



Taking Issue

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Taking Issue is produced by:

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes
Senior Editor

Kirsten Kossen
Journalist

Juan Hoffmaister
Journalist

Elsabet Samuel
Journalist

Kristine Slyngstad
Graphic Designer

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 are held in Conference Room C at the United Nations Building.

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

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Which Energy?

In stark contrast with the first drab morning session of the IPM when governments chose not to interact with the Major Groups at the Interactive Discussions, an impressive 48 Delegates vied for their two-minute slot in the interactive discussion on Energy for Sustainable Development yesterday. The list of speakers was so long that the Qatari Chair of the Bureau decided to extend the discussions to the afternoon, eating up the time originally meant for the discussions on Industrial Development. Energy is indeed a HOT topic at the CSD, no doubt.

But, which Energy?

The exchanges started with a jolt when a panelist from the OPEC warned delegates not to confuse pro-poor policies with the deployment of renewable energy as these are independent issues. That's diametrically opposed to what governments have been saying since CSD-14: making energy locally available, affordable and environmentally-friendly will alleviate poverty.

While the walls of Conference Room 4 reverberates with a recognition that social stability, political security and economic growth of developing countries are threatened by the unstable supply and sky-rocketing prices of fossil fuel, G-77 and China came out with a spineless statement that obviously tried to make its oil-producing members happy. No wonder, it was mainly the OPEC-member countries that proudly aligned themselves with the G-77 statement which called for cleaner and affordable fossil fuels, exploring advanced energy technologies, and lamely calling for increased use of renewables in the energy mix.

With full bravado, and probably out of frustration from the weak G-77 Statement, the AOSIS through Barbados, called strongly for increasing the share of renewable energy in total energy supply and the setting up of a Global Energy Fund to support developing countries' efforts to shift. AOSIS

affirmed its position against nuclear energy as an alternative, which it tags as not appropriate, not acceptable and not compatible with sustainable development.

The EU said that countries should set time-bound targets and commitments, albeit voluntary, on energy efficiency and the shift to renewable energy and the EU's voluntary commitment is aiming for a 20 percent of bio-fuels in the total energy supply by 2020. More retrospective countries like Costa Rica, Mexico and SIDS remind other states that the world has an outstanding commitment in Johannesburg five years ago to increase the share of renewable energy to 20 percent by 2020 and to eliminate subsidies that are harmful to the environment. Talk about having short-term memories! So far, only Iceland has shown the way that through political will a country can shift to renewables as its primary energy source.

Drowned in all the talks on which energy direction to take is the US' call for upscaling of successful concrete actions culled up from the CSD Matrix. Here there are no impassioned call for shift to renewables and definitely no talk about paradigm shift in energy. The less you say, the less you rock the boat, and business can go on as usual.

The politics of energy source and technology control underpin the debate on Tuesday. Most oil exporting countries and countries that control fossil fuel technology insisted that fossil fuel is here to stay and ignored that countries need to collectively take measures to tackle the energy problem for future generations. As stated by Venezuela, that cannot be done in a competitive manner, using market fundamentalism, but through fair and just energy price, and addressing the issue of speculation and manipulation of prices. Distancing itself from other oil producing states, Venezuela strongly stated that sustainable development is about solidarity and shared responsibility.

neth/hira, TWN/27Feb07

Air Pollution/Atmosphere: Issues and Policy Options

The issues and policy options involving air pollution are inextricably interlinked to the three other topics in the current thematic cycle of the CSD, namely Energy for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Industrial Development. The problems in air pollution today can be after all primarily attributed to the world's dependence on fossil fuel as the chief energy source for industries and transportation. The changing composition of the atmosphere due to air pollution compounded by climatic factors is contributing to overall climate change.

Neth Daño // Third World Network (TWN)

Based on the discussions from the review year of the current cycle and as presented in the Matrix for the current thematic cycle, we can expect the following key issues to be dominantly discussed at the IPM and on to CSD-15 policy discussions in Spring.

On Indoor Pollution

At CSD-14, we heard numerous government speeches on the direct co-relation of indoor pollution resulting from the use of bio-mass and wood for cooking and heating in many rural areas in the developing world to the health and status of women and children who generally bear the burden of cooking chores and providing heating for the household. We heard experiences and lessons from a handful of countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Africa and Peru, on how they addressed this problem by promoting the use of bio-gas, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and improved stoves with better ventilation.

Among the principal question that hangs in the air that needs to be

tackled in the policy discussions at CSD-15 is the issue of access to affordable, cleaner and environmentally-friendly cooking and heating facilities. Most of the initiatives reflected in the Matrix that promote a shift to cleaner and more environmentally-friendly cooking and heating technologies initially succeeded because of the availability of financial resources to provide for the LPG tanks and improved cook stoves that were distributed to households. The interest of the business sector selling LPG in partnerships promoting such initiatives is understandable, but the sustainability of such projects remains the biggest challenge in view of the impoverished living conditions of many rural households that cannot afford to meet basic needs, let alone buy

LPG tanks and maintain modern stoves.

Sustainable policies to address indoor pollution should promote the use of affordable, locally-available, efficient, and cleaner-burning biomass stoves, biogas and solar cookers. Policies should promote the adoption of simple and culturally-appropriate technologies to allow

for greater ventilation of smoke from indoor fires. Environmental and social impact assessments should be adopted before promoting such technologies to ensure

their appropriateness and acceptability. Moreover, such policies should contribute in reducing the burden of women and children in the household as well as contribute in overall poverty reduction.

“Education remains as one of the best insurances in sustainably addressing the problem of indoor pollution.”

Education remains as one of the best insurances in sustainably addressing the problem of indoor pollution. Raising the awareness of women and children on the hazards of indoor pollution from cooking and heating smoke will not only improve their health and social status, but will also encourage the development of local and culturally-appropriate solutions.

Ambient Pollution

As acknowledged in the Secretary-General's paper on Air Pollution, much of the ambient pollution in the world today is due to industrial development, energy production and use, and transportation – all of which are primarily dependent on fossil-fuel. Country experiences have shown that adopting regulatory and innovative measures on air standards, monitoring and enforcement, as well as promotion of the shift to cleaner fuel and mandatory replacement of diesel with compressed natural gas have been quite effective in addressing ambient pollution. Active education on the hazards of air pollution and promotion of more efficient public transport alternatives have also made some impacts in key cities worldwide.

Since CSD-14, however, it is the use of bio-fuels such as ethanol and bio-diesel, as the new battlecry of governments to address world dependence on fossil fuels and abate air pollution that have reverberated loud and clear across intergovernmental forums. Many countries have since adopted legislative and administrative measures to promote the use of bio-fuels, and some governments have earmarked hundreds of thousands of hectares of land for bio-fuel pro-

duction. This trend has sparked more debates especially over the potential impacts of massive bio-fuel production on world prices of agricultural commodities, and more importantly, on the long-term food security of households and access to limited land. Expect this debate to spark up again at CSD-15. Hopefully, such discussion would lead to the formulation of assessment tools for the socio-economic and environmental impacts of bio-fuels in particular and renewable energy in general which can be used by governments as a guide in making decisions on this regard.

The issue of technology fixes in addressing ambient pollution in particular and air pollution in general is also expected to pop out at the IPM and on to CSD-15. Last year, we heard some calls for such high-tech solutions as carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) to address air pollution caused by industrial development, and we expect to hear them again this year. The accessibility of such technologies for developing countries that suffer most from air pollution and the environmental impacts of such technology fixes should figure out in the CSD policy discussions.

There are also some glaring gaps in the discussion of air pollution that were barely addressed in the review year and even in the SG paper for the policy year. Among which are policies pertaining to the use of incineration in processing garbage and landfills. Policies should be adopted on banning the incineration of garbage that emits, and international cooperation should promote the transfer of alternative technologies to incineration.



A factory near the UN

Transboundary Air Pollution

As a consequence of increasing global trade in goods and services, aviation and marine shipping have become significant sources of air pollution and green house gas emissions, and due to their nature would require international cooperation. There are existing international standards and conventions that govern key aspects of transboundary aviation and marine shipping which should be strongly enforced through sharing of experiences and technical capacity, as well as building the capacity of developing countries to comply with and enforce these standards and agreements.

The End of the Road for the Present CSD?

Delegates and stakeholders have thought out loud: is the CSD really defunct?

On Wednesday 28 February 2007 at 4pm in Conference Room C there will be a side event to explore the recommendations of the High level Panel on System-wide Coherence, particularly the recommendations on the environment and sustainable development. This is your opportunity to hear arguments, and engage in a discussion to reform and perhaps upgrade the CSD.

Sustainable Development a down-graded priority

Despite 15 years and several reform measures, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) remains a weak global authority on sustainable development; the two-year process has highlighted inherent flaws in its mandate; the secretariat is very weak; CSD continues to be dominated by the Ministries of the Environment suffering from weak political influence and inadequate funding. As the UN's high level forum on sustainable development, the CSD has struggled to appropriately address the three pillars of sustainable development, but as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) it often lacks the appropriate political decision making powers of the General Assembly or its subsidiary organs. The CSD has been particularly inefficient in addressing the means of implementation, such as finance and technology transfer- as per its General Assembly, UNCED/WSSD mandates. Major concerns remain related to: heavy agenda; disconnected cross-sectoral issues; lack of time; re-negotiating principles and past agreements; failure to recall previous agreements; monitoring financial contribution; national progress; reporting; and Ministerial-level representation (Dodds et al, 2002).

Forgotten CSD accomplishments.

Even though the Commission has not always lived up to its expectations, over the years, the Commission proved to be an important 'home' for keeping the broad sustainable development agenda under active review, and has been instrumental in launching a number of new initiatives and securing intergovernmental cooperation. The Commission can claim some success in exerting influence on the multilateral agenda: advancing the cause of Small Island Developing States (SIDS); initiating the global freshwater assessment (now the World Water Development Report); establishing the open-ended process on oceans and the law of the sea; introducing multi-stakeholder dialogues and promoting the role of Major Groups; recommending that relevant bodies seek a legally-binding status for the Prior Informed Consent procedure; the setting up of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the UN Forum on Forests; supporting the Washington Global Plan for Action on protecting the marine environment from land-based activities; setting a date for National Sustainable Development Strategies to be produced and implemented; pioneering national reporting; developing a set of indicators for sustainable development; and agreeing on new consumer guidelines to include sustainable development.

Encouraging follow-up

The UN system's follow-up to Johannesburg has been encouraging. Most, if not all, multilateral environmental agreements and UN agencies, programmes and funds have engaged in the process of integrating their work with the goals set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). Sustainable development has become a priority of the intergovernmental system. However, the CSD and its parent body ECOSOC are currently failing to effectively oversee the system-wide coordination of sustainable development, as well as the balanced integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of United Nations policies and programmes. Attempts to reform both bodies have provided limited remedial benefits. The renewed focus on system-wide coherence in light of the World Summit 2005 and the urgent need to meet the MDG and JPOI targets in its self points to a problem with the current system.

High Level Panel Recommendations

In its report, the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence recommended that "the status of sustainable development should be elevated within the UN institutional architecture and in country activities. The United Nations system must strive for greater integration, efficiency and coordina-

tion of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. At the operational level, the Panel supports a strong partnership between UNEP (normative) and UNDP (operational) and a sharper focus on environment by the resident coordinator system as part of the One United Nations at the country level. The Panel calls for the Economic and Social Council to establish a sustainable development segment — and for continuing reform of the Commission on Sustainable Development that truly leads to integrated decision-making on economic, social and environmental issues." The Panel also recommended the establishment of a Sustainable Development Board. "Reporting to the Economic and Social Council, the Board would provide the decision-making and monitoring framework for implementation of One United Nations at the country level. The Board would be responsible for oversight of the implementation of the pilot programme to create unified United Nations country programmes."

The Future of the CSD

As has been stated, the Commission has not always lived up to its expectations. Since its establishment a number of organizational reforms have been implemented. In 2002, Stakeholder Forum provided a summary of some of the main problems identified over the two key phases of the CSD: 1994-1996 and 1998-2001. Among these concerns were problems associated with the heavy agenda; disconnected cross-sectoral issues; lack of time; re-negotiating principles and past agreements; failure to recall previous agreements; monitoring financial contribution; national progress; reporting; and Ministerial-level representation (Dodds et al, 2002).

Some are now asking: what future can the CSD have? There are a number of potential options available:

1. That it carries on as it is
2. That there is incremental change — some suggestions on this were pub-

lished in the Stakeholder Forum publication "Strengthening the Johannesburg Implementation Track"

3. The Panel recommendations to move the integration functions of CSD to EcoSoc

4. Or most ambitiously, going back to Maurice Strong's suggestion in Rio of a

GA level body such as a UN Sustainable Development Council.

The workshop taking place today will explore these issues on CSD reform, as well as broader issues of reform of the UN's environmental and sustainable development architecture.

WORKSHOP ON UN-SYSTEM WIDE COHERENCE: recommendations of the High-level Panel on the environmental architecture of the United Nations

Inter-governmental Preparatory Meeting for the Commission on Sustainable Development

Co-sponsored by UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN NGLS), Stakeholder Forum, the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Development (FBOMS) and ANPED with the support of the governments of Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and the UN Foundation.

28th FEBRUARY 2007

4.00 pm – 6 p.m.

Conference Room C

**United Nations
Headquarters
New York**

Programme:

- Overview of the report of the High-level Panel on UN-System Wide Coherence and sustainable development
- Update on discussions at UNEP GC on environmental reform
- Update on discussions at the General Assembly on the environment
- Discussion on the Commission on Sustainable Development
- Discussion on the Sustainable Development Board and one country programme



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UN-NGLS, Room DC1-1106, (212) 963-3125, npls@npls.org, www.un-npls.org

Poverty reduction through economic growth does not work!

NGO's are asking for a paradigm shift. A shift into a sustainable world, based on the carrying capacity of the planet, based on human rights and equity for all. But changing the dominant economic and political power relations is not an easy job. Also questioning the economic growth paradigm is almost impossible. Although it is proven that economic growth will not give a solution for all problems in the world. The argument for this orthodox vision is simple: if we have more production, we have more market, we have more money, we have more to share. Seems to be a nice thought, but reality is different.

The cake will not grow with us

On the contrary this is a dangerous thought, because it drives us far away of what sustainable development wants to bring us. The inconvenient truth of sustainable development is that we have to deal with limited natural resources and limited environmental space. That means that economic growth is also limited. Even despite our efforts to become more energy efficient and resource efficient, there still are limits. The cake we have to share with all the people in the world, the planet, is round and will unfortunately not grow with us.

Taking this into account, will economic growth be the best strategy for poverty reduction?

The governments of the world committed themselves to meeting the MDGs, Goal 1 aims to halve the proportion of the population of developing countries living below the "1 dollar a day" poverty line. They want to achieve this with more economic growth.

A research work of the New Economic Foundation (UK) tells us that global economic growth is an extremely inefficient way of achieving poverty reduction. Between 1990 and 2001, for every 100 dollar worth

of growth in the world's income per person, just 0.60 dollar found its target and contributed to reducing poverty below the 1-dollar-a-day line. To achieve every single dollar of poverty reduction therefore requires 166 dollar of additional global production and consumption, with all its associated environmental impacts. This approach is both economically and ecologically inefficient.

For economic growth we need more natural resources and energy. This will lead to more climate change, and environmental and economic costs will increase, especially in the most vulnerable countries, for which the poverty reduction is meant.

The alternative

The alternative, then, is to move decisively away from the current top-down approach, in which policies are largely determined at the global level, ostensibly to promote global growth, but in practice to promote the commercial interests and ideology of the major developed country governments.

Instead, we definitely need to move towards a system in which policies are designed explicitly and directly for achieving social and environmental objectives. The global economic system, in turn should be designed

to promote, foster and support such policies, treating growth as a by-product, and putting the interests of the majority of the world's population ahead of those of the rich and the transnational companies.

The report says that the notion that global economic growth is the only way of reducing poverty for the world's poorest people is the self-serving rhetoric of those who already enjoy the greatest share of world income. Its authors argue that to achieve real progress we need to change in the way we think about and discuss economic issues, and break out of the confines of mainstream economic thinking. We also need a shift in power relations, both globally and nationally, to move power from developed countries, elites and commercial interests to the majority of the world's population, the poor.

If we are to reconcile the objectives of poverty reduction and environmental sustainability, we need to challenge this conventional wisdom, and the blind pursuit of economic growth which springs from it. We cannot afford to continue with a system that sacrifices the environment, on which we all depend for our very survival, to give yet more to those who already have too much, hoping that a few more crumbs will fall from the rich man's table.

Read the publication of New Economic Foundation "Growth doesn't work" on www.neweconomics.org

Youth, the energy paradigm and that environment thing...

The discussion on energy for sustainable development was the center of the IPM attention yesterday. With over fifty statements in the plenary, the chair opted to allow the morning session to spill over into the afternoon discussion. The five hours of extensive monotonous pre-made statements gave insight into the mediocre approach to sustainable development this commission is building: supplying energy for economic development at any cost, and 'but it would be nice if we think of environmental and social components as we do it'.

Thursday afternoon will probably not bring us any surprises. The chair's summary is likely to reiterate that energy access is an issue, that improved technologies increase energy supply, and that we should all work together to make things better.

Yes, it took us two years to get there, folks!

Perhaps, if the 'interactive' discussions were interactive (ie. not just pre-made statements delivered without listening to what others are saying), we could have a summary outlining recommendations, providing guidance, setting targets and timelines, and clearly stating

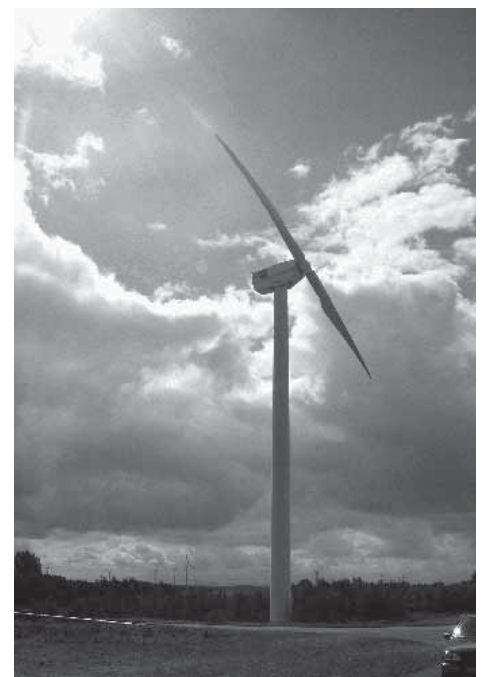
steps for meaningful implementation. Political will in the basement of the UN won't deliver a kilowatt, but it can create a framework that will promote action.

After listening to things being said over and over again, we need to see substantial steps to allow for changes in the way we think of energy supply and energy demand. The centralized production approach continues to be the target for most efforts, but that appears to assume that those cables and wires will make their way from nuclear and coal plants to rural communities, slums, and all those who do not have the economic power to attract the magic partnerships of the CSD. Increasing access to energy for rural communities requires a context-sensitive approach, and renewable energy can allow for such an approach.

Although increasing access to energy is one of the targets of the work of this commission, we cannot forget the context in which we are

trying to create that access: an access that represents equal and fair opportunities and sustains the environment. Many delegations do not seem to accept that creating strategies for sustainable development does not hold back economic development. Tomorrow, when the chair's report comes out, we hope to find policy recommendations that equally weigh the three pillars of sustainable development.

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Question of the day

What is the most important aspect in Climate Change?



Alison Drayton

United Nations Development Programme, US

For me the most important aspect is the possible loss of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). And the obvious and inevitable consequences of climate change for the poorest people in the world, both in developed as well as in developing countries. It is the poor that suffer disproportionately, they are the most disadvantaged in dealing with the consequences, especially the economic ones.



Gisbert Glaser

Science and Technology, Austria

For me the most important aspect is the urgency to deal with the problem. We need to achieve the goal of around + 2% of global warming. Anything above it, let's say 2.5% could lead to reaching the tipping point where the consequences will be too difficult to manage.



Michael Kelly

Business and Industry, France

I would say the actual danger of climate change for future generations. The real danger of climate change is the increase of anomalous unpredictable and violent weather patterns, which threaten human existence and future generations.

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