ready for their full implementation. Furthermore, climate change was an emerging problem that called for joint efforts.

LETICIA BAQUERIZO ( Ecuador ) said that, almost three decades ago, the United Nations General Assembly had dealt for the first time with the topic of products harmful to the environment. Ecuador had consistently supported the efforts of the international community in that regard. The mechanism selected by the General Assembly was to request the Secretary-General to draw up a consolidated list of products whose consumption or sale had been, among other things, banned by Governments. That list, which should be continually updated, had proven to be an important tool.

Colombia was carrying out aerial sprayings along its border with Ecuador, and that had had serious effects on organic and genetic health, caused agro-social destruction, loss of food resources, and negatively impacted on tropical networks and the food system. Ecuador hoped that all countries would fulfil the commitments they undertook at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, namely to ensure that chemicals were not used in forms that damaged the environment.

ALIHOAIGA FETURI ELISAIA ( Samoa ) said that it had been exactly 15 months since Samoa had first been recommended for graduation from the least developed countries category by the Committee for Development Policy in its report on its eighth session to the Economic and Social Council. During that period, Samoa had consistently argued that it was not ready to graduate from the least developed country category due to its inherent vulnerabilities, that a decision on the matter be deferred to the next review of the least developed countries criteria in 2009, and, more importantly, that the economic vulnerability index be one of the two criteria a country had to meet before it could lose its least developed country status. On reflection, it was fair to observe that Samoa's position on the graduation issue polarized the Council's membership. In questioning the recommendation of the Committee for Development Policy, some had interpreted Samoa's action as tampering with the status quo.

The only motive in re-capping the history of the graduation issue was to remind the Council of the genesis of the draft resolution now being negotiated in informal consultations among the main parties with an interest in Samoa's graduation. The draft resolution had three critical elements, namely the graduation of Samoa from least developed country status; the critical role of the three-year transitional period to cultivate durable partnerships to lay the foundation to ensure Samoa's resilience to endure endogenous shocks, thus guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of Samoa's development efforts; and to call the Committee for Development Policy to take full account, and to assess exhaustively the economic vulnerability index as a critical criteria in the inclusion and graduation of countries.

MUHAMMAD AYUB ( Pakistan ), speaking on behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, said the Group unequivocally supported the position of Samoa, and the move by Papua New Guinea to include itself on the list of least developed countries. The issue of graduation of Samoa was critical, and should be addressed at the substantive session of the Council. Samoa had made a reasonable proposal that the economic vulnerability index should be of two requisite criteria for graduation, and that proposal merited consideration. No country wished to live in poverty forever. However, the criteria for graduation should be fair. Samoa's willingness to graduate showed that it was not willing to put it off forever. Samoa was economically vulnerable, and as a small island State, was also vulnerable to climate change. The development partners should help to ease Samoa's transition and continuing economic development.

YANG NINGNING ( China ), speaking on the issue of Samoa's graduation, said China endorsed the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In the report, it was clearly pointed out that the development of the small island pacific States was lagging behind. Samoa often suffered from climate change and natural disasters. China understood and sympathized with Samoa. It was hoped that the Council would postpone the consideration of Samoa's graduation.

On the issue of sustainable development, China also endorsed the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Sustainable development was in the long-term interest of all countries. The fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had carried out a comprehensive review. No agreement had been reached, however. For the first time in history, the Commission had failed to reach an agreement. The relevance of the Commission on Sustainable Development in deliberating issues from the environmental and social point of view was a valid as before. The achievements of the Commission were recognized. The Commission remained an important platform to exchange dialogue and reach and develop partnerships. The discussions on relevant issues should not be stopped. The focus of international cooperation should be on how the developing countries could achieve the Millennium Development Goals. For its part, China paid great attention to the protection of the environment. Sustainable development strategies had been developed. China was ready to continue further cooperation with all parties concerned.

SIMLA OZKAYA ( Turkey ) said that the arrival of the new millennium had brought recognition of the need for international efforts to improve the lives of the large portion of humanity who had been excluded from the growing global prosperity of recent decades. It was high time to turn commitments into concrete actions. Progress could be measured not by the formulation of policies and additional commitments, but rather by the realization of common goals through technology transfer, strengthening of capacities and other means. Challenges regarding environmental protection were more crucial than ever before. It had been proved that environmental problems were major threats to human safety and had direct consequences on health and productivity. People lacking minimum living standards were the most vulnerable to the deterioration of natural ecosystems.

Turkey believed that energy issues were the bridging item that connected the issues of climate change, industrial development and air pollution. Energy was the starting point for achieving the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, economic growth, social welfare and protection of the environment. Industrial development and economic growth required a sustainable energy supply, which did not threaten the climate and did not cause air pollution. Sustainable development could only be achieved if a secure, uninterrupted, reliable and affordable energy supply was ensured. Taking into account the importance of the utilization of renewable energy sources and the development of energy efficiency technologies, Turkey had been implementing policies in order to increase the share of renewable sources into its energy mix, particularly through the use of hydropower.

FERNANDE HOUNGEBEDJI ( Benin ) said that, with regard to the recommendations of the Committee on Development Policy, in Samoa and Papua New Guinea, every three years the Committee held a review, designed to identify countries that could meet the criteria to either join or be removed from the list of least developed countries. The role of the Committee was therefore of vital importance, as it made it possible for the United Nations and the international community to determine where to guide action, and to identify countries where development and assistance needed to be concentrated. The efforts of the Committee to improve its methodology were appreciated.

With regards to the Committee's recommendations at its eighth session, Benin wished to congratulate Samoa for its progress in building an economy in which there were considerable levels of income and human development. However, Samoa was economically vulnerable, and that could be a major challenge were its economic performance not to be sustained. Benin hoped, and was convinced, that the Council, when saying that graduation from the list of least developed countries would not impede the normal development of that country, and should consider the possibility of examining economic vulnerability, and make it an essential criteria for its decision.

RICHARD T. MILLER ( United States ) said that, with regard to the report on sustainable development, the United States was among the countries regretting that the Commission had not been able to produce a negotiated text. But the important result had been what the Commission had accomplished, not how many pages it had produced.

TROY TORRINGTON ( Guyana ) said that Guyana associated itself with the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In Guyana's view, collaborative efforts needed to be redoubled and the measures to which countries had committed themselves should be implemented. Guyana highly valued the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Guyana's natural development plan was capable of providing an important stimulus for the country's development.

For a full version of the press release, please visit  
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ecosoc6303.doc.htm>

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