



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 5 No. 58 Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Monday, 24 February 1997

THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 24 FEBRUARY – 7 MARCH 1997

The *Ad Hoc* Open-Ended Intersessional Working Group of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will open this morning. During its two-week session, the Working Group is expected to review the reports of the Secretary-General and others, and focus on the format and substantive contents of the document to be considered at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSD

Agenda 21 called for the creation of the CSD to: ensure effective follow-up of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED); enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity; and examine progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local, national, regional and international levels. In 1992, the 47th session of the UN General Assembly set out, in resolution 47/191, the terms of reference for the Commission, its composition, guidelines for the participation of NGOs, the organization of work, the CSD's relationship with other UN bodies and Secretariat arrangements.

The CSD held its first substantive session at UN Headquarters in New York from 14-25 June 1993. Amb. Razali Ismail (Malaysia) was elected the first Chair of the CSD. Delegates addressed, *inter alia*, the adoption of a multi-year thematic programme of work; the future work of the Commission and the exchange of information on the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national level.

The second session of the CSD met in New York from 16-27 May 1994. The Commission, chaired by Klaus Töpfer (Germany), discussed cross-sectoral chapters of Agenda 21, including: trade, environment and sustainable development, consumption patterns and major groups. On the sectoral side, delegates considered health, human settlements, fresh water resources, toxic chemicals, and hazardous, solid and radioactive wastes.

The CSD held its third session (CSD-3) from 11-28 April 1995 in New York. The revised format of the Commission, which included numerous panel discussions, enabled the participants to enter into a dialogue. The Day of Local Authorities, combined with

the NGO and government-sponsored panels and workshops throughout the session, enabled the CSD to examine the local aspects of implementing Agenda 21. Chaired by Henrique Cavalcanti (Brazil), CSD-3 examined the second cluster of issues according to its multi-year thematic programme of work. The sectoral cluster for 1995 included: planning and management of land resources; combating deforestation; combating desertification and drought; sustainable mountain development; promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development; conservation of biological diversity; and environmentally sound management of biotechnology. The Commission also established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests.

CSD-4, held from 18 April – 3 May 1996, completed the Commission's multi-year thematic programme of work and began considering preparations for the Special Session. The Commission, chaired by Rumen Gechev (Bulgaria), examined the third cluster of issues according to its multi-year thematic programme of work. In reference to the Special Session, most delegates agreed that the CSD should continue and that it should not conduct another review of Agenda 21. Suggestions as to its future work varied from concentrating on certain sectors (e.g., oceans) to cross-cutting issues (e.g., poverty) and specific problems (e.g., megacities). Many held out hope that in the coming year the CSD could redefine its role and accelerate progress in achieving the promises made in Rio.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL: The nineteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council met from 27 January-7 February 1997 in Nairobi. The Council adopted the "Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP," which states that UNEP is the principal UN body in the field of the environment and is the leading global environmental authority, serving as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. It notes core elements of a focused mandate: analysis and assessment; policy advice; promotion of cooperation; international environmental law; and the promotion of greater awareness. On the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), priority was given to the implementation of the GPA in UNEP's programme of work and a request was made for its expansion to all regional seas programmes. On chemicals, the Council concluded that a global legally-binding instrument was required to reduce the risks from persistent organic pollutants (POPs). It requested that an

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Peter Doran <PF.Doran@ulst.ac.uk>, Kira Schmidt <kiras@iisd.org> and Lynn Wagner <grund@scf-fs.usc.edu>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James Kimo Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. French translation by Mongi Gadhouch. The sustaining donor of the *Bulletin* is the International Institute for Sustainable Development <reception@iisdpost.iisd.ca>. General support for the *Bulletin* for 1997 is provided by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) of the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the Swiss Federal Office of the Environment. Funding for the French version has been provided by ACCT/IEPF with support from the French Ministry of Cooperation. The authors can be contacted at their electronic mail addresses or at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists (ASCII and PDF format) and through the *Linkages* WWW-server at <<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>>. For further information on ways to access, support or contact the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.

intergovernmental negotiating committee start work by early 1998. On the development of an international legally-binding instrument for the application of the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, the Council requested that UNEP hold a conference by the end of 1997, for the conclusion and signing of an international legally-binding instrument.

Delegates could not agree on a US proposal for the creation of a high-level committee to oversee UNEP and suspended their meeting on its final day. UNEP's Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) said the proposal reduces the role of permanent representatives to that of "postmen." As a result of this lack of consensus on governance, the US, the UK and Spain announced that they will temporarily withhold their contributions to UNEP for 1997 until the matter is resolved. The Governing Council was suspended and is expected to reconvene later this year to resolve the outstanding questions on governance.

SECOND SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT: The Second Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Management (FORUM II) was held from 10 - 14 February 1997 in Ottawa, Canada. Delegates to FORUM II made recommendations on five Programme Areas: expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks; strengthening national capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals; harmonizing classification and labelling of chemicals; exchanging information on toxic chemicals and chemical risks; and establishing risk reduction programmes, including the disposal of obsolete chemicals and pesticide risk reduction and pollution release and transfer registers (PRTRs).

FORUM II also made recommendations on emerging issues such as endocrine disrupting substances and established an *ad hoc* Working Group on persistent organic pollutants (POPs). Delegates reached agreement on a number of actions regarding the structure and function of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS). They established a Forum Standing Committee as a mechanism that would better respond to new developments and give advice in preparing for future meetings. They also agreed to a full review of IFCS terms of reference, a general policy for operating languages, and provisional criteria for meetings to be held under IFCS auspices.

WORKSHOP ON INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The second Ghent Workshop on indicators of sustainable development (ISD), held from 20 - 22 November 1996 in Ghent, Belgium, was sponsored by the Governments of Belgium and Costa Rica with the support of DPCSD. It focused on the Working List of indicators adopted at CSD-4. Countries may select from this list the indicators to use in their national policies, according to their own problems, policies and targets. The Ghent Workshop welcomed the methodology sheets produced for each indicator on this Working List as a valuable basis for methodological harmonization. The objective of this second Ghent Workshop was to launch the testing of ISDs. It endorsed guidelines and a timetable for national testing and agreed that regular reporting would be useful for all partners in the testing process. Twelve countries have now confirmed their intent to test the ISDs on behalf of the CSD. The first two reports were planned for January and March 1997, while the first substantive annual report about the testing process is requested for November 1997. The testing phase should conclude by the end of 1999. The aim of the CSD is to have a working list of ISDs available for all countries, based on their national priorities, by the end of 2000.

MEETING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL ADVISORY BOARD ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The UN High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development held its seventh session in Monaco from 14 - 17 January 1997. During the session, the Board addressed the preparation of a report for the Special Session. The Board selected energy, water and transport as critical issues for sustainable development and will present policy recommendations drawn from recent experience in many countries to address those issues. The Board's discussions involved not only its members but also a number of invited specialists in the fields of energy, water and transport development. Their discussions with the Board focused on promoting private cooperation between international, governmental and private sector organizations and on ways to promote private investment in the sustainable development of energy, water and transport.

FOURTH EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON FINANCIAL ISSUES OF AGENDA 21: More than 70 international experts in finance and sustainable development from international organizations, Governments, NGOs, academia and the private sector participated in the Fourth Expert Group Meeting on Financial Issues of Agenda 21, subtitled Finance for Sustainable Development: The Road Ahead. The meeting, held at ECLAC Headquarters in Santiago, Chile from 8-10 January 1997, aimed at: (i) assessing progress in the mobilization of financial resources for sustainable development since UNCED; (ii) providing a state-of-the-art review and analysis of unresolved issues related to traditional and innovative international and domestic financial mechanisms; and (iii) generating information and recommendations that will assist the CSD in preparing for the Special Session.

WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION: PATTERNS AND POLICIES: The Governments of Brazil and Norway hosted this Workshop from 25-28 November 1996 in Brasilia, Brazil, to identify the key elements for a shared North-South vision on the issue of changing consumption and production patterns. The conclusions of the meeting note, *inter alia*: the issue of consumption and production patterns (Chapter 4 of Agenda 21) has the common interest of, and deserves additional international cooperation between, industrialized and developing countries; exchange of information and experiences on national policy development and implementation is a determining factor toward achieving progress in making patterns of consumption and production more sustainable; and the current debate should have a broader scope, going beyond technological and policy change to incorporate the human dimension, in terms of better understanding needs and values that underpin sustainable livelihoods.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

The CSD's Intersessional Working Group will convene at 10:00 am in Conference Room 4. After electing its officers, the Working Group will turn to adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/CN.17/1997/WG/1). The morning session will also feature statements by the newly-elected Co-Chairs and presentations of the outcome of sessions of relevant intergovernmental and intersessional meetings. In the afternoon, the Working Group will begin its general discussion on preparations for the Special Session of the General Assembly to review and appraise Agenda 21 implementation.