

NETWORK 2015

SHADES OF SEATTLE?

OCT. 2003

The WTO a 'Medieval Organisation'? Time for Reform

On the 14th September the 5th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) collapsed. In a midst of political tension and fury an un-resolvable impasse had been reached in the negotiations. Amongst speculation for the premature closure of the conference, a host of NGO's celebrated the events as a triumph for developing countries, whilst others grieved for the failure of the Doha *Development* Round, and expressed deep regret as well as concern for the future of developing countries. Fuelled by NGO advocacy and support, the voice of developing countries interring the phrase – *no agreement is better than a weak agreement* became increasingly audible, reaching a crescendo on Saturday evening. Whereas many developed countries were advocating that the Doha Development round is a once in a generation opportunity to use trade as a tool for development, and that developing countries should seize it as such.

It is said by some that the Doha Development Round was fated to failure from its birth. We know that although agriculture should have been the lynch-pin of the negotiations, it was the altercation over the inclusion of the Singapore Issues that finally brought the negotiations to the ground. The inclusion of the new issues was not an option for in excess of 80 countries. The main reason given for their exclusion was the lack of developing countries capacity to deal with an extended agenda in an already over-crowded single undertaking. The EU, Japan and Korea amongst many others stood resolute that they had to see negotiations begin on the Singapore Issues within this round. Despite some movement on behalf of the EU on this issue, the compromise position offered was rejected on two accounts. African countries outright rejected any deal which required negotiations to commence on any of the four issues. Secondly, in an unexpected twist, Japan and Korea stood hard against the EU in the de-bundling of the Singapore Issues and refused to continue discussions on these grounds.

What perhaps came as even great a surprise was that despite clear tensions, it was not the member states that made a final and resolute decision to close the talks, but the Chair Derbez.

The Chairman therefore stands accused of acting illegitimately and of being unwilling to listen to the voice of the member states. Some therefore feel that he should bear the responsibility of the collapse on his own shoulders.

It seems that there are two elements to the collapse of the Cancun; substantive and process.

Substantive was unpredictable but expected, process was predictable but perhaps unforeseen. The multi-lateral trading system, whether it be under GATT or WTO has constantly come under heavy, and justifiable, criticism for its governance structure, its lack of democracy, and absence of transparency and accountability in its decision making processes. Now we see a new element added to this list, the power, autonomy and rule of the Chair and facilitators of contact groups. Since the collapse of talks in Seattle, 1999, Ministers and NGO's alike have been calling for a substantive reform in the functioning of the WTO.

"I said it after Seattle, and I will say it again here, the WTO is a medieval organization"

Pascal Lamy

After Seattle the legitimacy of the WTO was called to question, but after the successful conclusion of Doha the multi-lateral trading system was heralded as being alive and well. Now as we return from a failed Ministerial in Cancun, the process is once again being acclaimed as the fundamental issues resulting in a break down of the talks. Yes, it could be said that the mechanism is being used as a *scapegoat* to remove attention from the real crux of the problem – that developed countries are unwilling to go that one stage further to assist development. Whilst this may be true, we should not focus solely upon it. It is indisputable that the way in which the WTO conducts itself needs to undergo reform if the multi-lateral trading system, and indeed the organization itself are to survive.

Three key elements result in discontent over the WTO as an organization; governance structure; transparency; democracy.

As a member led organisation, many feel that the governance structure is insufficient to deal with the task in hand, that it is too weak and too poorly organised to manage such an extensive membership base, and an increasingly complex and large mandate. Further to this, the lack of consistency and coherence in the manner in which the WTO interacts with other international organisation is of deep concern.

Despite whisperings in the corridors during Cancun about improved transparency and accountability of the WTO, we have to remember the base-line from which the bar has been raised. Entrenched scepticism remains over the way in which documents are drafted, disseminated, the functioning's of the Green Rooms, the decision making process and bi-lateral meetings

Whilst *explicit consensus* is acclaimed as the greatest strength of the WTO, and should result in a perfect model of democracy, in reality this does not play out. The Green Rooms are at the centre of this, the process of 'by invitation only' discussions are entirely exclusionary. Questions continue to be asked as to how *explicit consensus* can be reached if countries



aren't a party to the negotiations.

Significance of the Collapse

There are two sides to every coin, and the collapse of Cancun is no different.

Positive

Developing countries strongly advocated that they did not have the capacity to deal with the single undertaking, and more fervently, the Singapore Issues. The stalling of the talks provides them with the opportunity to give further consideration to their positions and the options available to them, to build their capacity and come back to the table in a stronger, more informed and competent position

Cancun has seen a shift in the power balance between developing and developed countries. Cancun witnessed a new characteristic of developing countries. They did not succumb to bullying tactics, and held out for agreements that supported their development needs. Returning home from Cancun all will have been alerted to developing countries as an increasingly powerful force in the WTO. This is an extremely significant and important shift in the relationship of the WTO membership.

The environment and sustainable development had been all but lost from the discussions. This pause in the talks buys more time for governments and NGOs to consider their position on the fundamental need to address sustainable development as underpinning trade agreements.

The serious need for contemplation of the governance structure and mechanisms of the WTO was once again highlighted by the collapse. Significant and expeditious reform is required of the WTO. The events of Cancun should act as a catalyst for reflection and long awaited change.

Negative

The Doha Development Round already has a signature of missed deadlines. With the collapse of talks in Cancun, it is clear that the January 1, 2005 completion date will be added to this list.

Following shortly after September 11, 2001, there was a sense of shared responsibility and solidarity at Doha, and the Development Round was launched. A failure to complete the round is a failure to facilitate development through trade. This round was an opportunity to put development at the heart of trade agreements, to hold countries to account on their proposals, to give developing countries a voice and to enable them to demand a global trading system and economy which

supports them in their development.

Doha was criticised for its lack of transparency – but a deal was reached. Cancun was commended for its improved transparency – but a deal was not reached. This has not gone un-noted, and a number of rumblings have been heard to the accord that there is a lot to be said for brinkmanship. If taken seriously, we may once again see the rise of translucent, at best, processes.

We are in a climate where people are denouncing multi-lateralism as a mechanism for reaching agreement or taking action. The 5th Ministerial was an opportunity to not only strengthen the multi-lateral trading system, but illustrate that multi-lateralism is an effective model for reaching consensus. This was not to be, and once again multi-lateralism has been publicly undermined. Failure here will fuel the arguments of countries to act outside of international institutions.

With so many political games being played, it is difficult to take an objective over view of the implication of the collapse. One thing remains the same though, we must not let developing countries continue to be raped by the more powerful in the name of development through bi-lateral and regional trade agreements. The potential of the WTO to protect, and progress development through a multi-lateral trading system must be strengthened, not undermined by those who benefit from unchecked trade liberalisation. We should go away from Cancun feeling angered by its failure, but this anger should be channelled into action, action to make a successful conclusion of the development round to serve the critical needs of those who need it the most.

Editorial

And so another house of cards comes tumbling down. Let the acrimonious finger pointing begin. Political horse trading from all sides merely underlines the painful truth of this process. It seems few had the best interests of those to whom this 'Development' round intended to address in mind. Was this all a false agenda anyway? Is trade for development simply incompatible. Do I buy from you because it helps your family, or because you are cheaper than your competitor? Even if I am altruistic enough to follow the former route, can I depend on my competitors to do likewise. All starts to look a bit flimsy, doesn't it. Cancun only appeared to reinforce that governments are no different in following the second track.

But is it really all so bad? Perhaps we should look at the bigger picture.

The Cancun Ministerial took place within the context of a political climate in which multi-lateralism is on the decline, with many playing a waiting game to see how global and regional instabilities and insecurities play out. That is inherently going to establish a mind set. The WTO itself, as we have seen in our lead article, is a baby of an institution. It will need time to put the right systems in place to make the machine run smoothly.

This is notwithstanding the task the WTO set itself at its last outing in Doha - to refocus trade as a vehicle to increase development of the most needy. That in itself represents a wholesale reassessment of macro-economics, no easy task.

The real concern is the continuing plight of people and planet, matched to a lack of ability, energy or willingness for governments to work together. All this at a time when most of the world's people live in democracy's. Ironic!

T. Middleton, Editor.

Network 2015

Building Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Editor

Toby Middleton

tmiddleton@stakeholderforum.org

Subscription

join-earthsummit2002@healthdev.net

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SUSTAINABLE NEWS

Small Island Developing States

The first regional preparatory meeting toward the next year's International Meeting on small island developing States (SIDS) took place in Apia, Samoa 4-8 August to review the progress achieved in the long-term development of Pacific SIDS. The second regional preparatory meeting for the Atlantic Sea, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and South China Sea (AIMS) was held in Praia, Cape Verde from 1 to 5 September. The third and last regional SIDS preparatory meeting, 6 - 10 October, will be in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

At the Pacific and AIMS meetings, countries discussed their national assessment reports, including progress in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS (BPOA). They also addressed those issues they wish to discuss with partner organisations in the developed world during forthcoming meetings.

The lack of a specific financial mechanism for BPOA has been singled out as a major obstacle to implementation at the national level. Lack of awareness among various stakeholders has also undermined BPOA's internalisation. Social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities are SIDS flags to continue calling for the special attention of the international community. Nevertheless, the Mauritius 2004 may be the last time for SIDS to make their special case according to AOSIS chairman.

UNEP's efforts in continuing its support to SIDS include the preparation of the State of the Environment reports for the three SIDS regions, the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, the analysis of how partnership initiatives can contribute as well as specifically on the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities, amongst other.

This review process of the BPOA is also a challenge for UNEP to assess and re-shape its assistance to SIDS.

Second International Early Warning Conference

The Second International Early Warning Conference (EWC-II), 16 to 18 October 2003 in Bonn, Germany will address the impacts of disasters, that have grown rapidly over the past 30 years, with 1000's of fatalities, 100's of millions of people affected and 10's of billions of dollars of losses.

Developing countries are disproportionately affected, with losses sometimes exceeding a year or more of desperately needed economic development. The ultimate goal of hazard forecasting and early warning systems is to protect lives and livelihoods, therefore proving to be a crucial element of any disaster reduction programme.

To serve people effectively, early warnings need to be integrated instruments, linking forecasters, scientific and technical initiators of warnings with the those who process, issue and disseminate alerts and emergency instructions, and ultimately users of warnings at the community level.

The EWC-II will provide an opportunity to enhance the dialogue among all partners, strengthening coordination and cooperation to further integrate activities of the various sectors involved in the early warning process. The discussions and outcomes of the EWC-II will contribute to the goals and

objectives of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, addressing the Millennium Development Goals as well as the objectives set out in Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of last years Johannesburg World Summit.

The EWC-II is a contribution to the partnership entitled 'Integrating early warning and disaster risk management into the sustainable development agenda and practice', launched at the Summit, aimed at translating political commitments into action.

CSD 12 Bureau Meeting

The 2nd meeting of the Bureau of the 12th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) took place in New York on 3 October 2003. The following are the main highlights of the discussion that took place during the meeting.

The Chairperson had attended international events and had invited ministers to contribute to the preparations of CSD-12. There was strong support for CSD-12, as well as high expectations. Vice-Chairs reported on their respective meetings and contacts with regional groups.

The Secretariat provided an update on the preparation of the 5 regional meetings that would feed into the work of CSD-12. These had been previously scheduled in the Regional Commissions' calendars but have been adjusted to take on the reviews on water, sanitation and human settlements. As such, these meetings would benefit from broader participation of member Governments and other stakeholders. The outcomes of these regional meetings will input to the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the relevant conclusions and recommendations. The meetings will take place as follows:

- UN Economic Commission for Africa, 8-13 Dec. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- UN Economic Commission for Europe, 1 Dec. & 15-16 Jan. Geneva, Switzerland
- UN Economic Commission for Latin America & the Caribbean, 22-14 Oct. (La Paz, Bolivia), 17-18 Nov. (Santiago, Chile), 20-25 Nov. (Panama)
- UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific, 27-18 Oct. Bangkok, Thailand.
- UN Economic & Social Commission for Central & Western Asia, 19-21 Oct. Cairo, Egypt.

The Chairperson shared with the Bureau his further consideration of the organization of work at CSD-12. It was pointed out that the proposed framework provides a sound, logical structure for including regional presentations, the High-Level Segment and interactive discussions with Major Groups.

In the proposed framework, the 3 themes of water, sanitation and human settlements would be accorded equal priority taking into account cross-cutting issues. Major Groups will be given the opportunity to participate in all aspects of CSD-12, including the High-level Segment and a focused half-day event. Furthermore, 2 half-days would be set aside in the 2nd week to examine the relationship among the 3 themes.

The Bureau stressed that the High-Level Segment should reflect on the progress discussed in the previous 7 days and pave the way for effective policy discussions in the lead-up to the Policy Year. The Bureau also stressed that the High-level Segment should be oriented toward interactive discussions rather than prepared statements.

NETWORK OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Network of Regional Governments 3rd Conference

The Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (NRG4SD), established at the WSSD (September 2002) held its 3rd Conference in Fremantle, Western Australia. The following statement reflects the main outcomes of the conference, and is followed by the Academic Forum's Fremantle Declaration of the Academic Network of Regional Government for Sustainable Development, which also met.

The network reaffirmed the Gauteng Declaration particularly the commitment to sustainable development as outlined in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, and the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Delegates also reaffirmed particularly the call upon all Regional Governments to develop sustainable development strategies, and the call upon Heads of Government and international organisations to recognise and support the necessary and essential role of Regional Governments in the promotion of sustainable development and in the achievement of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Targets at all levels and spheres of Government.

There was a Recognition of, and commitment to, the following principles for sustainable development, with regional governments encouraged to consider adopting these principles as part of their sustainable development strategies, through the following action points:

Sustainable Development Strategies

- Developing regional sustainable development strategies that provide a vision and a framework for sustainable development within the region and continue to promote best practice in developing these strategies
- Engaging all sectors of civil society in the development and implementation of strategies.
- Taking into account the global impacts of decisions made at regional government level.
- Developing common indicators of progress toward sustainability, informed by indicators developed at the international level.

Renewable Energies/Climate Change

- Actively contributing to the international conference for renewable energies in Bonn, June 2004 and ninth Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Milan, December 2003.
- Developing and sharing best practice in the field of renewable energies and climate change at the regional level.

Working with Local Government

- Working in partnership with local government to implement regional sustainable development strategies including sharing best practice.

Tourism

- Jointly promoting sustainable tourism between developed and developing regions.
- Responsible investment in tourism.

Water

- Developing a program of work for the Network on sustainable water and sanitation provision at the regional government level to be presented at the forth conference of the Network.

Operational Structures

- Implementing the agreed work programme that sets out priority areas for the next two years. This includes increasing the membership of the network, with particular focus on engaging regions in developing countries.
- Legally registering the network as soon as possible.

At this Conference the Governments assembled recognised the substantial progress that has been achieved in creating the Network since its launch at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002.

The Network welcomed the Fremantle Declaration of the Academic Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development.

The Governments assembled congratulated the Western Australian Government for hosting the Third Conference of the Regional Government Network for Sustainable Development and called on regions to join them at the fourth conference to be held in Cardiff, Wales, UK from 22 to 25 March 2004.

While the priority of the Network in 2003-4 will be to ensure it established robust organisational structures and procedures, the Governments assembled commit to:

- A target of increasing the membership of the network to 100 regional Governments by September 2004 ensuring not only a geographical balance throughout the planet but also a balance among developing and developed regions.
- Increase the profile of the Network at the global level, especially at the United Nations
- Strengthen the relationships amongst members of the Network by:
 - Exchanging experiences and good practices amongst the members of the Network mainly through the NRG4SD web-page;
 - Promoting partnerships between regions, with the goal of establishing 10 partnership agreements between members by September 2004;
- Establishing geographical working groups in the following areas:
 - Latin American and Caribbean, African and Indian Ocean, European, Australasian
- Consistent with the agenda of the Commission on Sustainable Development, establish thematic working groups in the following areas:
 - In 2003-4 on water, sanitation and renewable energies;

- In 2004-5 on water, sanitation and human settlements.

The conference Agreed that Regional Governments should:

- Outlining policies/proposals that the NRG4SD believe should be accepted by Regional Governments

Affirm/Confirm:

The declaration may want to have affirmed or confirmed other important points learned from the conference or other conferences, meetings or summits.

The Governments assembled congratulated the Western Australian Government for hosting the Third Conference of the Regional Government Network for Sustainable Development.

Fremantle Declaration

Sustainability is the key imperative for the world.

Evidence such as ecological footprint analysis confirms that current practices cannot long endure. Conference delegates from states and regions around the world expressed great concern that current patterns of development, consumption and production are unsustainable and that there is an urgent need for action.

Conference presentations demonstrated that enormous opportunities exist to change the way in which human kind lives and relates to the earth. More sustainable practices were shown to be not only cost effective but to convey decisive competitive advantage and to enhance quality of life.

The transition to a sustainable future will require every community to shape its own vision for a preferred future, supported by blueprints and action agendas backed by a genuine commitment to implementation. The conference presented abundant inspirational examples of governments, industries and communities who are implementing more sustainable approaches. What is now needed is the political will to apply these lessons in every community and company.

It is clear that an integrated "whole of government" approach must guide this process. But the conference consensus was that the regions are the most effective level of government at which the transition towards sustainability can be implemented. Regionally managed lands and cities are closer to the communities and industries that have the ability to implement real change. Growing networks at national, international and local levels can help, but regional government cannot escape taking responsibility for leading the transition to sustainability. Through the development of operational linkages between the regions around the world, active partnerships and technology transfer, the regions can promote best practices and ensure efficient action. Capacity building and community awareness are the next imperatives for action.

The torch has passed to the regions.

Contact: www.nrg4sd.net

FORESTRY CONGRESS

XII World Forestry Congress calls for harmonizing needs of people & planet

By harmonizing the needs of people and the planet for forest services we can progress along the path of sustainable development," the XII World Forestry Congress underlined at the conclusion of a week-long intensive debate on the future of forests.

In a final statement released in Québec City, Canada, on Sunday 28 September, the Congress stated that "forests have enormous potential to make an invaluable contribution to the imperatives of this era: for environmental security, poverty alleviation, social justice, enhancement of human well-being, equity for present and future generations."

"However, harmonization between people and the planet cannot be achieved by forest managers alone. Bridges must be built with other sectors," according to the Congress final statement.

"For the first time, the World Forestry Congress has addressed what humans need from the forest, what the forest can provide sustainably and the harmonization between the two," FAO Assistant Director-General M. Hosny El-Lakany said.

Dr. El-Lakany, who heads FAO's Forestry Department, indicated that the Québec gathering helped to bring about more awareness that forest issues should be reinstated on the political agenda at the highest level.

An FAO global forest resources assessment completed in 2000 reveals an annual net reduction of 12.4 million hectares of forest in tropical developing countries over the previous decade. Worldwide, some 1.6 billion people rely on forests for their livelihoods.

The participants in the Congress pledged to work towards reducing deforestation significantly over the next decades, expanding or maintaining forest cover, enhancing forest restoration and strengthening the role of plantations in supplying wood products.

The right of indigenous peoples, forest communities, forest workers and professionals were re-emphasized, and their role in decision-making related to forest management and utilization have been recognized, Dr. El-Lakany indicated.

He also said that the balance between economic, environmental and social aspects of forests was reiterated at Québec City.

"We envision a future with social justice, economic benefits from sustainable forest management, participatory governance and responsible use of forest resources," according to the final statement of the Congress.

"We also envision a future where healthy forests supply the full spectrum of products and services: soil and water conservation, maintenance of biodiversity, climate regulation, carbon sequestration; where forest cover is increasing, where forest fragmentation is decreasing, and where degradation is halted."

From talk to action

To realize this vision, the Congress called for sustained political commitment, a stronger forest sector, bridges with other partners and sectors, sustained international cooperation, recognition of the knowledge of indigenous people and management of forests and trees at local and regional scales.

Above all, the Congress urged countries to move the intergovernmental dialogue on forests from talk to action.

The final statement urged the world community to promote policies, partnerships, education, management and better monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress in achieving

the balance between the needs of people and the planet.

The Congress recognized that forest education and research are essential for sustainable forest management.

Participants in the Congress pledged to exert renewed efforts to ensure that forests make a strong contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed targets.

The Congress requested FAO to monitor, assess and report on progress on the implementation of the conclusions outlined in its final statement. A progress report will be presented to the XIII World Forestry Congress to take place in 2009.

The XII World Forestry Congress held from 21 to 28 September

2003 in Québec City, Canada, attracted more than 4 000 participants from more than 140 countries.

A wide spectrum of issues, in context of the Congress theme: Forests, Source of Life, was considered under three programme areas: Forests for People, Forests for the Planet and People and Forests in Harmony.

Participants included various levels of government and international organizations, NGOs, individuals from rural communities, private forest owners, labour, indigenous people, youth, industry, environmental organizations and scientific and academic community.

Food & Agriculture Organisation

STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment releases first report

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), the most extensive study ever of the linkages between the world's ecosystems and human well-being, today released its first report, *Ecosystems and Human Well-being*.

The 245-page report lays out the approaches, assumptions, processes, and parameters scientists are using in the study. It offers decision-makers a mechanism to identify options that can better achieve core human development and sustainability goals and better understand the trade-offs in decisions about development and the environment.

"The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment brings together state of the art natural and social science to bear on the needs of decision-makers concerning the links between ecosystems, human development, and sustainability," said Dr. Robert Watson, co-chair of the MA and chief scientist of The World Bank. "It will help them understand the multiple effects on an ecosystem of any management or policy change."

The goal of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is to establish the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the contribution of ecosystems to human well-being without undermining their long-term productivity. Its research results will be published starting late 2004 in a series of four in-depth reports and up to seven shorter studies intended for decision-makers in government, the private sector, and civil society groups.

The other volumes will report on the conditions of Earth's ecosystems, describe plausible scenarios of ecosystem change and human well-being, and provide examples of responses to ecosystem changes and how to avoid them. Another volume will look at how these three topics are treated at a variety of scales from villages to regional watersheds in different assessments being undertaken around the world as part of the MA. Five additional reports will address biodiversity, desertification, wetlands, and the importance of ecosystems for human well-being, and the private sector.

Some 500 scientists from 70 countries are working on these reports, and hundreds more will provide expert review of the assessment. Dozens of institutions throughout the world are contributing their expertise and supporting an on-going dialogue between the scientists and decision makers.

The studies will be published by the MA through Island Press. All the findings will also be available through the website of the, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) is a 4-year, \$21 million effort. It was designed by a partnership of UN agencies, international scientific organizations, and development agencies, with guidance from private sector and civil society groups.

Major funding is provided by the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and The World Bank. The MA Secretariat is coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The MA has been recognized by governments as a mechanism to meet part of the assessment needs of four international environmental treaties -- the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Convention on Migratory Species. Twenty-two of the world's leading scientific bodies, including the Royal Society of the UK and the Third World Academy of Sciences, have pledged to ensure the quality of the reports and assist in its outreach to policy-makers.

The MA's work is overseen by a 45-member board, co-chaired by Dr. Robert Watson, chief scientist of The World Bank, and Dr. A. H. Zakri, director of the United Nations University's Institute of Advanced Studies. The Assessment Panel, which oversees the technical work of the MA, includes 13 of the world's leading social and natural scientists. It is co-chaired by Angela Cropper of the Cropper Foundation, and Dr. Harold Mooney of Stanford University. Dr. Walter Reid is the director of the Millennium Assessment.

World Resources Institute

The Equator Initiative - Learning from Community Action

The critical role of local communities in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was placed at centre stage at a recent Equator Initiative workshop, held in Nairobi, Kenya, 13 - 18 July. More than 120 representative from 15 African countries came together to share experiences, identify common concerns and forge lasting partnership with one another.

The workshop's unique structure - entitled *Learning from*

Community Action to Realize the MDGs: Biodiversity & HIV/AIDS - was specifically designed with concrete outcomes in mind. These included the drafting of a 'Community Declaration', in which participants identified key priorities for action, and called on their national and international partners to address their particular concerns. In addition, a fund of \$50,000 was made available to finance the creation of partnerships between participants (TBA).

The week's events commenced with an orientation session on the MDGs and related issues. The workshop proper began with a keynote address by Dr. Kulundu, Kenya's Environment Minister. This was followed by a series of presentations by community leaders on the history of their respective projects. Senior Chief Simon Nduru Kinyaga, of Kenya's Il Ngwesi Group Ranch, told of his community's success in protecting biodiversity while simultaneously reducing poverty. 'The wild animals have come back, and now the community earns a large proportion of our livelihoods from their eco-tourism lodge. The money goes towards educating the community children, as well as expanding into new income-generating activities,' he said.

The poser of community action to achieve real development gains was the central theme of the workshop and provided a lens through which the issues of biodiversity conservation and HIV/AIDS could be viewed. The next day's sessions were entirely devoted to the latter topic. Rose Auma of GROOTS and Atheanasie Mukarweko of the Rwanda Women's Network, gave especially moving presentations on their personal experience of the pandemic, and told of their remarkable work to help others in a similar situation.

Field trips to a number of Kenyan community initiatives were arranged to remind participants of the need to relate their discussions to action 'on the ground'. Projects visited included a Maasai heritage project, a Nairobi slum-based Aids initiative and a reforestation project in Kereita forest.

The workshop ended with a gala evening, serving as the ideal occasion for the launch of Kenya's National MDG Report, which gives a detailed examination of the country's progress

towards achieving the Goals by 2015.

The gala evening was characterised by a spirit of hope for the future. Richard Lolusoli of the Indigenous Information Network, spoke for many when he said that the workshop had given him confidence that the MDGs will be realised. 'The innovative practices presented by the communities and the pace at which participants are fighting the war on HIV/AIDS leaves no doubt that the menace will be out of our way sooner rather than later,' he said. *Learning from Community Action* was hailed by participants as a successful beginning to the Equator Initiative's Learning Exchange Programme.

The *Learning Exchange Program* is primarily designed to address the following themes:

- Lessons from successful projects,
- Eco-Enterprise set-up and management,
- Local partnership development,
- Financing strategies, and
- Partnership building

Learning Exchange Grants are an essential component of Equator Initiative's Learning Exchange program and seek to:

- Draw lessons from community-level experience, and support the spread of successful community-level strategies and innovations among CBOs and NGOs, host governments, development aid agencies, and others working on a larger scale.
- Build partnerships and networks of local stakeholders to support and strengthen community, CBO, and NGO capacity to address biodiversity conservation and promote sustainable development.
- Provide a grant that encapsulates a bottom-up holistic learning package focusing on biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation. This will encourage learning exchange between communities and also help disseminate valuable information.
- This capacity development and learning process seeks to allow local stakeholders to influence the formulation of national and international plans and policy.

STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES

UNEP GPA Outreach

Stakeholder Forum has recently established a partnership with UNEP's *Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA)*. Through this partnership, Stakeholder Forum is undertaking outreach to non-traditional stakeholders and developing dynamic tools to help deliver the GPA.

The GPA was enacted in 1995 and endorsed by 108 Governments and the European Commission in response to the increasing threat to the marine environment from human activities on land. Some 80% of the pollution load in the oceans originates from land-based activities. Key pollutant sources include persistent organic pollutants (POPs), heavy metals, radioactive substances, nutrients, oils, litter, physical alteration and destruction of habitat and wastewater / sewage.

The GPA is designed to be a source of conceptual and practical guidance to be drawn upon by national and/or regional authorities for devising and implementing sustained action to prevent, reduce, control and/or eliminate marine degradation from land-

based activities. The GPA website and web networks (Clearing House Mechanism – CHM) exists as a system through which decision makers and other stakeholders at national and regional levels are provided with access to current sources of information, practical experience and scientific and technical expertise relevant to developing and implementing strategies to deal with the impacts of land-based issues.

Stakeholder Forum is building on its experience and expertise to restructure and build upon the GPA CHM. This includes a mix of informative and interactive resources designed to raise the profile of the GPA, expand its network and to increase participation by all stakeholders in its delivery. The work programme is designed to provide outreach from mid-2003 to 2006, when the Intergovernmental Review (IRG) is scheduled. The work includes newsletters, events diaries, interactive web-based activities such as online debates, polls and video diaries, the development of reporting templates and peer reviewed papers.

Stakeholder Forum is in a unique position to contribute to the GPA through their international stakeholder outreach work. This new partnership is exciting for all.

Karen Dickinson, Stakeholder Forum

STAKEHOLDER FORUM
 7 Holyrood St., London SE1 2EL, UK
 Telephone: +44 (0)20 7089 4300
 Fax: +44 (0)20 7089 4310
 Email: info@stakeholderforum.org
 Websites: www.stakeholderforum.org

STAFF

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

5 Oct. - 9 Oct.	XI World Water Congress - Water Resources Management in the 21st Century. Madrid, Spain. Contact: www.cedex.es/iwracongress2003/en/hoja2_en.htm
13 Oct. - 17 Oct.	Consumers International World Congress. Lisbon, Portugal. Contact: www.consumersinternational.org/News_Events/world.asp?cat=24
14 Oct. - 15 Oct.	Stockholm International Investment Conference: Focus on Africa. Stockholm Sweden. Contact: www.africaforum.org/IC-Stockholm-2003/Stockholm2003.html
20 Oct. - 22 Oct.	Fourth Annual Asia Pacific Cities Summit. Brisbane, Australia. Contact: www.apcsummit.org
20 Oct. - 21 Oct.	UNEP Finance Initiative Global Roundtable. Tokyo, Japan. Contact: www.unepfi.net/tokyo/
30 Oct. - 31 Oct.	Moving Forward from Cancun - Global Governance, Trade, Environment & Sustainable Development. Berlin, Germany. Contact: www.ecologic-events/de/Cat-E/en/background.htm
1 Nov. - 7 Nov.	Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety. Bangkok, Thailand. Contact: www.ifcs.ch
4 Nov. - 5 Nov.	Conference on Water for the Poorest. Stavanger, Norway. Contact: www.thewateracademy.org/stavanger/inforpage.html
12 Nov. - 14 Nov.	Global Conference on Oceans, Coasts & Islands. Paris, France. Contact: www.globaloceans.org/globalconference/index.html
17 Nov. - 21 Nov.	10th Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Prior Informed Consent. Geneva, Switzerland. Contact: www.pic.int
18 Nov. - 21 Nov.	GEF NGO Consultation & Council Meeting. Washington DC, United States. Contact: www.gefweb.org/participants/Council/Meetings_Schedule/meeting_schedule.html

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