



Taking Issue

The Sustainable Development Issues Network

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EU SENDS A STRONG MESSAGE TO THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT

Come September, and the Millennium Plus Five Summit will take place. The next three days of this CSD offer a unique opportunity for CSD, a UN entity that may still be considered a powerful unit of the UN, to send a message to the Summit in September. As the CSD enters the High Level Segment mode, the focus for some of the discussion will be on precisely the Millennium Development Goals.

It is well worth remembering that the summit is the five year review of the declaration, and not the MDGs as many somewhat erroneously assume. But be that as it may, it is quite clear that reference will have to be made to the progress of fulfilling the MDGs.

The SG. Mr. Kofi Annan challenges CSD

The UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan addressed a segment of the CSD this week where Finance Ministers were present. He said: "You meet at a time of gathering momentum around the global agenda. There is an unprecedented consensus that greater investments in development are an imperative for all of us – for our well being, our security, our very freedoms....The issues you are focusing on at this year's session of the Commission are central to our hopes. Studies suggest that halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015 will require a doubling of current investments, to \$30 billion a year. UN-HABITAT estimates that improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 would require an estimated \$5 billion a year."

CSD against the Summit

Against this background, it is rather absurd to see that so many of the delegations seem reluctant to send a strong message from CSD-13 to the Summit in September. Time and again, we have heard that this CSD is not a prep com for the Summit. Time and again, major groups have responded positively to the challenge expressed in the Secretary General's message. Now one 'cluster of nations' have raised their flag, and speak directly to this issue.

Cooperation for the Millennium Plus 5

NGOs find themselves often jealously protecting their integrity against the onslaught of pressure from governments and markets. Thus cooperating with governments on policy is nothing that happens every day. Now however, may be an occasion that speaks to such a cooperation. The EU has come out with strong text that many NGOs find they can support.

The text that the EU has tabled starts by noting that the UN has adopted sustainable development as a key element of the overarching framework for United Nations activities, in particular for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

MDGs, the Summit and linkages

Then the EU text strongly states: Reaffirming the call of the Millennium Declaration for respect for nature and prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the



precepts of sustainable development and that only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants;

Heeding the call for integration and linkages, the text continues in the same spirit as the opening lines: Stressing the need for national ownership, mutual responsibility and partnership, as well as for stronger linkage and synergies between the MDGs, the Monterrey and Johannesburg commitments, including those in the Road Map towards the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration, which are key to the achievement of sustainable development.

Taking Issue responding to many NGOs milling about in corridors looking for a document to believe in, finds it within the interest of the greater Major Groups community to quote the remainder of the EU document directly:

Excerpts from the text

1 -poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, protecting and managing the natural resources base of economic and social development are overarching

objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development. Environmental protection is essential to achieve all the MDGs, sustainable development, peace and security, as well as to prevent natural disasters, but is often greatly underestimated in many of our countries.

2 -While environmental sustainability underpins the achievement of all MDGs and of the WSSD commitments and is a crucial asset to escape the poverty trap, the world is clearly off track in meeting MDG7. There is a need for a systematic integration of environmental sustainability considerations into national poverty reduction strategies, UN development assistance frameworks and national development plans, taking into account the World Summit on Sustainable Development target for the elaboration and implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

3 -As the current CSD cycle has emphasised, equitable and sustainable access to basic services is essential for achieving sustainable development.

4 -Tackling climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation and desertification, unsustainable

production and consumption patterns and using the full range of available instruments are needed to curb the decreasing carrying capacity of ecosystems, *inter alia* through increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources as well as phasing out subsidies to fossil fuels.

5 -Further UN inter-agency cooperation and improved international environmental governance are required, including in support of regional and national capacity building for environmental governance and sustainable development, with a particular focus on Africa.

Still no rights based, though

Had the EU also been able to include strong language on the rights based approach including sending a strong message to the General Assembly about the access issue, it would have been almost too good to be true. But if this is as good as it gets for the time being, a large segment of the Major Groups community finds themselves in the position of supporting the EU positions as quoted. Whether this text enters into the final document, well that remains to be seen.

...jgs



YOUTH SAYS: DON'T EXCLUDE US - LET US PARTICIPATE!

Youth expresses frustration over the closed-door approach by governments at CSD-13

We, as the youth caucus, are trying to be an outward-looking, all-inclusive youth network, containing people working on grassroots level, at UN-meetings directly and certainly both.

Unfortunately there are only a few of us, especially from the south, that have the opportunity to be here to struggle for the strengthening of participatory democracy and accountability, stated in the Cardoso report as goals for the UN itself (*See Monday's Taking Issue*).

Mixed signals

It is hard for civil society to be effective and democratic in our participation when

there are mixed messages about what medium we should use to participate. We were told that our best tool for participating is lobbying governments, but then we are faced with the open sessions being shut down in favor of more closed-door informal meetings.

How can we help draft the Chairman's Summary for CSD-13 when we are left out? On Friday, Chair John W. Ashe was asking for advice from the NGOs. We are more than happy to continue contributing to the whole process, as has been set out for the CSDs and for many other UN activities, if we are only **LET IN** to the process.

Active youth involvement

We, as young people, are concerned about what this trend means for both this and future CSDs. We call for all involved to remember the important roles of NGOs, including the youth, since we have experiences and knowledge valuable for the future of sustainable development. As we all know children and youth are especially vulnerable to the shortage of water, sanitation and human settlements. Therefore: **don't exclude us - let us participate!**

Youth caucus"

WATER IS A SACRED AND CULTURAL RESOURCE

Indigenous Peoples say CSD-13 negotiations lack an ethical framework for the cultural manifestations of water

By the Indigenous Environmental Network

Water is Life: the recognition, as a guiding principle, that “water connects and regulates planet earth as the sacred mat of life” by nourishing the land and all living organisms, including human beings.

An ethical framework based upon respect for life-giving water and its cultural manifestations is of critical importance for water, sanitation and human settlement policy. Humanity must declare all water sources as sacred sites.

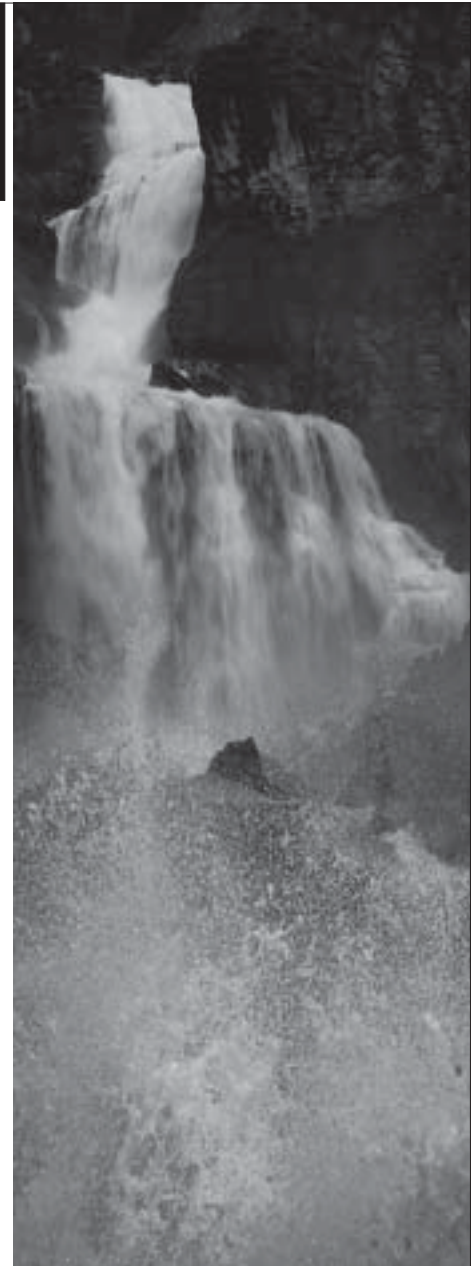
Underlying the global water crisis is not just a governance crisis, but also a cultural crisis. Water is a vital resource, having economic, ecological, social and spiritual functions. Relations between peoples and their environment are embedded in culture. Water is life, physical, emotional and spiritual. It should not

be considered merely as an economic resource.

Sharing water is an ethical imperative and expression of human solidarity. The intimate relationship between water and peoples should be explicitly taken into account in all decision-making processes.

Cultural diversity, developed during the millennia by human societies, constitutes a treasure of sustainable practices and innovative approaches. Indigenous knowledge holders should be full partners with scientists to find solutions for water-related and human settlement issues.

Education is necessary to learn about the sacredness of water as well as the inclusion of indigenous and traditional laws, which are needed to “protect water for future generations of all plants and animals.”



Women leaders for WASH:

READY TO FIGHT FOR SANITATION

Sanitation is not sexy enough to get the attention it deserves, says Hilde Frafjord Johnsen, Norway's Minister of International Development. Well, that's about to change. Not because sanitation is about to become sexy. But because the Women Leaders for WASH are about to make sure it actually gets the attention it deserves.

When Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, went to study in Sweden, she was amazed to find that nobody littered. People actually took time to throw it away. And that's why it was so clean! Where Anna had come from, and at her previous school, the latrine was so dirty that nobody even used it. So her point is made: - Sanitation and hygiene is a culture. It is a behavioural culture. We need cultural education. A cultural revolution.

North and south

The Women leaders for WASH initiative was conceived by two female ministers from two very different countries: Maria Mutagamba, Minister of State for Water, Uganda, and Chair of African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW), and Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Minister of International Development, Norway. First announced during the Global WASH Forum in Dakar 2004, the official launch

happened during a CSD-13 side-event yesterday. Said Mutagamba: - We have a woman from the north speaking the same language as a woman from the south. It gives us a better chance to be listened to.

Exhilarating!

With a panel full of distinguished and impressive women leaders from among others Kenya, South-Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Colombia, Ms Nane Annan opened the roundtable discussion by saying how exciting it was to see all female leaders around her. - Men are used to seeing male leaders around them all the time, but for me as a woman to sit here with all these important women, it's exhilarating!

Annan continued by telling the story of a village she once visited in the north of Ghana where the women had told her about how the village water pump had changed their lives. - They said "The water project liberated us". And that's why I'm proud to be a WASH supporter.

Lack of leadership

Hon. Mamphono Khaketla, Minister of Natural Resources, Lesotho, highlighted the importance of education: - You can be rich today, but poor tomorrow. You can be healthy today, but sick tomorrow. You can be educated today, and you will be educated tomorrow. Education needs to be in the forefront of empowerment of women and the issues of water.

Remembering how poverty was dealt with in the 18th century by installing proper sewage systems in western cities, Dr. Kerstin Leitner, Assistant Director General for WHO, wondered why the same couldn't be done in the countries who still need it today. - It's not about lack of technology. It's not about lack of knowledge, and it's not about lack of resources. It's lack of leadership. And women are natural leaders.

Leitner also said it is disgraceful that we today are not even close to meeting any of the MDGs.



Decentralization

Dr. Sunita Narain, Director of Centre for Science and Environment, India (and Stockholm prize winner 2005) also gave an impressive speech: - However much we have invested, we have invested too little. And we have never understood that the approach is wrong. The technology of the future is the technology that can put this in the hands of the people. Today, we are failing in our delivery mechanisms. We don't know how to reach the poor people. The paradigm has to change to one of decentralization. We can't only plan for the woman. We have to make sure the plan is in her hands!

WASH is life

Summing up the event, Frafjord Johnsen highlighted five points made during the discussions:

- The importance of alternative technology like for instance ecological toilets. The big and expensive technological solutions of the 1980s need to be replaced with solutions that work for the local communities.
- Financing, decentralization of financing, micro-credits and ways of allocating more money to local governments to reach the local communities.
- How women can make latrines their business, how to get involved and run the business themselves.
- Monitoring. Knowing what's going on, how the money is being spent. And finally,

- Sanitation needs a home and it needs focus. As it is today, it is dispersed to different parts of the governments and nobody seems to be responsible. Having to cut the discussion a bit short Frafjord Johnsen also noted that: - Nice speeches don't deliver, cash does.

Well there we have it. Commitment on top level hoping to bring in women from all levels to ultimately bring about some serious change and some serious progress toward the MDGs for water and sanitation. And so, in the words of Ms Nane Annan: - I wish you all success because water is life. And so is sanitation. And hygiene.

-ida

THE FACTS

ORGANIZATION

The women leaders for WASH will meet collectively at least once a year, and will make public announcements relating to WASH issues at least once a year. Ministers Hilde Frafjord Johnsen and Maria Mutagamba will be acting as co-chairs and co-conveners for the first three years. All members will be women, and membership will be geared towards a diversity of perspectives, from a range of backgrounds and from all continents. The group will have Secretariat-level support from WSSCC, Geneva. Members will be

- Heads of State
- Southern country policy-makers
- Northern country policy-makers
- UN organizations
- NGOs
- Academia
- Public/Private sector
- Media Networks
- Women's issues groups
- WSSCC (represented as convening organization)

Objectives:

1. To advocate for WASH issues, and particularly issues related to the improvement of the situation of women in the sector, at international and national level.
2. To lobby for the mobilization of additional resources for WASH issues.
3. To encourage similar leaders to join such a group, operating either internationally or nationally.

Activities:

- To raise the profile of WASH issues during international level policy related events; such as the United Nations MDG review (September 2005), and the 4th World Water Forum (March 2006) to a variety of target audiences (politicians, implementing agencies, media, general public).
- To raise WASH issues within dialogues of regional level policy structures (i.e., NEPAD) and with national level politicians.
- To raise WASH issues with international and national level media.
- To mobilize leaders from other parts of society to join and contribute to such a group.



Above:The women with vision: Maria Mutagamba and Hilde Frafjord Johnson
Below: Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Eirah Gorre-Dal

THE WASH CAMPAIGN: SANITATION IS NOT A DIRTY WORD.

WASH stands for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene and is a campaign that was launched at the International Conference on Freshwater in Bonn in December 2001 By WSSCC – The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. The campaign aims to mobilise political awareness, support and action towards achieving the MDGs for water and sanitation. The WASH campaign lobbies intensively through UN structures and directly with politicians, and has received praise for its active role in obtaining commitment for the new sanitation target.

BUILDING UP WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES THROUGH CITIZENSHIP

The book 'Reclaiming Public Water' published by the Transnational Institute and Corporate Europe Observatory, presents policy makers with concrete examples of public utility reforms, which have resulted in major improvements in access to clean water and sanitation, including for the poorest. The case studies in the book reveal a number of policy actions available to governments that should receive more attention at CSD 13.



Mr. Antonio Miranda

Through 22 well-documented cases, over 270 pages, the reader gets a good insight into the development of municipal water and sanitation services.

On Tuesday, Taking Issue had an interview with Antonio Miranda who in his position as head of the Municipal Water and Sanitation Services, city of Recife in Brazil contributed one of the case studies entitled 'Building up Water and Sanitation Services through Citizenship'.

24 years of experience

Antonio Miranda has more than 24 years of experience in working on Water and Sanitation. In December 2004, he left his position as head of the Municipal Water and Sanitation Services, to become an advisor to the department of Water, Sanitation, Solid Waste and Rain Drainage at the Ministry of Cities, which is in charge of Urban Affairs. Besides this paid job, Mr. Miranda is involved in several voluntary positions dealing with water and sanitation, such as being a member of the UN Secretary General's advisory board on Water and Sanitation. During his interview

he presented his view on how the water and sanitation sector should be organized based on his experiences in Recife in reclaiming the public water.

The Recife case in short

Recife, with 1.5 million inhabitants, is the capital of Pernambuco State in northeast Brazil. More than two thirds of the population lives in poverty, half of these below the official poverty line. Only 27% of the population is serviced by sewers, and less than 10% have even basic services. Instead of choosing for the privatization of Compesa, which is the provincial level public utility responsible, the municipality decided to launch a so-called "First Municipal Conference on Water and Sanitation. During a seven-month process with involvement of all relevant civil society organizations 160 decisions were voted on and approved. One of the results was a "cession contract" between the municipality and Compesa, on which all the rules, goals, roles and penalties will be established. Another important outcome was the creation of a municipal council of water and sanitation. Democratically constituted and pro-

consumer oriented, all the issues – coverage, quality, maintenance, prices, etc. – will be under its control. Only 25 % of the votes of this council will come from governments, another 25% will come from labourers and 50% will come from civil society representatives.

Mr. Miranda wanted to highlight several lessons learnt from his experiences in Recife:

Achieving the MDGs

The Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without really strengthening and improving local government and local public operators. Especially given the fact that public operators are responsible for more than 95% of the water coverage.

Providing for the Poorest

The main concern is to provide for the poorest. To reach them and to provide adequate services to them, money is needed. Providing for the poorest is deeply unprofitable, as the poor are in no way able to pay a tariff that includes a portion for reinvestment and maintenance.

Usually, developing countries - Brazil in particular- have highly progressive tariff structures; those that are poor pay less than the cost, while those that can afford it pay more than the cost. The surplus obtained from the richer peoples can then be used for maintenance, improvements and expansion.

Privatization is not a solution, as the poor do not have the financial means to access these services, hence only the richer people will benefit. The poor people will

be left to be catered for by the public sector, with no means available to maintain an adequate service level.

Sustainable services

It is impossible to have sustainable services without a strong mechanism for civil society participation, civil society meaning to include all parts of society, including inter alia, NGOs, Business and Churches. These civil society groups are needed as a watchdog of the public sector, or as Mr. Miranda stated: –Improving the public sector side by side with a civil society control mechanism is key to achieve sustainability in the water and sanitation sector.

This requires for all the different interests to be laid out on the table so that they

can all be part of the decision making process, which usually happens based on a majority voting.

Private sector not in control of delivery

The best way from his point of view to deal with the private sector is to have them as manufacturers for supplying the pumps and pipes, as contractors or for consulting services, but not in control of the delivery itself.

Message to CSD

Mr. Miranda wants to bring two main messages to the CSD:

- The good examples in both fields of water and sanitation should be taken as inspirations in other places where there is not a 100% coverage.

“Improving the public sector side by side with a civil society control mechanism is key to achieve sustainability in the water and sanitation sector”.

- The need for multi-stakeholder processes need to be taken more seriously. All the different viewpoints can best be understood if these different views are recognized and the best way to deal with them is through dialogue and this is what CSD is for. - kk

Info: “Reclaiming Public Water – Achievements, Struggles and Visions from Around the World” Edited by Belén Balanya, Brid Brennan, Olivier Hoedeman, Satoko Kishimoto and Philipp Terhorst. Transnational institute and Corporate Europe Observatory, January 2005. (ISBN: 90 – 71007-10-3) Available at: <http://www.tni.org/books/publicwater.htm>

...and at the end, the Chair said:

THE RIGHT TO WATER IS IMPORTANT!

First time we weren't prepared enough, second time the questions were a little harsher but we weren't satisfied but now at the third NGO meeting with John Ashe, the questions were sharp and focused and the Chair seemed to struggle for answers.



Chair John Ashe at the NGO morning meeting

John Ashe is becoming a regular at the NGO morning meetings. He strode into the meeting with his usual air of panache, but few seemed to take notice of him. A celebrity no more? He came across quieter, a little humbled maybe. He talked quietly, and seemed to be searching for answers to the questions fired at him. He had a tendency to answer the last question first and linger long enough perhaps hoping we had forgotten the serious questions just asked.

But his audience was determined to ask direct and critical questions, to show that NGOs feel that CSD this time is not ground breaking.

The chair was asked to take responsibility. Responsibility to raise the level of the discussions and outcomes. Some said the Rio documents were strong, had legal implications. But since Rio in 1992, the process and the decisions coming out of the WSSD and subsequent CSDs had weakened: all seem to be going backwards. One NGO strongly said that the chair must play a sharp role in recognizing the need for human rights and, that the problems of the text was that it is being used by certain countries to increase liberalisation and privatization. And the process itself, some said, had become confusing to delegates, major groups and vice-chairs alike; besides, there is a lack of transparency.

The Chair responded in much the same way as the other days, that it was not his role to address the above, that he had not the primary responsibility for the content of the text, it is not his text but the text should reflect the views of the member countries. NGOs should not ‘trash’ the processes and disagree with the statement that the content had been consistently weakened. He claimed that it is not the purpose

of the CSD to make more commitments but to follow up on the processes before.

John Ashe sighed heavily and referred to the text now having grown from a small succinct document of 5 pages into 25 pages overnight!

He then repeated a question to the NGOs that he had asked at the last meeting, what would you do if you had 200-300 members all wanting input but have a short document? Again he called NGOs to put governments ‘feet in the fire’ and be major partners in implementation of the ‘living’ document.

We cannot keep the government’s ‘feet in the fire’ if you do not give us strong language – this statement from the youth stirred up enthusiastic applause from all.

Why is it that the NGOs feel, that no one in an influential position, it seems, wants to take responsibility? The chair does have power, and should be responsible. And at the very end of the meeting, the chair said the right to water is important and this should not be lost to the delegations! Why not take this view when chairing Mr. Ashe?

- HJ

QUESTION OF THE DAY



How important is it for you that the Rights Based Approach is explicitly stated in the final text?

Lucien Royer, Trade Union Major Group

-It's very important. It is the principles, by which to address equity imbalances and access barriers to water, sanitation and human settlements.



Naomi Foxwood, Tearfund

-The essential thing is that there is political will to use the CSD process to make a difference to those on the ground. The mention of Rights Based Approach would be a good indication that governments mean business.

On a sinking note ...



Mwangi 05

Contribute to Taking Issue

To publish articles in this newsletter, please submit your text before 5.00 p.m. to one of the SDIN facilitating organisations' staff. Or, send an email to: kirstenkossen@yahoo.com, or phone us on: +47 47 01 83 37

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