



Taking Issue

*The Sustainable
Development Issues
Network*

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

What will the future CSD bring to Sustainability

Major groups voice their concerns during the first week of CSD 11:

NGOs as well as all the other 8 major groups are concerned about the future of CSD. The multi-stakeholder debate allowed for an exchange of ideas, comments and concrete suggestions between the major groups, the delegations, the bureau as well as the chair. The following week will be crucial, as the fate of the CSD the next decade will be sealed. Taking Issue brings some of the concerns of three of the major groups in this issue – the NGOs, the Indigenous Peoples and the Trade unions. The following issues of the newsletter will bring the concerns other major groups

NGOs: The future of CSD is about implementing Agenda 21

NGOs strongly support the Multilateral System and the United Nations. The decisions taken about the future of the CSD can lay out a path that can significantly increase that support world-wide. This was only one of many important positions the NGOs stated during the first week of CSD 11. During the MSD debate, the NGOs highlighted several times a number of issues. – here are some excerpts:

Three overarching objectives of sustainable development

The future of the Commission on Sustainable Development is about the implementation of Agenda 21, including the Rio Principles, using the roadmap of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Sustainable Development is also about the Millennium Development Goals, Human Rights, and Participation. The commitment to and the political will displayed for the Millennium Development Goals by delegations, were comforting, as they will lead to an understanding of how much the MGDs are an integral part of Agenda 21. The NGOs, in line with all the other major groups, felt the need to reiterate the need to treat the three overarching objectives of sustainable development with equal importance, as the proposed text from the Chair did not seem to reflect this.

2 year work programme

The 2-year cycle of work, work on the national and regional level with reviewing implementation, identifying obstacles, a rights-based approach to sustainable development, defining CSD as an international UN body in relationship to other multilateral institutions were among the many points highlighted by the NGO statements.

Partnerships

The partnerships may be voluntary agreements between partners to undertake a certain
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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 6 from 9.00 to 10.00.

Co-ordination meetings will be held on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in Conference Room D: 6.00 to 7.00 PM

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programme of work. They are however officially endorsed by the United Nations, and hence must be held accountable to high standards. NGOs found the concept of voluntary reporting to be almost inherently contradictory. If partnership[s] were to benefit from a recognition and association with the United Nations, the minimum these partnerships should expect was to return to the multilateral system a factual report. Voluntary reporting would make the whole idea of reporting highly subjective. Independent evaluations of effectiveness, as required by essentially all UN operations would be essential in this context.

Trade and sustainability

In direct relationship to the Chairman's text, the NGOs encouraged the need for a chapeau where the relationship between trade and sustainable development was outlined.

The absence of any consideration to the CSD's role in integrating trade is a major

omission that will come to haunt its implementation programme and jeopardize its chance for success. The WTO is today the most powerful multilateral organization, and its legally binding rules have tremendous impact on sustainable development. If sustainable development dimensions are not injected into trade policy, the goal of sustainability will forever remain an elusive goal. By not doing this, the CSD will undermine its own mandate.

Policy and implementation

Time and again NGOs have had to reiterate that there is no contradiction between policy and implementation, and that these two issues are in fact mutually reinforcing. A large number of NGOs and other major groups working on sustainability are in fact engaged in both issues – lobbying the UN and executing concrete projects in the field. The specific skills of the policy experts within NGOs are highly needed in the CSD to help translate the experience of those working on the ground.

New major groups

The Chair had brought up the number of major group, and opened the possibility for adding new ones to the existing 9. No one are opposed to this idea, least of all the NGO community. The role of education as a cross cutting issue, is long neglected in the CSD, and should be included. The educational community in Johannesburg had made thorough preparations for a possible inclusion as a 10th major group. The elderly has long tried to be included as a major group on several occasions. Whatever the expansion, this issue should not be handled on an ad hoc basis. A task force could be established on this issue, but with members representing the major groups. These members should come from around the globe.

The coming week will see major groups eagerly contributing to developing the new CSD, and eagerly committing to carrying this out

..jgs

Reversing the paradigm

Putting 'ecological debt' on the agenda of multilateral negotiations

By Geert Fremout, DODO, Belgium

The concept of 'ecological debt' was launched by South American ngo's in the run-up to the UNCED conference. It is a powerful concept, adding a dimension to the analysis of the existing North-South relationships within the context of Sustainable Development

Conflicts

Internationally, the ecological debt arises from two separate ecological distribution conflicts. First, the exports of raw materials and other products from relatively poor countries are sold at prices which do not include compensation for local or global externalities. Second,

rich countries make a disproportionate use of environmental space or services without payment, and even without recognition of other people's entitlements to such services (particularly, the disproportionate free use of carbon dioxide sinks and reservoirs).

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Ecologically Unequal Exchange

- The (unpaid) costs of reproduction, maintenance or sustainable management of the renewable resources which have been exported. For instance, the nutrients incorporated into agricultural exports.
- The costs of the future lack of availability of destroyed natural resources. For instance, the oil and minerals no longer available, or the biodiversity destroyed.
- The compensation for, or the costs of reparation (unpaid) of the local damages produced by exports (for example, the sulfur dioxide of copper smelters, the mine tailings, the harms to health from flower growth, the pollution of water by mercury in gold mining), or the present value of irreversible damage
- The (unpaid) amount corresponding to the commercial use of information and knowledge on genetic resources, when they have been appropriated gratis and commercial use has been made of them "biopiracy".

Lack of payment for environmental services or for the disproportionate use of Environmental Space

- The (unpaid) reparation costs or compensation for the impacts caused by imports of solid or liquid toxic waste.
- The (unpaid) costs of free disposal of gas residues (carbon dioxide, CFC...), assuming equal rights to sinks and reservoirs.



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Ecological Debt

One objection to the notion of an Ecological Debt is that debts are recognised obligations arising from contracts, such as a sale or a mortgage. A non-recognised debt does not exist, according to this view. However, there are cases in which debts have arisen without a contract. Take for instance the obligation to pay reparations by a State after a (lost) war, as Germany had to do after World War I, or the indemnities for infringements on human rights as Germany had to do after World War II.

Alternative treaty

One of the alternative international "treaties" at Rio de Janeiro's Earth Summit of 1992 was a Debt Treaty, which introduced the notion of an ecological debt in contraposition to the external debt. One decade later, Friends of the Earth made of the Ecological Debt one of its campaigns for the following years. Now the concept is known worldwide. The 'Southern Alliance of creditors of the ecological debt' was founded, it has associated networks in all continents.

Principle 7

So far, the Principle of 'the common but differentiated responsibilities (Agenda 21) is the most visible 'translation' of the notion of ecological debt in UN-language.

The creation of the adaptation fund under the Bonn agreements (UNFCCC COP 6) was the first significant step that is made towards repaying a part of that ecological debt in practice. Politically this is an important gesture.

Eco debt in operation

Individual countries are already using the concept of ecological debt. During PrepCom II (WSSD), India referred to it in an official statement. The Swedish government made in the early '90s the Swedish government made efforts to calculate the country's environmental debt. The Belgian Federal Plan on Sustainable Development stipulates the execution of a research project on the possible use of the concept of 'ecological debt' as a policy tool.

Now, time has come to move on and use the concept as a strong argument in negotiations on the multilateral level, not only in the discussions on financial debt, biodiversity and climate change, but also as an imperative for an urgent change of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in northern countries.

Trade Unions See Key Role for Civil Society in CSD Programme of Work

By Winston Gereluk, Global Unions

As the CSD moves into its second decade, and a post-WSSD Programme of Work, there is a need for Major Groups to work together to ensure that the role of civil society is properly addressed. The first week of meetings at CSD 11 have provided some reason for concern.

Uniformity ensured by CSD

Major Groups will have to keep particularly close watch on the way that Implementation Cycles unfold. For example, while Trade Unions generally support the proposal for Regional Implementation Forums to be held before each Review Session, replacing the work of the Inter-Sessionals, they are strongly convinced that these must remain under the full coordination and control of the CSD Secretariat. Only in this way, can uniformity and full participation of all Major Groups be ensured in all of the Regions.

No outside experts

Trade Unions also believe that there is good reason for Major Groups to take united action against proposals to feature a 'dialogue with experts' at inter-governmental preparatory meetings held in advance of each of the proposed Policy Sessions, and in particular, to the proposal that resources be specifically dedicated to this purpose.

The concern is two-fold: Firstly, one of the prime reasons why Major Groups were designated in Agenda 21 was because of the unique and proven expertise they could bring to the process, by virtue of their diverse backgrounds. Trade unions, moreover, have a long-standing disagreement with the use of 'outside experts', based upon experience with the perspectives they tend to bring to the process. They believe that if resources are available for 'expertise', that these should be devoted to increasing the participation of the Major Groups, as

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Workplace Assessments:

The issues of expertise, information and knowledge raised in the Chairman's Draft ties in directly with the major proposal trade unions have brought before CSD11: Workplace Assessments. Trade unions believe that these

partnerships have the potential to involve millions of workers around the world in joint efforts to provide information and direction from the 'ground floor'. Joint assessment, furthermore, can lead directly to joint action for change in patterns of production and consumption at the workplace, and also serve as springboards to sustainable consumption in personal and community life. Workplace assessments can be part of a strategy to win the hearts and minds of the public-at-large, especially on the importance of modifying their individual life style patterns

The Workplace Assessment (WA) is a process whereby trade unions and employers in one or several worksites, a sector or region, work together to assess workplace performance according to agreed checklists of environmental, occupational and social criteria. Their most positive feature is that they are based on the concept of joint action; precisely the concept underlying the involvement of Civil Society at the CSD, as they depend on an agreement between workers, employers and the community to:

- Joint target-setting, monitoring, record-keeping, and workplace implementation;
- Tracking of progress on identified issues;
- Setting of priorities at specific worksites or across sectors;
- Establishing effective reporting; and
- Consolidating targets set by such international agencies as ILO, UNEP, etc.

Older Persons as a Major Group

By Mary Racelis

Sustainable development without the active participation of older persons is simply unsustainable! This was the message brought by the three panelists to a side event last week on "Older Persons". This story is from the Phillipines.

Older people bemoan the lack of services provided by the government, ranging from clean water, health services, sanitation and secure land tenure, to adequate schools for their grandchildren. The health clinic is too far away to walk to, requiring money for transport. Even if one gets there, the most a patient can hope for after a long wait are merely diagnosis and prescription. One still has to buy the medicine. Free medicine is mainly for children and pregnant women. Geriatric concerns have generally not found their way into the public health system.

Being old poses problems common to older persons everywhere. But being old *and poor* brings even greater difficulties. The constant threat of summary eviction hanging over residents of urban poor settlements rests most

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support for their participation has always been a major issue underlying involvement.

Strong trade union role in the CSD Member States voted in Johannesburg to enhance the contribution of Workers and Trade Unions to the CSD. They can show that they are serious, in this regard, by taking a few simple, but practical steps. Firstly, they can include trade union members in their caucus, to allow them to participate directly. Secondly, they can provide funding and resources to allow trade unionists to participate fully in all of the meetings before and during CSD Sessions. Thirdly, they can ask the CSD to provide ample opportunity for serious dialogue during CSD Sessions. Finally, they can engage trade unionists and other Major Groups in the negotiations that take place at CSD Sessions.

Strengthening CSD as a multilateral institution is important. Assuring major group participation along the lines Trade Unions have suggested is equally important

heavily on older people. The disruption of the household economy, the distance of relocation sites from health centers and hospitals, the possibility of being dumped in the open under rain and sun can prove lethal to the weaker members of the family. Women, however, seem to cope better than men in dealing with new threats. As Aling Linda put it, "Men know they will be taken care of by us; women, on the other hand, have to fend for themselves."

Yet, one should not see poor older people solely as victims. In many of Metro Manila's poor settlements, older people, most of them women, have organized with the help of NGOs around the issues that matter to them. They have created funeral cooperatives through contributing small amounts of money to a common fund, which become available for the proper burial of a member. Geriatric community workers chosen from their own ranks get training in taking blood pressure, conducting daily exercises for older persons, organizing dances and outings, and performing services for the larger community. Several groups have set up their own geriatric health centers, with doctors, dentists, and nurses volunteering their services, and pharmaceutical companies contributing medicine.

So successful has the program of the Council of Services for the Elderly (COSE) become that similar activities and groups have been

organized in other cities of the Philippines by older persons themselves. Through their combined efforts, a much-publicized and well-attended annual program of awards now takes place, singling out 10 older persons nationwide who have contributed significantly to the development of their communities. NGOs active in community theater help the groups to put on a splendid program of entertainment, which is attended by high-ranking government, business, and civil society leaders and publicized on television. COSE promotes the idea that through organizing around their own interests and contributing their time and energy to the overall well-being of the community as well, older persons enhance their image and gain the respect of younger generations. It goes without saying that this empowering process also enhances their self-esteem, confidence and happiness.

Thus, through effective organizing, older persons have become important stakeholders in sustainable development. This enables them to claim more of the societal resources due them. Community-based organizations that have expanded nationally, like COSE, offer the opportunity to consolidate worldwide movements and federations centering around the concerns of the growing number of aging and active citizenry in a true grassroots, bottom-up effort. Only when the power and capacities of older persons gain wider recognition will genuine sustainable development come of age.

Are the Rio principles already meaningless?

During the first week of debate at CSD 11, a number of delegations questioned such items as a general access to information, the right for major groups to participate and debate as well as refusing to see war and militarism linked to the general debate on sustainability. Others seemed less willing to discuss problems unless they were linked to so-called hard scientific facts. And there were those who scoffed at the concept of human rights and the environment.

Allow us to reiterate:

Rio Principle 7 points out Common, but Differentiated Responsibilities: no.10 emphasizes the right to participation, justice and information: Rio Principle 15 establishes strongly the Precautionary Principle, nr 24 outlines the causes of war and war itself as a major obstacle to implementing Agenda 21, and paragraph 169 of the JPOI establishes the link between human rights and sustainable development.



Indigenous Peoples' Vital Role in Sustainable Development

By the Indigenous Peoples Caucus

During the first week of the CSD, we as the Indigenous Peoples Major Group presented specific proposals during the Inter-active Ministerial roundtables and the Multi-stakeholder Dialogues.

Strong statements

Joji Cariño (Ibaloi-Igorot, Philippines), speaking to "Poverty Eradication," emphasized the danger in global policy planning and implementation that ignores historical and cultural diversity and specificity. She urged culturally sensitive implementation of JPOI and MDG Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategies to ensure that implementation does not lead to our further impoverishment and marginalization.

Managing the resource base

On "Protecting and Managing the Natural Resource Base of Economic and Social Development," Tom Goldtooth (Dakota/Dine, North America) stressed that Agenda 21 and the JPOI must be the basis for the CSD work programme. Furthermore, he stated that the exercise of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination over the protection of our natural resources is a precondition for successful governance, implementation and/or partnership processes for sustainable development.

Health and POPs

Regarding "Health and Sustainable Development", Lucy Mulenkei (Maasai, Kenya) highlighted the fact that poor health is connected to negative environmental impacts and unsustainable development. Examples were the toxic releases of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and toxic contamination from the mining industry. She called for prior, informed consent and for governments and industry to ensure comprehensive and participatory multi-citric assessment of mining activities, which incorporate environmental, social, cultural, and health impact assessment. She emphasized the central role of Indigenous healers as human and indigenous-scientific resource persons, and the specific and vital role of women as bearers of traditional knowledge and as the inter-generational keepers of language, culture, food and health.

Self selection

During the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on the "Future Programme of Work of the CSD",

Carol Kalafatic (Quechua) addressed the Chair's questions regarding Major Group involvement in the future work of the CSD, and what Major Groups are *doing* to implement sustainable development. She called for the self-selection of Major Groups representatives, and stated that what Indigenous Peoples have been "doing" is struggling to maintain the very practices that the CSD should support.

Regarding the proposal for a more people-centered development, she urged the strengthening of Major Groups participation, and asked that all participants recall that the UN Charter established the UN as an organization of *Peoples*. She called for CSD coherence with the UN bodies, agencies and other multi-lateral organizations that *support* rather than undermine our rights and our very existence.

She also called for more adequate funding to support informed and effective participation of Major Groups, including for translation of CSD preparatory materials to at least all the UN languages, and funding for travel from remote areas. On the implementation of sustainable development, she urged our full and effective involvement in planning processes, development of indicators, implementation, monitoring, assessment and reporting.

Her final point was that the development of cultural indicators was essential for sustainable

development to safeguard not only our own cultures but also "Indigenous Peoples vital role in sustainable development," as reaffirmed in paragraph 25 of the Johannesburg Political Declaration.

Human Rights – a precondition

The Indigenous Peoples Caucus underscored that the Kimberley Declaration and Indigenous Peoples' Programme of Implementation on Sustainable Development represent the distinct vision and commitments for the next decade towards achieving social and ecological justice, self-determination and sustainable development.

The recognition and realization of our human rights is a necessary precondition for securing sustainable development.

Immediately after CSD 11, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (advisory body of ECOSOC) will hold its second session.

Mandated to discuss Indigenous Issues relating to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights, the functions of the UN Permanent Forum and the CSD are highly complementary and their work should be coherent and coordinated. The Indigenous Peoples Caucus will report CSD-11 outcomes to the Permanent Forum to ensure that the CSD work cycle becomes truly coordinated with the Permanent Forum.

Further recommendations were:

- 1) Regional and national forums and activities must include the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples;
- 2) All international financial institutions and development agencies must adopt rights-based development policies on Indigenous Peoples, containing mandatory operational practices to ensure our rights and well being;
- 3) All actors should collaborate in development of "Indigenous-specific" qualitative and quantitative indicators for poverty eradication, supported by disaggregated data and statistics.

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.

Schedule Monday 5 May

9:00 to 10:00 SDIN Morning Meeting, Conf. Rm 6

9:00 to 10:00 Business Caucus
Crowne Plaza at the UN

Conference Room D

10:00-11:00 Freshwater Caucus

11:00-12:00 Youth Caucus

12:00-1:00 Education Caucus

1:00-2:00 Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security Caucus

2:00-3:00 Indigenous Peoples Caucus

3:00-4:00 Energy Caucus

4:00-5:00 Legal and Institutional Issues Caucus

5:00-6:00 Women's Caucus

6:00-7:00 SDIN NGO Issue

Group Co-operation Meeting

To reserve a room:

Contact NGLS by 4:00 PM the preceding day

Tel: 963-3125

WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH, ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER— by Elizabeth Roxas, Co-Chair of the Philippine Civil Society Counterpart Council for Sustainable Development

The two outcome documents so far of CSD 11, were beautifully crafted products of a well rehearsed, planned, and thought through, interactive discussions among governments, major groups and various agencies and stakeholders, there are still no real links to implementation and action on the ground.

Levels of implementation and action must be felt and done at the local level where real implementation and action are most important, needed and required. Though priorities have been well identified in the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the CSD, definite targets and timetables were additional missing links that would connect words to action.

It seems that the establishment of a World Solidarity Fund also has been watered down, a clear mechanism of fund sourcing and allocation is missing, even general access for marginalized groups was put aside. Responsibility and accountability applies to all and therefore also applies to all established partnerships. Transparent, participatory and credible mechanisms must be put in place to make implementation credible and possible. At this point, a lot of criticisms have been generated by different groups and stakeholders, but just the same it is a matter of linking such criticisms into real course of actions where everybody gets connected and sustainable development truly attained.

FACTS TO AID COHERENCE

-NOT A COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENT-

"The first human-made object to break through the sound-barrier was a whip"

— Snapple fact #169