



CSD-13 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 11 APRIL 2005

The thirteenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13) opened on Monday morning, 11 April 2005, at UN headquarters in New York. The session began with opening statements from key officials and the adoption of the agenda and organization of work. Delegates were also briefed on relevant intersessional meetings and discussed the Chair's text from the recent Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM). On Monday afternoon, regional perspectives on water, sanitation and human settlements were presented and discussed.

OPENING SESSION

CSD-13 Chair John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) opened the meeting, noting that this is the first policy session under the new work programme agreed at CSD-11. He reflected on the review of water, sanitation and human settlements conducted at CSD-12, and its conclusion that current efforts are not sufficient to achieve the targets set out under the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and relevant Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He highlighted poverty and lack of resources and capacity as major obstacles in achieving these targets. He also drew attention to the Chair's text from the IPM and the "matrix" of issues summarizing this text. He explained that the challenge now is to agree on measures to expedite progress on targets, and said his vision for CSD-13 was that it would take decisions that would have a positive impact, including on resources. He reminded delegates that CSD-13 would set a precedent for future CSD sessions and other processes, and highlighted the important role of Major Groups.

Delegates then addressed various organizational matters, formally appointing, by acclamation, Khaled Elbakly (Egypt) and Husniyya Mamadova (Azerbaijan) as the final two Vice-Chairs (Dagmara Berbalk of Germany and Boo Nam Shin of the Republic of Korea were elected in 2004). Husniyya Mamadova was also elected as rapporteur. CSD-13 then adopted its agenda (E/CN.17/2005/1) and organization of work. Regarding the organization of work, Chair Ashe noted that the Chair's draft text will be distributed at 9:00 am on Thursday, 14 April, and that formal negotiations will begin the following day.

José Antonio Ocampo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, reminded delegates that the task facing CSD-13 is to agree to policies and practical measures that countries can adopt on the goals on drinking water, sanitation, and slum dwellers, noting that CSD-13's outcome will provide a litmus test of international political will. Ocampo said the target of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020

is not ambitious enough, and stressed the need to address local authorities' lack of fiscal resources and capacities.

Anwarul Chowdhury, UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), noted that these countries are recognized by the UN as the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. He urged delegates to address LDCs' and SIDS' needs, while expressing disappointment that they are not appropriately reflected in the matrix of the Chair's IPM summary. Chowdhury called for a shift from a needs-based to a rights-based approach. He also suggested that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) be encouraged to increase funding for water and sanitation.

REPORTS FROM INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS:

Following the opening statements, delegates were briefed on relevant intersessional meetings held since CSD-12, including the:

- 20th Governing Council of UN-HABITAT (April 2005);
- UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (February-March 2005);
- World Conference on Disaster Reduction (January 2005);
- Africa Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (January-February 2005);
- International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (January 2005); and,
- Second International Forum on Partnerships for Sustainable Development (March 2005).

REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL

PREPARATORY MEETING: Chair Ashe introduced the agenda item relating to the report of the IPM, explaining that a Chair's text and matrix had been developed to help focus discussions during CSD-13.

Jamaica, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, highlighted CSD-13's precedent-setting role, as well as the need for focused and action-oriented outcomes, better examination of the issue clusters' interlinkages and financial implications, public education, integration of the issues into national plans and appropriate follow-up. Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, discussed the need to identify actors with actions, promote the JPOI's importance in the development agenda, improve interagency and donor coordination, and adopt monitoring and follow-up mechanisms.

The US said the new two-year format had built political momentum and integrated partnerships into the conduct of the CSD's work. However, he cautioned that achieving the Millennium Declaration's development goals is still a long way off, and highlighted issues of financing, capacity, and



multi-stakeholder cooperation. He concluded that the best message CSD can deliver is “to show how a reformed UN process that integrates the actions of governments, international organizations, and a range of non-governmental players can deliver concrete results.”

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

On Monday afternoon, delegates considered regional perspectives on water, sanitation and human settlements in a session chaired by Vice-Chairs Berbalk and Elbakly.

AFRICA: The UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA) discussed the African Ministers’ Council on Water (AMCOW) and outcomes of the Pan African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water (December 2003, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia), including prioritization of ecosystem protection, sharing of water resources, support for the knowledge base, and operationalization of the African Water Facility. He discussed the need for a flexible integrated settlements approach that balances rural and urban needs, and suggested including “implementation status” in future CSD agendas.

UNDP highlighted Africa’s minimal water supply and sanitation coverage, noting the difficulties of addressing these issues in post-conflict societies and given the HIV epidemic. She discussed UNDP’s role in catalyzing basin-wide dialogue and encouraging incorporation of water activities into national plans, emphasizing partnerships’ importance.

The AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK discussed its Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative, stressing the importance of water and sanitation in achieving the MDGs in Africa. He also discussed the goal of achieving 80 percent water and sanitation coverage in Africa by 2015.

ASIA-PACIFIC: The REGIONAL COMMISSIONS’ NEW YORK OFFICE reviewed the Asia-Pacific’s growing water problems resulting from expanding needs in agriculture, industry and urbanization. He noted the attention being given to IWRM and supported a greater focus on financing capital investments in infrastructure, efficiency incentives in the agricultural, industrial and domestic sectors, legal frameworks and standards to strengthen governance of public water utilities. He noted that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has also encouraged increased exchanges of experience, regional cooperation and integrated approaches to human settlements planning.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA provided additional detail on the results of the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, and UNDP reviewed many of the activities it supports in the region.

WESTERN ASIA: The UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA) highlighted the value of pro-poor policies and national IWRM facilities based on each country’s specific circumstances. He stressed the need for efficient water use and the role technology transfer can play in areas such as wastewater management. He highlighted the value of confidence-building measures on transboundary water issues. On sanitation, he noted the need to strengthen capacity for monitoring and enforcement, while on human settlement issues he emphasized tenure and greater security for the poor, partnerships and appropriate financial mechanisms.

UNDP’s REGIONAL BUREAU FOR ARAB STATES highlighted increasing water stresses in the Arab world and steps taken to mainstream water issues in national strategies. Stressing the value of IWRM, he highlighted work by a number of countries, and also outlined UNDP’s work on the Capacity 2015 programme to operationalize the MDGs.

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN: The ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC) noted the region’s improved economic conditions, high levels of water supply, and urban concentration.

He outlined important issues such as financing systems and urban property regimes. He also highlighted the need to assess economic losses due to insufficient water provision and sanitation, less sophisticated water treatment systems tailored to Latin America, and the relationship of land tenure to water management.

UNDP’s REGIONAL BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN underscored, *inter alia*: problems with rural water and sanitation in the region; the importance of UNDP’s collaboration with the GEF; the need to adapt to the increasing effects of climate change; and the need for political awareness raising, scientific studies, capacity building, and the strengthening of institutions.

EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA AND OTHERS: The UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (UNECE) drew attention to the numerous transboundary water areas in Europe and the issues of equitable use and resource distribution that they raise. He stressed the value of IWRM and the role of water and sanitation in combating poverty. Regarding human settlements, he indicated some deterioration in existing housing stocks in Central and Eastern Europe. He also highlighted the role of governments in creating favorable investment conditions, and stressed the role of the private sector. UNDP reported on the activities of its regional bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. She noted an increase in sub-regional differences, with the Central Asian countries demonstrating the need for effective water management, and UNDP’s promotion of capacity building.

DISCUSSION: Argentina, speaking on behalf of the RIO GROUP, stressed the importance of regional cooperation in implementing decisions and promoting further actions identified by national authorities. The EU drew attention to several CSD-related processes ongoing in Europe, and to the development of the EU water strategy and relevant initiatives. Belgium, for the EU, suggested regular four-year experts’ monitoring of the three current CSD themes. TANZANIA emphasized a rights-based approach to water, while MEXICO stressed technology for increasing water use efficiency, and CANADA presented on its support for various projects in Africa.

UNEP noted the need for a follow-up mechanism for the regional initiatives. In response a question from CUBA, ECLAC said some Latin American countries will achieve the MDGs, although progress on sanitation coverage had recently slowed. He also stressed the need for a stable technology transfer mechanism and for improved Rio Group coordination. In response to a question from TANZANIA, the ECA noted the existing list of sub-regional initiatives. UNDP responded to questions from JAMAICA, explaining efforts by UNDP’s Water Task Force to support the exchange of experiences and highlighting issues common to all regions, including poor and marginalized populations, decentralization, integration, and capacity building.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Major Groups were debating the format of their participation in CSD-13 as the meeting opened on Monday. Some were concerned at the reduction in time allocated by the Bureau for interactive discussions during the first week, and the impact this might have on Major Groups’ input. Others seemed satisfied with the Bureau’s explanation during a meeting held on Sunday that Major Groups would be integrated better in discussions held on Tuesday and Wednesday. Some Major Group representatives were also reporting problems actually accessing the meeting, apparently due to heightened security around the UN.

An issue of interest to some delegations was the call by at least one UN agency head to strengthen the target on improving the lives of slum dwellers, a topic that was a source of discord at last week’s UN-HABITAT Governing Council session. Some delegates were expecting it to resurface in New York.