



**CSD**  
**– the UN Commission on Sustainable Development –**

**Unique opportunities for governance and  
sustainable development**

**Looking back to look forward.**

CSD made understandable from the point of view of the Nine Major Groups.

by Jan-Gustav Strandenaes  
UN CSD NGO Co-Organising Partner  
Senior Policy Adviser, ANPED  
Northern Alliance for Sustainability

# **CSD – the UN Commission on Sustainable Development – made understandable from the point of view of the Nine Major Groups<sup>1</sup>.**

## **Unique opportunities for governance and sustainable development Looking back to look forward<sup>2</sup>.**

### **CONTENT**

- **CSD – an organisational structure:**
  - **First year**
  - **Second year**
- **Coordinating with the other Major Groups**
- **A small recap concerning the struggle for civil society’s space**
- **The modalities available to civil society at CSD**
- **Creating space for civil society, points of entry and engagement**
- **Creating space for civil society, points of entry and engagement**
- **Civil society statistics, from the IPM and CSD proper**
- **Major Group policy meetings**
- **Modalities to ensure participation**
- **Involving NGOs in various processes: modalities for a participatory statement**
- **The reality of the new CSD**

**ANNEX I: - The CSD themes**

**ANNEX II: - excerpts from guidelines, CSD secretariat,**

---

<sup>1</sup> Even though this article is written primarily with NGOs in mind with examples from the NGO experience, the problems and challenges identified, the obstacles scaled are all applicable to the Nine Major Groups, - see note 5

<sup>2</sup> Written and researched by Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, ANPED Policy Adviser. Conclusions and opinions are his only, and do not necessarily express the views of the UN or his organisation.

## **CSD – the UN Commission on Sustainable Development – CSD made understandable from the point of view of the Nine Major Groups<sup>3</sup>.**

### **Unique opportunities for governance and sustainable development Looking back to look forward<sup>4</sup>.**

#### **CSD – an organisational structure:**

The UN CSD - the UN Commission for Sustainable Development<sup>5</sup> - offers the world one of the most open and participatory intergovernmental processes on sustainability issues. With a renewed mandate from the JPOI<sup>6</sup> in 2002, CSD started work with its new organisational mandate focussing on the sets of cluster themes known as the thematic clusters. The themes are found within two-year cycles complete with its organisational choreography as decided by CSD 11 in 2003 (for all themes see Annex I). Broadly outlined the organizational choreography is as follows:

#### **First year:**

- Developing the Secretary General's report – governments and civil society are all invited to contribute to the content; governments are invited to send, on a voluntary basis, a country report on the cluster issues.
- The 9 Major Groups<sup>7</sup> compose an 8000-word review document, which is subsequently translated into all official UN languages; it is imperative that this document does not deal with policy issues (see annex II); the documents are sent the CSD delegations as part of the official background documents.
- Each of the UN economic commission regions organise regional meetings, a so-called RIM, Regional Implementation Meeting, to discuss the cluster themes from a regional perspective. These meetings are supposed to come up with a non negotiated statement; civil society through their Major Groups are all invited to participate;
- Towards the end of the first part of the two-year CSD cycle, governments and civil society participate in the two-week review session held in April/May at UN headquarters in New York to finalise the identification of success stories and obstacles to progress; these meetings also have their set choreography.

#### **Second year:**

- Based on the outcome of the Review Session, policy documents are developed by the Secretary General and by each of the 9 Major Groups. The Major Group policy statements, based on the outcome of the Review Process, not exceeding 1000 words, are translated into all UN languages and distributed to all governments as part of the background documents.

---

<sup>3</sup> Even though this article is written primarily with NGOs in mind with examples from the NGO experience, the problems and challenges identified, the obstacles scaled are all applicable to the Nine Major Groups, - see note 5

<sup>4</sup> Written and researched by Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, ANPED Policy Adviser. Conclusions and opinions are his only, and do not necessarily express the views of the UN or his organisation.

<sup>5</sup> CSD, the Commission on Sustainable Development, a standing committee under the Economic and Social Council, charged with following up work on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, both dealing with global sustainable development.

<sup>6</sup> Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, decided on at the UN Summit on Sustainability, the WSSD in Johannesburg 2002.

<sup>7</sup> women, youth, trade unions, farmers, Indigenous Peoples, NGOs, local authorities, science and technology, business and industry

- The second year of the CSD cycle deals with policy outcomes, through two sessions: The first, the IPM, the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting at the UN Headquarters in New York, which then prepares the discussion for what has been called:
- CSD proper, the final two-week meeting in May, again at the UN headquarters in New York mandated to hammer out policy directives based on the two-year process to secure and cater to the success of the themes dealt with.

The CSD cycles present governments and civil society with a most poignant set of sustainability issues to work with and with this an opportunity to raise global awareness and renewed interest in some of the basic issues that relate to sustainable development.

### **Coordinating with the other Major Groups.**

The UN CSD secretariat works closely with representatives of the 9 Major Groups, through designated partners known as the organising partners. The partners are sought from within the constituencies of the 9 Major Groups.

Representative networks from within these constituencies make a bid for the role as the coordinating partner; the bid is discussed by the CSD secretariat, coordinating partners are nominated, recommendations on the nominated candidates are given from the secretariat to the CSD Bureau, which then assigns the task to one representative group from within each of the nine Major Groups. The task of coordinating partner is one year long, with a natural carry over to complete the two-year period; functioning as the organising partner or facilitator, with no funds from the UN, involves a large amount of work, working among other things to make the modalities of the CSD work as far as possible to the benefit of the major group, on logistics and process, capacity building and coordination to prepare the constituency for the UN based CSD meetings as well as providing coordination at the CSD meetings themselves. It is a full time job for at least one person. The various tasks are discussed below. Some of the organising partners are: WEDO, Women in Development has for many years been the coordinator for the women – this is now carried out by WOCAN - Woman Organising for Change in Agriculture; ICSU, International Council for Science, for the scientists, ITUC for the Trade Unions<sup>8</sup>, WBCSD, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development for business and industry, SDIN<sup>9</sup> the organising partner for the NGOs to mention but four of the nine.

(For more info on the Nine Major Groups, see: [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mgroups/mg\\_op.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mgroups/mg_op.htm).)

<sup>8</sup> . ITUC the International Trade Union Confederation is the world's largest trade union federation formed in Vienna on November 1, 2006 out of the merger between ICFTU, the International Confederation of Free Trade unions and WCL, the World Confederation of Labour. ITUC the International Trade Union Confederation is the world's largest trade union federation formed in Vienna on November 1, 2006 out of the merger between ICFTU, the International Confederation of Free Trade unions and WCL, the World Confederation of Labour.

<sup>9</sup> The Sustainable Development Issues Network was established in 2001 through an agreement between ANPED, the Alliance of Northern Peoples, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, ELCI, the Environment Liaison Centre International, Nairobi, Kenya and TWN, Third World Network, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to help facilitate NGO input into the CSD process, including their own networks, which covers some 3 500 NGOs in more than 170 countries. SDIN has been the organising partner for NGOs working for the UN CSD secretariat in this capacity every year since 2002. ITUC the International Trade Union Confederation is the world's largest trade union federation formed in Vienna on November 1, 2006 out of the merger between ICFTU, the International Confederation of Free Trade unions and WCL, the World Confederation of Labour. ITUC the International Trade Union Confederation is the world's largest trade union federation formed in Vienna on November 1, 2006 out of the merger between ICFTU, the International Confederation of Free Trade unions and WCL, the World Confederation of Labour.

## **A small recap concerning the struggle for civil society's space.**

To elucidate the reader concerned with civil society's participation in intergovernmental matters, it might be of interest to learn about the seriousness of the debate that took place on this theme during CSD 11.

According to the Johannesburg Plan of Action, the CSD was thoroughly revised during CSD 11. A two-year cycle was adopted as were a number of new modalities. Concern had been raised during the CSD 11 negotiations over the future participation of Major Groups. NGOs followed this discussion closely, and lobbied governments actively to arrive at as open and participatory approach as possible. Rolling back systems and processes of accreditation and participation as well as opportunities for engagement with delegates to what they had been prior to 1992 was not seen as acceptable, yet some of the official delegates were openly talking about this as an option. Whereas most delegations welcomed the presence of civil society, a number of countries, particularly from the G-77, wanted a stricter system of participation observed. The issue of enhancing the contribution made by Major Groups was taken up by Working Group II at CSD 11. Following protracted negotiations, the group finally came up with what they thought was agreed language on Major Groups. This debate, however, took much time during the plenaries at CSD 11. As ENB reported in their Summary Issue, on May 12, 2003:<sup>10</sup>

“During the working group's discussions, a number of areas of disagreement arose. These related to a variety of issues, including references to stakeholders and other constituencies, and to the “level” of Major Groups' participation in the high-level segment. Proposed references to “stakeholders,” “civil society” and other constituencies, such as scientists and educators, resulted in prolonged debate that was only finally resolved during the closing Plenary. In the working group, the EU, US and a number of other countries expressed a preference for text that allowed for the engagement of a broader input to the CSD process. However, the G 77/China argued that it was inappropriate in some cases to go beyond the original formulation, which generally referred just to Major Groups.

On Thursday evening, during the last week of CSD 11, following extensive discussions, a subparagraph promoting enhanced participation of “civil society and other relevant stakeholders” in implementation was approved. However, as part of the agreement on this text, the EU, US, Australia and others agreed in turn to a request by the G-77/China to delete a paragraph listing various constituencies/stakeholders, such as disabled persons, consumer groups, educators, parliamentarians, media, and the elderly.

A reference to the scientific community and educators was included elsewhere in the text, however. In spite of lengthy negotiations, the working group was unable to reach a consensus on two additional references to “other relevant stakeholders” proposed in the section. These were referred back to the Plenary, which approved a Canadian-brokered compromise to replace this specific reference with text using language from the JPOI....

‘Another area of dispute was how the text should guide Major Groups in determining their representation in the high-level segment. The G-77/China, Brazil and Saudi Arabia preferred

---

<sup>10</sup> Earth Negotiations Bulletin, Monday, 12 May 2003; Vol 5 no 193, page 10

using a reference to the participation of “high level Major Groups representatives”, arguing that this was appropriate in order to have an interaction with ministers. However, Canada, Mexico, Switzerland and several others preferred a less prescriptive formulation, noting that, in some cases, the most senior Major Groups representatives are not those that ministers would benefit most from speaking with. The discussion resulted in compromise language calling for participation “at the appropriate level.”

As negotiations at CSD 11 ended a set of modalities was developed and appeared acceptable to the Major groups:

**“Final Text:** The decision states that contributions to the CSD from Major Groups, including the scientific community and educators, should be further enhanced through measures such as:

- strengthening Major Group participation in CSD activities, including through the interactive dialogue during the high level segment;
- making multi-stakeholder dialogues more action and implementation oriented;
- enhancing participation and effective involvement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in implementation, as well as promoting transparency and broad public participation;
- striving for a better balance and better representation of Major Groups from all regions; and
- supporting active involvement in partnership-related and capacity-building activities at all levels, including the Partnership Fairs and Learning Centre.”<sup>11</sup>

Lobbying for maximum space for civil society at CSD has been a major objective for the Major Group coordinators. Even though CSD 11 seemed to set the rules of process and modalities with new rules of engagements for the Major Group community, this by no means ended the process debate at the conclusion of that CSD. The issue of allowing Major Groups space at CSD re-emerged strongly during CSD 13, and again at CSD 14 and will warrant vigilant supervision from civil society to keep the present transparent and participative civil society process at CSD alive.

### **The modalities available to civil society at CSD.**

Civil society is according to decisions taken at CSD 11, granted extensive participation at CSD, and to ascertain some efficiency and relevance, both concerning civil society and the delegations, a number of modalities have been developed. They can be described as rules of engagement and rules of performance.

From a technical point of view, these rules and modalities are the following:

- The civil society organisation must have relevant accreditation, according to rules by the CSD.
- Access is given to all meetings during negotiations, unless certain committee meetings or breakout groups are described as ‘closed’ at the discretion of the Chair or Facilitator of a given negotiating process.
- Access to all documents is provided on a continuous basis prior to as well as throughout the CSD negotiations.

---

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* page 10

- Civil society is further provided ample opportunities to participate in negotiations through
  - Organising side events;
  - Participating in ‘official’ side events;
  - Participating and presenting at the learner centre;
  - Participating in the NGO run morning meeting;
  - Participating in the special strategy review session/ policy sessions for each major group;
  
- CSD secretariat organises regular meetings with the Bureau for the 9 co-organising partners;
  
- The Chair of the Bureau may, if invited by civil society, address the NGO morning meeting;
  
- Regional groups (governments) may select a number of key representatives from the Major Groups and have meetings with them (often a practice used by the EU, the US and USCANZ/ JUSSCANNZ)<sup>12</sup>;
  
- The dialogue sessions: 3 hours are set aside for the official plenary to have a dialogue with all the 9 Major Groups on the cluster themes. After having listened to short interventions by representatives of each of the 9 major groups, the plenary discusses the statements, in what should be an interactive exchange of ideas and concerns. There is a similar dialogue session during the High Level segment as well also lasting one and a half hour.
  
- Civil society has a right to address the plenary following certain procedures:
  - There are formally designated spaces, so-called entry points, for a representative of the 9 Major Groups to address the plenary – at the opening of CSD, through the dialogue sessions, at the closing of the formal session, and, opportunity provided, commenting on the chairs text; this last is usually at the discretion of the chair.
  - Participation in the plenary negotiations, asking questions etc according to a selection process handled by members of the CSD secretariat during the ongoing plenaries: statements or questions are written down on a designated form, and brought to the chair during the meetings who may or may not bring civil society into the discussion.
  - The chair may ask civil society to address a segment in the official plenary with a prepared statement.
  - During the review session, when many of the sessions are based on panel discussions, members from the 9 major groups are asked to be part of the panels.

---

<sup>12</sup> USCANZ: The USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; JUSSCANNZ: Japan, the USA, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Norway and New Zealand

## **Creating space for civil society, points of entry and engagement**

NGOs in particular, and civil society representatives at the CSD in general often has a long way to go to bring the procedural context to their constituencies and make use of it to maximise their opportunities in interacting with CSD in a constructive and meaningful way. Obtaining as many entry points during the official negotiations and discussions as possible has been a goal civil society always has been striving for. Making these entry points visible for civil society is imperative. Thus ongoing information services throughout the year on the CSD cluster themes, and a well-organised training session prior to CSD have been deemed crucial for the success of civil society participation at CSD. The training session prior to the CSD opening is to familiarise civil society participants with procedure, lobby techniques, the agenda, the contentious issues, services available to the civil society participants etc. This training session is also to some extent, kept up during the work carried out at the NGO morning meetings, partly by devoting these meetings to content and reporting, as well as explaining difficult issues pertaining to political positions etc, and partly by having an open agenda so people can ask questions and understand the difficulties embedded in intergovernmental processes and intricate UN policy matters. Major Group strategy reviews or policy discussion is discussed at special meetings designated to deal with such issues.

Another success element for effective civil society participation is the daily news service. The NGOs publish a daily newsletter, an 8 to 10 pager, commenting on the review or policy development during the CSD sessions and allowing the various NGO participants to come with their own views and statements. The newsletter is read by most delegates, and gives them an opportunity to see what the NGOs are thinking as well. This has been an information service carried out every year at CSD since 1997.

### **Safeguarding space for civil society in the official process.**

A minor dispute emerged during CSD 13 (2005) concerning the dialogue session. According to the schedule, the first section of the chairs report would be released during the evening of the Wednesday of the first week. Thus G-77 had asked the chair to postpone all negotiations on the following Thursday, and be allowed to use this day for reading the report and if needed, to consult their capitals for further advice. This happened to be the day that was designated for the dialogue session with the Major Groups. A debate ensued – whether or not the Major Groups should accept the suggestion, or simply lobby governments for their support and try to stop the suggestion from G-77. A few NGOs had on their own initiative asked the EU to lobby against G-77, but both governments and Major Groups were divided over the issue. The US interestingly enough took the position of fighting G-77, ostensibly working to safeguard the position of Major Groups within the CSD. The NGOs after having consulted with other Major Groups and with a number of NGOs took a different position.

Arguing and lobbying to get the maximum out of what was obviously a fait-accompli, the NGO position was the following:

It was evident that the Chair would rule in favour of G-77 and grant them this day as a ‘study’ day. If the decision by the NGOs had been to keep the dialogue session intact on that day, something the NGOs definitely could have opted for, and would indeed have had the rooms complete with interpreters, chair etc, the Major Groups would most probably have talked to themselves, the delegates being back at their missions working out their responses to the Chair’s text. Such a practice would definitely have been against the intention expressed in the

outcome result of CSD-11. If on the other hand, civil society had chosen to go along with the Chair's suggestion, and lose the day, they needed to be compensated for the loss of the 'dialogue opportunity'. The loss was expressed by the NGO coordinator, SDIN, as a unique opportunity to address delegations during the official plenary commenting on the Chair's text. SDIN therefore argued that Major Groups should be compensated with an opportunity that would be equal to the loss of the dialogue session in stature and possibilities of influence. SDIN therefore suggested that the Major Groups be given an opportunity to comment on the Chair's text in plenary, and to do that with the plenary in official session. The request was met by the Bureau's argument that civil society could not actively participate in an official session and push their arguments in debate form. The official sessions were for representatives of the elected governments and civil society could not negotiate as such in an intergovernmental process. SDIN countered the argument and suggested the following: That the Major Groups would be allowed a three minute statement directed to the chair's text, and that these comments would come at the very beginning of the plenary session, thus they would be statements from civil society, and not arguments in a governmental debate. The preferred outcome would also be that these comments be annexed to the final text of the CSD. With the exception of the Major Groups' statements annexed, the suggestion was adopted by the CSD.

This was considered as a major victory for civil society. No other time in the history of CSD had the Major Groups been asked to or been allowed to comment in an official capacity in an official plenary on the Chair's text.

### **Civil society statistics, from the IPM and CSD proper.**

The official world, represented by government delegations has never been totally intransigent to allowing civil society to speak to delegates during official meetings. An article published at CSD (13) in the daily SDIN newsletter "Taking Issue", summed up the interactive way in which the major groups in general and the NGOs in particular, had been taken into the official negotiations:

- The first two-year CSD cycle (CSD 12 and 13) has had close to 190 interventions during the official sessions from the Major Groups. Using an average of 2 ½ minutes per intervention, and adding the Interactive Sessions from the Review Session during CSD 12 as well as for the two High Level Segments, Major Groups have talked to delegates for close to 15 hours during these official sessions.

The NGO strategy session between 9 and 10 every morning has been well attended; an average of 112 persons have attended daily. A much valued information tool has been the 'report backs' from the many sessions with the delegates. During the first week there were 26 report backs, during the second week, 32. Representatives from all continents carried out these report backs.'<sup>13</sup>

The 'report backs' are from members of the NGO community who follow the negotiations and report back to the morning meetings on what are the essential and which are the contentious issues. Thus despite many meetings often running parallel to each other, members of the Major Group community are able to follow what is going on by getting the larger

---

<sup>13</sup> Taking Issue no 15, ANPED/ SDIN 2005: see [www.ANPED.org](http://www.ANPED.org)

picture from the ‘report backs’. This reporting is done on a voluntary basis and the rapporteurs are selected on a daily basis during the NGO morning meetings.

### **Major Group policy meetings.**

As the morning meetings have taken on the nature of an open meeting, were all the nine Major Groups are welcome, and as these meetings have been slowly turned into morning information meetings on the politics of the day, NGOs needed a new session for their policy discussions. Such a meeting was organised during the late afternoon, early evening. These meetings were held daily, and close to 45 policy meetings were organised during CSD 12 and 13 with at total of almost 400 persons attended these meetings at one time or another.

### **Modalities to ensure participation**

Developing, writing and agreeing on statements have always been a cumbersome and at times painful process in the NGO world. The variety of interests, attitudes, approaches, the level of knowledge and experience, the right to participate in a participatory way, it all adds up to a process more categorised by discombobulation than an orderly ‘delegates way of doing things’. Yet, this seemingly disorganised way of doing business, reflects in many ways the nature of “we the peoples”. At the very bottom of any facilitation lies the challenge of bringing an NGOs process into an orderly event with an outcome that everybody can at least agree to as being part of and with an outcome that matters in content as well. Many have tried, and many have failed at this. Yet out of these past experiences, some chaotic, and allowing the untraditional to be tried, a system has emerged at CSD that for some time may provide answers to the need of participating in an accountable manner. The Arrias system at the Security Council is such an innovation, now being used so many times, that it has found its way into the world of accepted procedure. And though not entirely new, and embodying the eclectic nature of processes at the UN, maybe the participatory modalities that were used by the NGO major group both at CSD 12 and 13 in developing statements in interactive ways, is another such procedure.

CSD 12 was the first CSD to have an all out review session based on an interactive participation from all the nine Major Groups during the plenaries. Coordinating the input in this context posed new challenges for the Major Group community, and as all nine Major Groups were in many ways considered equal to the delegations and international intergovernmental groups, they were also called by the chairman to participate directly in the ongoing discussions. Thus higher performance demands were put on NGOs. This entailed being prepared with statements, being present at the “table” at any given time during the sessions, and being able to report back with high quality statements to the larger NGO community.

### **Involving NGOs in various processes: modalities for a participatory statement.**

During CSD 13, it became imperative a number of times to develop an agreed statement to be delivered on behalf of the Major Groups in the official plenary meetings. The way this was developed by the NGO coordination and facilitation efforts<sup>14</sup>, merits mentioning and can do well in being replicated:

---

<sup>14</sup> Carried out by ANPED for the SDIN group

The statement to be delivered in plenary relates of course always to an issue, and this time at the CSD the issues were those of the CSD thematic clusters: water, sanitation and human settlements. For now, in 2008 at CSD 16, the themes are: Agriculture, rural development, land management, drought, desertification, Africa, and the two 'revisit themes' water and sanitation. It may be recalled that CSD 13 decided that 'water and sanitation' were to be revisited at CSD 16 in 2008.

By using the morning meetings, where on an average 90 to 100 persons usually participated, the NGO coordinators (we) notified the NGO community that they had been given an opportunity to speak during the plenary sessions. Then we explained a process through which we all could participate and agree to the contents of a statement, and asked the morning NGO meeting for approval or rejection of the process:

The process we explained and devised was first tried out during CSD 12, and was later amended and somewhat perfected during CSD 13:

As has been noted above, an average of some 100 persons participated in the morning meetings during CSD 13. From talking to this group and from listening diligently to the discussions and statements made during the morning meetings, we had identified 8 major groupings within the NGO community: 4 geographical groups, an African, a South American, an Asian and a North-American/ European group. In addition we had identified 4 active thematic working groups: the working group on Freshwater, on the Human Settlements, the Water Consortium (consisting of large international NGOs working on water issues: WWF, Freshwater Action Network, Tearfund etc.) and a group that referred to themselves as The Environment Consortium; we asked the morning audience if people present felt they could belong to one of these groupings. They all acquiesced.

A core group representing the 8 identified groupings, (2 per identified group was suggested), was needed to handle the development of the statement, and deal with disagreements or any other problem that might arise in relation to this very process. We therefore asked each of these groups to identify two persons, thus forming a 16 people body. After having been set up, this group carried on the work that led to the final formulation of the content of the statement. In addition, this core group would also choose among themselves a speaker that would deliver the statement on behalf of the NGO community, as well as one assistant/secondment/back-up person to the speaker. In addition to the 16-group body we had also identified 3 persons who had already said they would be willing to function as an editorial board. This editorial board would be charged with writing the statement and be responsible to the larger 16 group body. The editorial group consisted of one African, one Asian and one European. These persons were already known to the morning meeting as capable and knowledgeable people. This entire set-up and process was subsequently presented to and unanimously accepted by the morning meeting.

Then we said that everybody present, including those NGOs who participated in the CSD proceedings, but for some reasons had failed to show up, could come back to the room we were in (Conference room B) at 2 in the afternoon. Between 2 and 3:30 pm they could all present ideas and issues they felt should be reflected in the NGO statement. (The only condition was that the issues presented had to have relevance to the CSD 13 cluster themes). The 16-person group, representing the 8-issue/geography caucuses, including the editorial committee, then received the ideas and wrote them down in an organised manner. The time used for this had to be exactly within the time allotted, and was punctually terminated at 3:30

pm. Had you not registered an idea before that time, your idea would not be included in the statement. And no latecomers were admitted. That would have involved extending the time again and again and defeated the very purpose of the time framework. After time was up at 3:30 pm, the working group put the statement together; the editorial committee finalised the statement, and we made sure it was copied and printed and handed out for each and every person present at the morning meeting the following day.

Strict discipline to decisions taken was kept at all times during this process. The proposed statement handed out at the morning meeting was not to be discussed there. The more than one hundred participants were told that they should read the statement, and come back to the same room at 2 pm to go through it, but that in accordance with the unanimous decisions taken the day before at the morning meeting, no new ideas would be allowed to be added to the statement. That sequence was over the previous day. The following afternoon session was only to be about the language: making sure the statement was within the three minute slot the NGOs were given, and making sure the language was strong, succinct, challenging. The afternoon session allowed for a thorough reading of the statement paragraph by paragraph. This process started exactly at 2 pm and was also terminated at exactly 3:30 pm, as was also unanimously agreed at the morning meeting. The editorial group was then given the final mandate to look over the statement once more, and come up with the final text within the confines of the afternoon discussion on language, after which we had the finalised NGO document printed and made available for all NGO participants the following morning.

This open and highly participatory process actually allowed more than 100 people to interact and participate in the writing of the first statement, and some 80 persons to interact in the writing of the second statement (there were one such statement each of the two weeks.)

### **The reality of the new CSD.**

In many ways, the new CSD decided on at WSSD in 2002 presented the players of the sustainability world with a new reality and with this, new challenges on how to understand and use the CSD reality. The UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Anan, expressed the hope that the new CSD could indeed be a watch dog over sustainability issues.

Working with the new reality of CSD while at the same time safeguarding the role of Major Groups and in particular the NGOs became an important task for the NGO coordinator. As was to have been expected, few really paid attention to the process between the meetings. Thus the ongoing work of the co-organising partner has become an integral part of successful civil society participation - a practice in good governance that may be replicated, imitated or inspire other processes within the UN and intergovernmental system.

Written and researched by:  
Jan-Gustav Strandenaes  
UN CSD NGO Co-Organising Partner  
Senior Policy Adviser, ANPED  
Northern Alliance for Sustainability  
Amsterdam, the Netherlands,  
office: +31 20 475 1742  
fax: +31 20 475 1743  
[www.anped.org](http://www.anped.org)  
cell: +47 470 18 337  
[jg\\_str946@hotmail.com](mailto:jg_str946@hotmail.com)

**ANNEX I: The CSD themes are:**

2004-2005 Water Sanitation Human Settlements SIDS, Regional Focus	2005-2006 Energy for sustainable development Industrial Development Air Pollution / Atmosphere Climate Change	2008-2009 Agriculture Rural Development Land Drought Desertification Africa, Regional Focus.
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2010-2011* Transport Chemicals Waste Management Mining A Ten-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns	2012-2013* Forests Biodiversity Biotechnology Tourism Mountains	2014-2015* Oceans and Seas Marine Resources Small island developing States Disaster Management and Vulnerability
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2016 – 2017\*  
Overall appraisal of implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation

\*needs to be reconfirmed during 2008.

Overarching themes:

- Poverty eradication, Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production,
- Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development,
- Sustainable development in a globalizing world Health and sustainable development,
- Sustainable development for Africa
- Sustainable development of SIDS,
- Other regional initiatives,
- Means of implementation,
- Institutional framework for sustainable development,
- Gender equality,
- Education

**ANNEX II:** (excerpts from guidelines, CSD secretariat, see the UN DESA/ CSD website for exact information.)

***“The Commission on Sustainable Development, at its eleventh session, encouraged countries to provide national reports, on a voluntary basis, in particular to the Commission’s review sessions. In doing so, the Commission underscored that the reporting should:***

- ***reflect the overall progress in all three dimensions of sustainable development, focussing on the thematic cluster of issues for the cycle;***
- ***focus on concrete progress in implementation;***
- ***include lessons learned and best practices;***
- ***identify actions taken***
- ***highlight relevant trends, constraints, challenges and emerging issues***
- ***incorporate, where relevant, the effective use of indicators for sustainable development.***

The chair’s report follows a few basic elements from the rules of procedure. They are:

- an improved understanding of priority concerns in the implementation of the selected thematic cluster of issues and pave the way for an effective policy discussion;
- strengthening implementation in these areas;
- to address the constraints and obstacles in the process of implementation identified during the Review Year;
- mobilise further action;
- address new challenges and opportunities, and share lessons learned and best practice;

The outcome of the Review Session will be a report including a Chairperson’s Summary containing identified constraints and obstacles and possible approaches and best practices....

(f) In the Policy Year the Commission will convene an Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting, for one week in New York in February/March to discuss policy options and possible actions to address the constraints and obstacles in the process of implementation identified during the Review Year.”

(g) The discussions of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting will be based on the outcome of the Review Session, Secretary General’s reports as well as other relevant inputs. Based on these discussions the Chair will prepare a draft negotiating document for consideration at the Policy Session.

(i) The Review Sessions and the Policy Sessions should mobilise further action by all implementation actors to overcome obstacles and constraints in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and address new challenges and opportunities, and share lessons learned and best practice.