



A daily publication of the Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN) at the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Defining a relevant future role for the CSD

Pieter van der Gaag, Executive Director, International Secretariat, ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability

The world outside that of the CSD is, regrettably, very large. It consists of the bulk of civil society, the bulk of governmental departments, and the bulk of intergovernmental organisations. This "majority" has consistently shown a disinterest for the work of the CSD, even though supporting sustainable development is high, if not highest, on its agenda.

Ministers and delegates gathered here and now in New York must consider in their deliberations what it will take to assert the relevance of the Commission on Sustainable Development to all those people working for Sustainable Development. There are several steps to be undertaken. The most important step is to establish clearly the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the international system

Policy Coherence

One of the more exciting proposals in the report of the Secretary General for this session- the CSD as a policy coherence and integration forum for the international system- is not a new one. This idea was already formulated in Agenda 21, and was thus the original purpose of the CSD. Focussing the limited resources of the CSD on policy coherence and integration will insert a certain amount of realism in the current rhetoric on "implementation, implementation and implementation". There are three levels of where policy coherence and integration will have to be established, stimulated, and monitored. These three levels are:

- 1) the international policy level
- 2) the level of the Intergovernmental Institutions
- 3) between the international level and the national level

The international policy level

There are few international environmental, social and economic policies that have not been established without sustainable development mentioned as a goal. But simply mentioning the words is not enough. The CSD should review and monitor these policies to form an understanding of how they contribute to Sustainable Development as defined in Agenda 21 and in the Johannesburg Programme of Action. The CSD should, when discrepancies are found, formulate recommendations for change in those policies as to make them coherent with Agenda 21 and the JPOI. Each review cycle should therefore consider the coherence of international policies that have been formulated for the issue area under consideration, or if issues of incoherence are brought to the CSDs attention. Thus, one function of the CSD should be to help the international system become more coherent.

The level of intergovernmental institutions

The work of all intergovernmental institutions should also be coherent with the goals as formulated in A21 and the JPOI. The CSD should request for each 2 year cycle a report from each IGO (from within the UN System, the International Financial Institutions, and the WTO) on

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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 will be held in Conference Room 1 from 9:00 to 10:00.

From Thursday 1 May on, meetings will be held in Conference Room 6, 9:00 to 10:00

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



Youth Participation as an Indicator of Sustainable Development

Jan Kozak, Elizabeth Weber, and Jeremy Lardeau
International Youth Parliament

CSD- a first

The International Youth Parliament is a fairly new organization. Having been established only a few years ago by OXFAM Australia, it has already subsidiaries in more than 150 countries. This is their first experience with CSD. The IYP views on how youth can effectively work on following up the content of the Johannesburg Plan of Action are strong.

Youth – a significant group

The United Nations estimated that in 2000 there were 1.1 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24, representing an unprecedented 18 percent of the global population. If almost 20 percent of the Earth's population is eager and willing to join into global, national and local problem solving efforts, shouldn't our government's pay heed and take advantage of these potential human resources

Integrating the power of youth- a strong, significant group- within the decision making process will improve planning and sustainable development implementation. Youth participation at a national level is therefore an indicator of sustainable development; it reflects the ability of governments to capitalize on the skills and ideas of a valuable yet often marginalized group.

Youth participation – a right

Youth participation is a right and enabling effective youth participation is an obligation to which most governments of the world have already committed themselves. However, the link between youth participation and their impact on decisions has been unsatisfactory so far. CSD should therefore provide guidelines and mechanisms for the accountability and credibility of youth participation at all

levels, as well as monitoring mechanisms through which to review and evaluate the extent to which youth concerns have been integrated into national decision-making.

Youth to use self-organized mechanisms
Youth groups should continue to use self-organized mechanisms to identify their representatives. We believe that it is at the national and local levels that young people must have a primary right to participate. Beyond youth-specific issues, young people have innovative ideas, new perspectives and dynamism to bring to the resolution of broader issues.

Establish national youth councils - now

We do not believe that there is one effective form of youth participation. Globally, both young people and their communities are heterogeneous. Within a social justice and human rights framework, there are certain universal principles that youth participation and representation should follow. Following these principles we seek to identify and analyze one specific mode of youth participation, the formation of National or Local Youth Councils (NYC). The success of NYC is not ensured by following a particular model, but adopting a model that reflects the wishes and aspirations of young people within a particular country or community.

Minimum requirements to make NYCs workable:

NYCs provide young people with a direct access point to government and policy making thereby encouraging real, rather than symbolic, participation in government processes. These councils often act to empower youth by allowing young people as individuals or members of youth organizations, national and international bodies to have the

opportunity to take part in formal decision-making.

The government consults with the NYC in formulating policies or laws that will directly or indirectly affect young people. This may be achieved by members meeting with ministers and government representatives.

The NYC should be established by the enactment of legislation. If the council is a statutory body its longevity will be ensured, and legitimacy and credibility bolstered. In this way young people will understand that the government is serious about involving them in governmental decision making processes.

Legal provisions are introduced making it compulsory for government to analyze the impact of governmental decisions on young people in consultation with the NYC.

The government includes youth representatives on all governmental bodies and in national delegations to the CSD.

NYCs must be democratic, representative, accountable and transparent. In order to provide the most appropriate environment for constructive dialogue between youth and the governments, NYCs need to retain their independence and autonomy under all circumstances.

NYCs need to be well resourced in order to play an active role in governmental decision making processes and to support administration, national events, research and maintaining a high level of communication between youth communities.

NYCs must have regular access to governmental decision making arenas.



Ecological Footprints:

Growth and ecology

What are the ecological consequences of the growth-based and resource-intensive development path that is presently being sought out by humanity as a whole. Many NGOs present at CSD 11 think these questions should be at the ideological basis of any CSD discussion, and especially as CSD 11 is about the direction of CSD and sustainability for the next decade. One of the fundamental questions that lie at the heart of the sustainability debate, is whether human activities are taking place

within the ecological capacity of the planet.

Ignored by economists

Unfortunately, economists and political leaders today tend to ignore or downplay these questions, because they claim that any limit to local biophysical capacity can be overcome through trade and commerce: in other words, if you require more resources than your local environment can produce, then simply import them from somewhere else.

Overconsumption

Recent Ecological Footprint calculations reveal some interesting results. On average, an American requires approximately 9.6 global hectares (1 hectare = 100m x 100m) resource and waste absorption requirements, while someone in India, for example, consumes some 0.77 hectares. How much is actually available to us? If we divide the Earth's biologically productive land and sea area by the world population, we have approximately 1.8 hectares available *per capita* (in 2002). Currently, humanity's Footprint is 2.3 hectares, which exceeds the biocapacity of the planet by some 20%. And this figure does not include the protection of 12% of the world's biologically productive space called for in the Brundtland Report (1987) to accommodate for the estimated 10 million other species with which we share the world.

NGOs challenge the governments

"Living more simply so that others may simply live" was part of the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. This message is not foreign to NGOs and they would like to challenge the governments in a side-event on Ecological Footprints and sustainable production and consumption issues on May 1st, from 1:15 pm to 2:45 pm in Room 6 at the UN Headquarters.

Integrative Strategies Forum and ANPED—The Northern Alliance for Sustainability, among others will participate. This event is hosted by Association 4D, an NGO based in France that coordinated the Jo'burg 2002 Coalition, a coalition of over 120 French NGOs that have worked together on the lead-up to, and during, the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

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how they are contributing to carrying out the agendas as formulated in those documents. The CSD should then work with those IGOs to reform their workprogrammes when incoherencies are found. Limiting this to the theme area that will be in focus during a particular cycle will limit costs and workload. National Governments must ensure that these IGOs are willing to work with the CSD.

Between the international level and the national level.

An important role the CSD can play is to ensure that the policies agreed at the international level actually get implemented on the national level. The CSD should review national reports on efforts undertaken to reform the internal policy system, and the policies in place to comply with the international agreements that further sustainable development. It should also commission reports from IGOs to help identify where the national policy making process is failing to reach the goals formulated in the JPOI and A21. The CSD should formulate recommendations to support improvements in national policy design.

The CSD, as the only global forum on sustainable development, is naturally placed to play this role. Focussing on the question of implementation through establishing and pushing for policy coherence, would increase the relevance of the CSD and make sense of its role.

No carrying capacity

The carrying capacity of our ecosphere is limited: there can be no infinite material growth in a finite environment! Yet, our economic models push us to produce more and consume more, largely through advertising. Economic growth remains the overarching objective on the political agenda of any country, a convenient way to skirt around any talk about redistributing the wealth that already exists (between and within countries). But planetary ecosystems can no longer accommodate current economic activities, let alone an increase. The UNEP's GEO 2000 report states that the present course is unsustainable. Postponing action is no longer an option.

The indicator debate

The Ecological Footprint is designed to measure the extent of the human impact on the biosphere. It is a measure of the biologically productive area that is required to provide—indefinitely and using prevailing technology—the resources and energy used by a given population, and to absorb its wastes, wherever this area may be located on the planet. As such it is a crucial indicator to measure progress, particularly in changing unsustainable production and consumption patterns, which are important components of sustainable development. It was introduced by William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel in the mid-1990s in Canada and is now used by a number of, institutions and international organisations as well as NGOs and academics.

To publish articles in this newsletter, please submit your text to one of the SDIN facilitating organisation's staff.

SDIN Facilitating organisations:

ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability
ELCI, Environment Liaison Centre International
TWN, Third World Network

Editors reserve the right to refuse articles or edit for length and clarity

We're on the Web:
www.sdissues.net

What is the Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN)?

The Sustainable Development Issues Network for 2002 is a collaborative effort among civil society networks and non-governmental issue caucuses. SDIN aims to improve communications and access to information on sustainable development issues, and improve communications among NGOs engaging in the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The Issues Network is not meant to compete with or replace the networking and organizing efforts of other NGO bodies, but to assist and promote the efforts of civil society networks working on sustainable development issues. In this sense, SDIN is not another "network" *per se* but hopefully a useful tool of NGO networks.

The CSD NGO Schedule 30 April 2003

9:00-10:00 SDIN Morning Meeting, Conf. Rm 1.

Agenda:

- Meeting with EU
- Report backs of negotiations and corridors
- Future of CSD

Conference Room D:

10:00 -11:00 Fresh Water Caucus

11:00-12:00 Youth Caucus

12:00-1:00 Earth Values Caucus

2:00-3:00 Indigenous Peoples Caucus

5:00-6:00 Womens Caucus

6:00-7:00 Trade Unions Caucus

7:00-8:00 SDIN Issue Group
Co-ordinators meeting

These are trying times - NGOs ruled out or deliberately forgotten by CSD?

A prestigious panel debate, the first ever on the CSD Regional Implementation Forum took place in Conference Room 4 on Tuesday afternoon. The UN ECE debated, as did UNEP, UNDP the EU and a regional initiative called Baltic 21 – another government undertaking. Among the accepted panellists was also Business and Industry. The panellists were all given space to expound on their implementation virtues. They had all been invited by the UN and had been given time to prepare their statements.

The only group legally recognized by the UN in addition to the governments, the NGOs, were not represented in the panel. The debate focussed on issues relevant to the UN ECE region – home of the Arhus-convention granting participatory rights to people and organizations, where NGOs have been driving forces behind projects on sustainability. Why then is Business and Industry given superior rights over NGOs?

Was forgetting the NGOs in the panel simply an organizational slip, or do we see the beginning of deliberate marginalisation and expulsion of NGOs from the CSD?

The future of CSD will show, - clearly we are living in trying times.

...jgs

Snapple facts

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