



Taking Issue

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Network*

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Major groups are in, then out then in, then....?

A feeling of surprise, consternation and confusion spread through Working Group 2 on Tuesday when members of the delegate community again tried to sideline major groups. Representatives of Major groups tried to analyze events that had led up to this change, but found no plausible reason for what appeared as an unexpected turnaround.

Major Groups reassured

The major group community at CSD 11 felt they had received ample reassurances from the delegate community that the future of CSD would be modeled on the experiences of the first week of CSD 11. A consequence of this was an open and participatory CSD where the MGs could interact with the delegates and participate in working groups.

Intense week of deliberations

This sentiment came after an intense week of work from the major group representatives. They had spent much time last week explaining why major groups should be part of the ongoing deliberations at CSD, and made every effort to follow the rules of procedure in the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue. Late night meetings among the major groups had resulted in concrete and coherent suggestions where they commented on the chairman's summary. To allay fears among uneasy delegates as to the motives of MGs, many underscored their interest in and loyalty to the CSD as well as emphatically committing to contributing to a larger understanding of sustainable development outside the UN.

Minor differences of opinion

Despite minor differences of opinion, the MSD had an inspired chair that managed to engage major groups and delegates in a debate that appeared to produce tangible results. Seasoned major groups, and CSD experienced delegates all agreed that this Multi-stakeholder dialogue should be labeled one of the more successful in the history of CSD. Many of the participants also felt they had contributed to

democratizing the global community when the high-level segment also had allowed concrete interaction between Ministers and representatives of major groups. Several Ministers had during informal meetings with the Major Group community expressed positive support to having a similar active presence of Major Groups in the future CSDs. All this was in sharp contrast to the unexpected turnaround at the end of Tuesday's deliberations.

MGs accountable

Earlier in the day, the concept of Regional Expert Forums had been presented, and subsequently shot down by a number of delegations. The major groups also felt "experts" easily could be substituting representatives of major groups. And whereas all Major Groups had systems of accountability, most through memberships, AGMs and peer reviews, experts would not be accountable to any. Major groups also opposed using "members of civil society" in the text without qualifying this term. Many felt this would actually allow new constituents to enter the UN system without any proper screening through a serious accreditation system. In the end this would only undermine the credibility of major groups. No one believed this was the deliberate intention of this suggestion.

The first week may have ended on a positive note for the major Groups, but the second week certainly started with an unwelcome surprise. ...jgs

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Visit the SDIN Morning Strategy Meetings for reports from working groups, information sharing, and strategic discussions. SDIN Morning Meetings are open to all NGOs.

Meetings will be held in Conference Room 6 from 9.00 to 10.00.

Co-ordination meetings will be held on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in Conference Room D: 6.00 to 7.00 PM

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Articles reflect the opinions of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SDIN network.

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Youth Caucus: Connecting Past, Present and Future

It seems that Youth will need to assume the responsibility of reminding those presently making decisions of the commitments made in the past to ensure a more sustainable future. People forget quickly. As outlined in Chapter 25 of Agenda 21, and Principle 21 of the Rio Declaration, all youth must have equal access to meaningful participation at all levels and in all fora to be able to actively influence the policies that impact them in their communities.

Youth participation

Especially young people from developing countries with limited access to resources, infrastructure and information should be supported by governments and international organizations. The Youth Caucus calls therefore for financial support to allow Youth delegates from the South to participate at all relevant social and environmental summits at regional and global levels. Without Youth present in the process, we will never be able to talk of democratic decisions taken at CSD.

Education

Education is essential to prevent social, economic and environmental damage. Action must be taken to provide quality education for all. The Youth Caucus therefore strongly recommends to include "Education and Public Awareness for Sustainable Development" as a cross-cutting issue within the CSD 10-year framework. The purpose of awareness and education is not only limited to the curriculum or consumer education, but can also help popularize sustainable development. Youth are less likely to learn the vocabulary of partnerships and frameworks, but they are certainly likely to fall in love with the ideas behind the messy concept of sustainable development and become active in their communities to turn their dreams into reality.

Employment

Youth employment is an issue of urgent concern because it is a pre-requisite for the eradication of poverty. Youth require capacity-building and employment programmes at national and local levels.

Capacity Building

Education is a first step towards capacity building, and needs to be complemented by actions. The mission of the Youth Employment Summit is to secure productive and sustainable livelihoods by the year 2012 for additional 500 million young adults, and youth facing poverty in particular. The Youth Caucus calls on governments to support the outcomes of the Youth Employment Summit.

Without Youth in the process, we will never be able to talk of democratic decisions in CSD

Regionalism

The UN system is experiencing a crisis. As history has shown, rhetorical commitments made by governments have not necessarily translated into concrete policies and positive outcomes. We demand a future of cooperation and information exchange between countries. As we travel the world and use information technologies to make new kinds of international friendships like no other generation has done before, we are the first to realize that rivers cross borders and that regions need to work together to collectively address regional problems. Regional approaches will demand greater accountability and more effective implementation at local levels.

Production and Consumption

CSD should adopt changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, protecting and managing natural resource bases for economic and social development and poverty eradication for sustainable development as overriding themes as mentioned in the JPOI (Chapter I, Introduction, Para 2).

Implementation of Agenda 21 and Partnerships

Participation of marginalized groups needs to be enhanced to strengthen participation of existing major groups in multi-stakeholder dialogues. Partnerships enhance implementation of Agenda 21 and JPOI, but should not become a substitute for inter-governmentally agreed commitments.

Creation of a Clearinghouse

In order to take concrete action in the future implementation of WSSD outcomes and Agenda 21, the Youth Caucus demands the creation of a clearinghouse serving as a focal point for exchange of information about existing efforts to implement sustainable development.

Summarized by:

Jan Kozak, IYP and Macalster College

Keep it coherent: Don't undermine the overarching objectives

A plea from Emmanuel Prinnet, Jeffrey Barber, and Veena Ramani

According to Agenda 21, the goal of sustainable development is to improve the quality of life for everyone. In Johannesburg, the definition of sustainable development was further clarified when governments agreed that the overarching objectives were to (1) eradicate poverty, (2) change production and consumption patterns, and (3) protect natural re-

Renegotiation

Less than a year after Johannesburg, governments are in New York struggling to agree on a practical logistical plan, presumably for achieving (or moving closer to achieving) those objectives over the next decade. Unfortunately, governments are trying to decide which overarching objective should arch over the other two in the coming years.

Which three objectives

Rather than pitting poverty eradication, sustainable production and consumption (SPAC), and natural resource protection against each other, governments should block out time within the first review cycle to clarify the interrelationships among these three objectives and how they apply to each sectoral issue to be examined by the CSD.

Peoples' needs

SPAC is not an end in itself but a means to the end of poverty. SPAC involves providing for peoples' needs (water, food, energy, shelter, health-care, education) without causing harm to people or ecosystems. Poverty is under-consumption, just as excess wealth and waste reflect over-consumption; together they are two sides of the coin of unsustainable consumption. (Heads or tails, we are tossing away the future.)

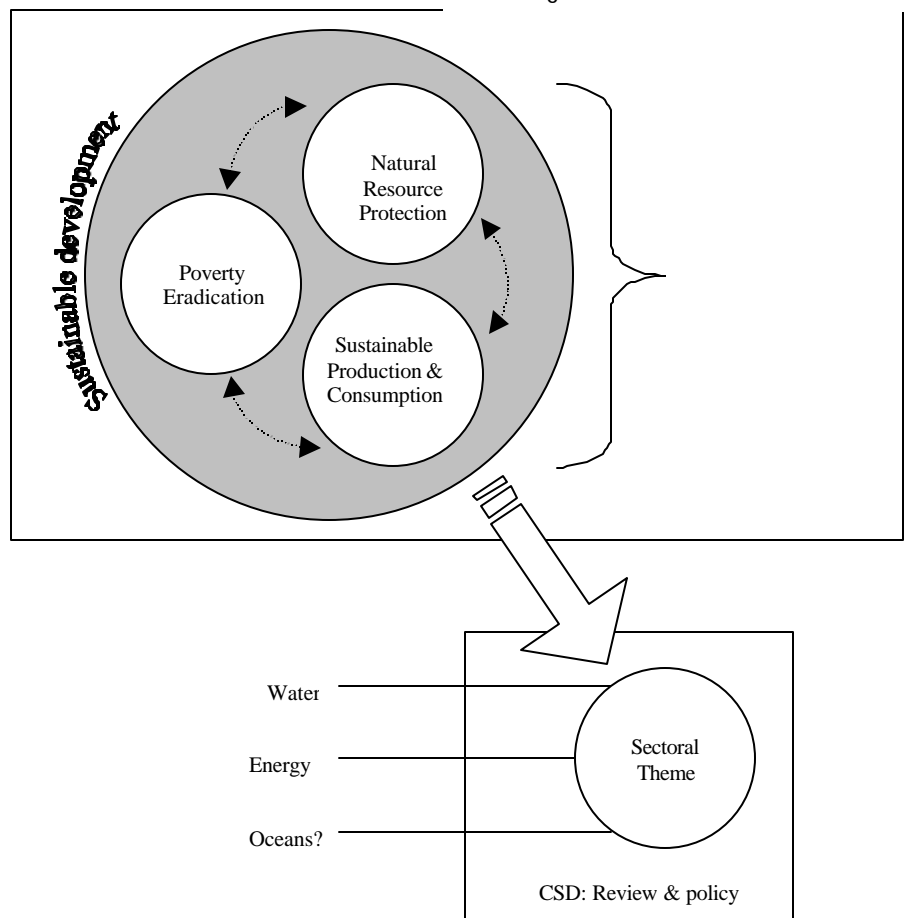
Policy coherence

In turn, poverty eradication requires access to as well as protection of

natural resources. Sustainable production and consumption involves identifying and meeting people's needs, as well as protecting the ecosystems by which those needs are met. To achieve policy coherence in each country's sustainable development strategy, the three overarching objectives need to be integrated into a coherent policy framework.

Needed: a definition

This framework needs to be operationally defined in the first year of the CSD Review Cycle, so that it can be applied as a practical tool for addressing each upcoming sectoral theme (i.e., water, energy, oceans). Otherwise, the three overarching objectives will once again be reduced to rhetorical "cross-cutting themes" given only token mention as they were in the five year work program following Rio+5.



To publish articles in this newsletter, please submit your text to one of the SDIN facilitating organisation's staff.

SDIN Facilitating organisations:

ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability
ELCI, Environment Liaison Centre International
TWN, Third World Network

Editors reserve the right to refuse articles or edit for length and clarity

We're on the Web:
www.sdissues.net

What is the Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN)?

The Sustainable Development Issues Network for 2002 is a collaborative effort among civil society networks and non-governmental issue caucuses. SDIN aims to improve communications and access to information on sustainable development issues, and improve communications among NGOs engaging in the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The Issues Network is not meant to compete with or replace the networking and organizing efforts of other NGO bodies, but to assist and promote the efforts of civil society networks working on sustainable development issues. In this sense, SDIN is not another "network" *per se* but hopefully a useful tool of NGO networks.

The Purpose of CSD: A Gentle reminder

Have we all forgotten what was decided in Rio? And have we forgotten that the information is still available in the document called "Agenda 21"? In case some of the participants at CSD 11 should have forgotten to bring a copy of "Agenda21", allow us to bring a few excerpts relevant to major groups and implementation.

From the Introduction:

"Made up of government representatives, (the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, established by the General Assembly) will examine progress made in implementing Agenda 21 globally."

Para 1.3

(Agenda 21)'s successful implementation is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments.

Para 38.11

In order to ensure the effective follow-up of (UNCED) as well as to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the inter-governmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues and to examine the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels, a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development should be established in accordance with Article 68 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Para 38.13 The Commission on Sustainable Development should have the following functions:

- (a) To monitor progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and activities related to the integration of environmental and developmental goals throughout the United Nations system...
- (b) To consider information provided by Governments... regarding the activities they undertake to implement Agenda 21...
- (c) To review the progress in the implementation of the commitments contained in Agenda 21, including those related to provision of financial resources and transfer of technology;
- (d) To receive and analyze relevant input from competent non-governmental organizations... in the context of the overall implementation of Agenda 21.

Para 38.43(b)

The UN system... should, in consultation with NGOs, take measures to... take into account the findings of review systems and evaluation processes of NGOs in relevant reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and all pertinent UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations and forums concerning the implementation of Agenda 21 in accordance with the review process.

We commit ourselves to ensuring that the next comprehensive review of Agenda 21 in the year 2002 demonstrates measurable progress in achieving sustainable development. (contribution by Jeffrey Barber)