



## CSD-8 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2000

The eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-8) opened today at UN Headquarters in New York. Chair Juan Mayr (Colombia) urged delegations to use the session as an opportunity for frank, sincere and transparent dialogue, noting the international deadlock on a number of the issues for consideration. After addressing procedural matters and listening to reports of intersessional activities in the morning, participants engaged in Multi-stakeholder Dialogues on Agriculture and Sustainable Development in the afternoon and evening.

### OPENING PLENARY

Chair Mayr declared the session open and invited delegates to consider the election of officers. He recalled that the election of one Vice-Chair of the CSD-8 Bureau had been postponed in 1999, and reported that African states had agreed to nominate Abderrahmane Merouane (Algeria). Merouane was elected to sit on the CSD-8 Bureau with Mayr, and Vice-Chairs Patrick McDonnell (Ireland), Zvetolyub Basmajiev (Bulgaria) and Choi Seok-young (Republic of Korea).

Nitin Desai, UN Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), described his expectations of the session, including: practical guidelines for the effective integration of economic, ecological and social dimensions of land and agriculture; a move beyond rhetoric on ways to address declining ODA; a new focus on trade and environment; and guidance for ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly on the follow up to the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF).

Chair Mayr outlined the organization of work for CSD-8, noting the establishment of three drafting groups: Integrated Planning and Management of Land Resources, and on Agriculture, to be chaired by Patrick McDonnell; Financial Resources and Mechanisms on Economic Growth, Trade and Investment, to be chaired by Choi Seok-young; and Preparations for Rio+10, to be chaired by Zvetolyub Basmajiev. On the High Level Segment, Chair Mayr noted that there would be five thematic meetings. The organization of work (E/CN.17/2000/1) was accepted.

**REPORTS OF THE AD HOC INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUPS:** The report of the *Ad Hoc* Inter-sessional Working Group (ISWG) on Integrated Planning and Management of

Land Resources, and on Agriculture (E/CN.17/2000/11) was presented by ISWG Co-Chair Patrick McDonnell. He highlighted, *inter alia*: implementation of sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) goals; the multi-functional character of agriculture (MFCAL); access to land and security of tenure; and security of food supply. ISWG Co-Chair Choi Seok-young summarized the report of the *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group on Financial Resources and Mechanisms and on Economic Growth, Trade and Investment. He noted elements for a draft decision identified during the meeting and stated that work in this area is crucial for the ten-year review of UNCED.

**REPORTS OF INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:** The NETHERLANDS outlined the challenges, objectives and results of the Cultivating Our Futures Conference on MFCAL, held in the Netherlands in September 1999, and called for an action-oriented solution.

AUSTRALIA summarized outcomes from the Land Care Conference held in March 2000, which addressed the sectoral theme of integrated planning and management of land resources. He noted the role of local and indigenous communities in land management and progress made in developing and implementing solutions. He highlighted the creation of a land care clearing-house in Canberra. AUSTRALIA described an international workshop on land administration and sustainable development and introduced the Bathurst Declaration. A UN DESA representative presented the results of the first International Forum of National Sustainable Development Councils, which met in New York during the week before CSD-8.

### MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE: PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES, CONSUMPTION AND SAFETY

Chair Mayr introduced the first Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture, focusing on choices in agricultural production techniques, consumption patterns and safety regulations, and potential threats to sustainable agriculture.

**OPENING STATEMENTS:** On behalf of business, the INTERNATIONAL AGRI-FOOD NETWORK identified integrated farming techniques as the most appropriate way of achieving sustainability, and welcomed government intervention adapted to local conditions. On behalf of farmers, the INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS and VIA CAMPESINA emphasized the importance of regenerative agriculture, and urged governments and international agencies to focus agricultural policy on small-scale and peasant farming. The INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF

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FREE TRADE UNIONS emphasized the need to: support the work of the International Labour Organisation (ILO); promote worker participation in decision-making; and identify the impacts of biotechnology on employment. The NGO CAUCUS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS, speaking for NGOs, women and indigenous people, recommended, *inter alia*: focusing on small farmers; improving food security through adoption of appropriate land tenure; supporting the trend toward organic agriculture; completing and ratifying the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs); implementing a moratorium on environmental releases of all genetically modified organisms (GMOs); removing agricultural subsidies; and supporting the consumer's right to know.

**OPEN DIALOGUE:** Noting the need for drought resistant crops, EGYPT advocated the use of new technologies where safety can be guaranteed. The NETHERLANDS highlighted global food security and called for action-oriented proposals from the CSD. NIGERIA, speaking on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, highlighted the debt burden of developing countries. The UNITED STATES outlined five principles to guide a framework for biotechnology: an objective regulatory process, consumer involvement, fairness to farmers, corporate citizenship, and free and open trade. CANADA supported building effective biosafety regulatory systems in developing countries.

**STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS:** Representatives of TRADE UNIONS recommended that: the concepts of SARD and MFCAL recognize waged agricultural workers as a distinct group; core labour standards be reflected in the work of the CSD and in the SARD and MFCAL concepts; and that greater safety and protection from pesticides be provided to workers.

NGO representatives offered recommendations on: the question of liability in the introduction of GMOs; the right of farmers to save their agricultural seeds; the creation of a multi-stakeholder working group to study indicators of sustainable agriculture; the revival of local knowledge and techniques; the commitment of fifty per cent of agricultural research funding and seventy per cent of project funding to organic production; a commitment by the FAO to allocate fifty per cent of its funding and staff resources to sustainable and organic farming within three years; a shift of university research funding to organic farming studies; the application of the precautionary principle; and implementation of a moratorium on technologies that pose a perceived risk. Representatives of INDIGENOUS PEOPLE offered recommendations on: the need for a moratorium on GMO field trials; government and inter-governmental support for the sustainable agricultural practices of indigenous people; government and international respect for land rights in support of sustainable agriculture; the need for a working group with representation from indigenous people, women, and the exploited; and the need for land tenure mechanisms guaranteeing access to productive land. INDUSTRY representatives recommended that: deliberations on organic farming and GMOs advance on the basis of sound science and not "emotionalism"; countries build capacity to implement informed and science-based regulatory biosafety procedures; indicators be developed to assess the respective impacts of organic agriculture and biotechnology approaches on sustainability; and that innovation be driven by need. FARMERS' representatives recommended that: equal amounts of financial support go to genetic engineering and small-scale farmers; governments increase public-sector investment in agricultural research; governments develop a sound regulatory framework for GMOs and organic products, with multi-stakeholder participation in the design; secure land tenure be recognized as the best incentive for sustainable agriculture; and that governments recognize the necessity of shared responsibility for the higher production costs of sustainable agriculture.

### **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE: BEST PRACTICES IN LAND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

Chair Mayr introduced the second Multi-stakeholder Dialogue, focusing on best practices in land resources management to achieve sustainable food cycles.

**OPENING STATEMENTS:** Noting the need for greater cultivation intensity and higher yields, the INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE NETWORK highlighted the role of biotechnology, and emphasized that sustainable agriculture be adapted to provide for local demographic, technical and socio-economic conditions. The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS and VIA CAMPESINA called for policy measures promoting sustainable agricultural practices, including equal access to credit for small-scale farmers, partnership programmes, and the promotion of organic products. The INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS called for guidelines for multinational corporations in the food system, and recommended using capital flows for capacity building. The NGO CAUCUS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS recommended removing subsidies, improving integration between agricultural and rural development policies, ensuring equitable land tenure, redistributing quality land, and promoting the role of small-scale farmers. He called on industry to define "sustainable agriculture".

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:** Emphasizing the multi-functional character of agriculture, JAPAN highlighted the public sector's role in providing information and technology.

**STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS:** INDUSTRY representatives proposed recommendations calling for public policies that: preserve yields; ensure dignified wages for workers and fair markets for producers; and encourage cooperation among all sectors. NGOs tabled recommendations calling for: resources for research into agroecology; the creation of a working group on land management issues, with a mandate to meet until CSD-10; the development of national and international legal mechanisms, reflecting land tenure as a prerequisite for SARD; the creation of national and international instruments to recognize traditional agricultural practices; and ratification of a POPs convention and relevant climate change agreements.

TRADE UNIONS recommended: establishing agricultural workers' rights; linking other sectors to agriculture; addressing cross-boundary pollution; and linking production and consumption patterns through an integrated food system. FARMERS' representatives called for: the identification of best practices for analysis; national government support for local farmers in obtaining capital; measures to protect present sustainable agriculture activities; and the incorporation of the precautionary principle in agricultural policies.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

A number of participants are questioning the shelf life of the stakeholder contributions to the dialogues on sustainable agriculture. They are asking whether the stakeholder recommendations will find their way into proposals to be negotiated in the CSD-8 drafting groups. Concerns have also been raised about the extensive focus on biotechnology at the expense of debate on other issues.

### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUES:** The third Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture, focusing on knowledge for a sustainable food system, will convene at 10:00 am in Conference Room 2. The final Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture, focusing on globalization and trade liberalization, will convene at 3:00 pm in Conference Room 2.