

## AIDE MEMOIRE

### *Expert Group Meeting on Small-Scale Production and Use of Liquid Biofuels in Sub-Saharan Africa: Perspectives for Sustainable Development*

Organized by:

**DIVISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 29-30 March 2007

#### **Introduction**

The Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs is organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on biofuel at the UN Headquarters in New York, 29-30 March 2007, which will focus on enhancing access to energy for poverty reduction through the small-scale production and use of liquid biofuel in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) will provide a forum for exchanging information and learning about the potentials of the small-scale production and use of biofuel in sub-Saharan Africa with the aim of improving access to energy and reducing poverty. It will provide examples and experiences and draw some conclusions with regard to policy options to promote the small-scale production and use of biofuel in a sustainable manner in other localities and countries.

#### **A. Background**

Energy is central for sustainable development and poverty reduction. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its 14<sup>th</sup> Session reiterated the need of expanding access to reliable, affordable, socially and environmentally responsible energy services for estimated 1.6 billion people around the world. Whereas some progress has been achieved in providing access to modern energy services in the Asian region, development in Africa is still lagging far behind in many ways. The situation is particularly precarious in sub-Saharan Africa where a mere 70 Gigawatt installed capacity of electric power is available for a population of roughly 725 million. More than 500 million people in sub-Sahara Africa do not have electricity in their homes and rely on the unsustainable forms of solid biomass (fire wood, agricultural residues, animal wastes, etc.) to meet basic energy needs for cooking and lighting. Most of schools and clinics do not have electric light. Businesses often suffer power interruptions.

In recent years several developing countries have gained positive experiences with the decentralized and small-scale production and use of fuel crops. As has been shown by several projects and organizations, the production and use of liquid biofuel from local feedstock can make a good contribution to improving access to sustainable and affordable energy. Cultivation and harvesting of fuel crops can enhance agricultural productivity and local economic development directly as well as through the use of crops' by-products. In addition, liquid biofuels emit much less pollutants than conventional fuels and, therefore, have much reduced harmful impact on public health. Biofuel production and use can also bring about positive gender

effects since at the village and household levels it is often women who carry the load of agricultural production and fuel collection.

## **B. Objectives**

The Expert Group Meeting will focus on the local production and uses of biofuels and resultant opportunities for enhancing access to energy for poverty reduction and sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa.

The EGM will assess potentials for small-scale biofuel production and use for sustainable development and draw conclusions for policy options that can be used in other localities and countries replication (albeit every community represents a case on its own).

The EGM will review and finalize a paper on small-scale liquid biofuel production and development in sub-Saharan Africa that will be presented as a background paper to the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

## **C. Organization**

The EGM is being organized by the Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). The Meeting will be held at the UN Headquarters in New York over the course of two days on 29 March and 30 March 2007. The meeting will be conducted in English.

## **D. Participating experts**

UNDESA will invite a small number of selected experts with in-depth knowledge on policy issues related to energy for sustainable development and with practical experience in the production and use of liquid biofuel to the Expert Group Meeting.

## **E. Communication**

Communications related to the organization of the EGM should be directed to:

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Division of Sustainable Development  
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Further information on the Expert Group Meeting can also be obtained from:

Mr. Ralph Wahnschafft, tel. 212 963 8598, email. [wahnschafft@un.org](mailto:wahnschafft@un.org)  
Mr. Shaoyi Li, tel. 212 963 8797, email. [lis@un.org](mailto:lis@un.org)