

REVIEW PAPER



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

APRIL 2003

Review of UN Secretary General's Report on the Future of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development



BACKGROUND

According to the Secretary General's report on the "*Follow up to Johannesburg and the Future Role of the CSD – The Implementation Track*" (E/CN.17/2003/2) the 11th CSD will aim to make decisions on the following areas:

1. Multi-year programme of work
2. New organisational arrangements
3. Proposed transformation of its Ad Hoc Intersessional Working Group into Regional and Global Implementation Forums and Expert Forums
4. Increased involvement of intergovernmental organisations and major groups
5. Increased role for scientists and educators
6. CSD as a focal point for partnerships for sustainable development

This paper summaries the main points of the SG's report that relate to each of these areas. It includes comments about the paper's recommendations, and suggestions for possible areas of further development.

MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK

Summary

Recognising the major outcomes from the Johannesburg Summit:

- Johannesburg Plan of implementation – Drawing upon the Millennium Summit MDGs, Financing for Development Conference and Doha trade meetings
- WEHAB initiative – UN coordination
- Partnerships – Over 220 initiatives for implementing agreements were presented at WSSD. Their follow-up should not substitute government responsibility

Follow-up actions are needed at:

- National level - Production of National Strategies for Sustainable Development, establishing national SD committees and national reporting
- Regional level - Regional commissions taking a catalytic role with other regional institutions
- International level - UN system coherence and task manager system review

SF Comments

- *Local level* – There is no reference to local involvement in follow-up actions. UNDP, regional and local authorities/municipalities play a key role in supporting local level input into policy and partnerships. In addition the importance of people being at the centre of the process needs to be emphasised.
- *National reports* – There is no discussion about the need for combined national reporting requirements – bringing together different national reporting obligations to make them harmonised and more streamlined, thereby facilitating governments by reducing their reporting burden and clarifying areas of cross-over between international and national processes.

- Developing countries and countries with economies in transition – There is no or little discussion regarding the need for support for developing countries and countries with economies in transition in policy, partnerships and reporting activities.
- *ECOSOC Commissions* – There is no discussion about the involvement and role of the other ECOSOC commissions in WSSD follow-up and the CSD's work.
- *UN Trusteeship Council* – There is no discussion about the involvement and role of the Trusteeship Council in WSSD follow-up and the CSD's work.
- *WEHAB* - A focus on WEHAB needs to be clarified to ensure that people understand the work to be illustrating and demonstrating cross-sectoral and multi-level sustainable development processes

NEW ORG. AGREEMENTS

Summary

To meet the Johannesburg commitments, the CSD will aim to:

- Integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, and the overarching issues e.g. poverty eradication, production and consumption, globalisation, health
- Review and monitor progress on implementation
- Enhance links between national to global activities
- Address new challenges and opportunities for implementation
- Broaden the participation of major groups
- Focus on a limited number of issues, tasks, objectives and targets
- Enhance the contribution of educators and scientists
- Establish a two-year cycle
- Ensure accountable and responsible delivery
- Compliment and not duplicate existing work, supporting coordination, consistency and coherent follow-up to Monterrey, MDGs and other UN conferences

CSD Programme of Work

Three issue categories:

- Development issues – e.g. poverty eradication, gender – already subject to broad policy deliberations in other international fora
- Sustainable development issues – specifically related and clearly relevant to the CSD e.g. sustainable production and consumption
- Natural resources and economic sectors – e.g. water and sanitation, biodiversity, land and agriculture, tourism

Issue selection:

- Option 1 - 2-3 issues pre-selected for each two-year cycle over the next 4 –5 cycles
- Option 2 - 2-3 issues selected for first two-year cycle, the next set to be selected at the end of the cycle
- Option 3 – Pre-select 1-2 issues for each cycle over 4 – 5 cycles, and allow a third issue to be determined at the end of each cycle
- A maximum of 5 - 6 issues should be covered in one year

2003 transitional year:

- CSD 11 is the transitional year before the first two-year cycle begins
- CSD 12 will kick off on Feb/March 2004 with national reviews and regional consultations, and production of a "State of Implementation" report.

SF Comments

- *Issue categories* - The paper needs to be clearer as to what could be specifically classified as true "sustainable development" issues. Agenda 21 categorised issues according to four areas which seems to be a more clear approach: social and economic dimensions to development; conservation and management of natural resources; strengthening role of major groups; means of implementation
- *Issue selection* – Perhaps even greater flexibility should be considered so that the first and possibly second two-year cycles can be used as an opportunity to learn what is working and what is not. After this the process could be reviewed and, if necessary, revised. The CSD sessions should provide time to address interlinkages of specific issues, e.g. water or energy, and crosscutting / overarching topics e.g. poverty eradication. The expertise of conferences, agencies that are dedicated to these overarching topics should be brought into the sessions, including the work of the UN Ad-hoc Working Group on Integrated Conference Follow-up
- *The State of Implementation Report* – This report will need to be backed by sufficient funds to support governments in producing their national reports as well as ensure other major group contributions.
- *Governance systems* – The crosscutting topic of Institutional Frameworks should cover not only issues relating to specific institutions but also broader governance systems – that will contribute towards good governance practical across all spheres / levels of governance.

TRANSFORMATION OF INTER-SESSIONAL WORK GROUPS

Summary

CSD transformation:

- For more detailed analysis of progress in achieving the agreed goals
- Establish a global forum for exchange of information, facilitating multilateral cooperation and promoting multistakeholder partnerships and other activities
- Promoting coordination among intergovernmental bodies, UN Specialised agencies; executive boards of UN Funds and Programmes; work programmes of the functional commissions and subsidiary bodies

Two-year cycle:

- Review Implementation year – Establish five regional Implementation Forums and global CSD Implementation Forum (replacing the Ad Hoc Intersessional Working Groups)
- Policy year – Establish global CSD Expert forums and special task forces / sub-commissions
- Reports produced from each cycle – "Trends in Implementation", "State of Implementation" and "Policy papers"

SF Comments

- *Joining up reform processes* - The process of CSD transformation needs to be linked with the UN Development Group's work on UN coordination of MDGs and WEHAB issues, along with the CEB's interagency task force review processes (see below).
- *Membership* - More attention needs to be paid to which groups will be engaged in these processes and how such groups will be constituted.
- *Special issue-orientated task forces / sub-commissions* – The paper does not discuss what such bodies would aim to do. One proposal is that they address issues of non-consensus or focus on collating perspectives on new and emerging issues. The CSD will need to agree how and when such groups would be created and how and when they would report back to the CSD. The paper also makes no reference to other alternatives such as establishing public policy networks or holding regional and national public hearings to engage and seek public opinion.

INVOLVEMENT OF INTERGOV. ORGS & MAJOR GROUPS

Summary**Political engagement:**

- All relevant ministries should be engaged in the process, bringing leadership for policy development.
- Ministers should take stock of progress in policy areas and hold high-level dialogues with major group "leaders".
- Wider ministerial engagement in other WSSD processes, e.g. national consultations and intersessional expert and implementation fora.

Regional inputs:

- Regional commissions, with UNDP and UNEP, will act to support regional implementation. They will provide a forum for:
 - o Policy dialogue and development
 - o National and sub-regional presentations
 - o Identification of indicators for monitoring regional progress
 - o Review of regional follow-up
 - o Identification of regional priorities
 - o Coordination of other regional bodies

UN Agencies, International and financial institutions:

- Coordination for coherent follow-up by UN Development Group, leading on integrating MDGs and WEHAB activities.
- Chief Executive's Board is developing guidelines for coherent UN operations and conducting a review of the Task Manager System for interagency coordination.
- Need to strengthen interagency capacity to support:
 - o Linking normative issues and analysis to implementation, monitoring, reporting (from national to international levels)

- o Linking intergovernmental activities with national implementation
- o Linking the three dimensions of sustainable development
- o Advocacy and raising the public profile of WEHAB
- o A clearing house and information exchange on policy and programmes
- o Policy coherence at all levels
- Apex collaborative groups – could be formed around issues that need better coordination, e.g. water and sanitation, energy.

Major groups

- Major Groups will act as:
 - o Implementers
 - o Observers and analysts of policy and partnerships/implementation
 - o Participants in policy and partnerships/implementation
- Multistakeholder dialogues should be used throughout the CSD process, including:
 - o Interactive High-level dialogues
 - o Issue-orientated discussions in Plenary
- Facilitators should be brought in from “all walks of life”.
- Partnerships should be reviewed with representatives of major groups.
- Major groups should comment on Commission’s outcomes.
- They should be self-organising groups.
- Regional implementation forums should mirror the international process, this may require strengthening of national and regional networks.
- Engagement of major groups should be further encouraged in:
 - o Intersessional meetings or task forces
 - o Inter and pre-sessional collaboration to build major group capacity
 - o Regular CSD Bureau and Chair meetings
- Accreditation – the 700 newly accredited organisations for the WSSD should be fast tracked for ECOSOC accreditation.

SF Comments

- *Government engagement* - There is a risk here of creating a greater burden on governments by establishing more and more meetings, without thinking whether the meetings are really needed and will really help mobilise implementation on an issue. However greater ministerial engagement can be encouraged through coordination – the CSD could examine examples of good coordinating mechanisms and look to promote these approaches.
- *Regional inputs* – No reference is made to opportunities for local or sub-national inputs. SF is currently acting as a secretariat for a Regional (sub-national) Government Network with an Academic Network working beside it. This model should be observed to see whether it might be replicated and transferable for other levels.
- *Local level* – The importance of the local level also applies here – effective models and mechanisms should be adopted to ensure local contribution.
- *UN Development Group* - Unclear how the UNDG will relate to broader WSSD follow-up in terms of its wider commitments and in relation to Agenda 21. The work of UNDP in relation to establishing good governance systems will also be able to contribute to this.

- *Apex collaborative groups* – There needs to be a process to identify and assess those issues which might benefit from inter-agency coordination, as well as an opportunity to learn from the previous experience of the ACC sub-committees working on freshwater and other areas – e.g. why were they not very successful in encouraging better coordination? Coordination for its own sake is not the end goal – the aim is to reach more people with basic water supplies and energy, therefore this must always remain at the forefront of the groups' mandate if they are established.
- *Supporting major groups* – There was no reference to establishing mechanisms to provide financial and technical support for major group representation, especially representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The engagement of groups that are actively involved in implementation programmes will require a process of outreach and support to ensure that it is not to their detriment to become involved in regional and international exchanges. The CSD should take an active role in establishing a fund to support such groups and processes. The facilitators that are used should be skilled and / or trained in the process of facilitation. The suggested fast track accreditation is very welcome. Requirements on speakers representing Major Groups, should be carefully studied to allow for fair representation of grassroots organisations, regional as well as gender balance.

INCREASED ROLE FOR SCIENTISTS & EDUCATORS

Summary

Strengthen scientific involvement:

- Separate major group and science processes should be established
- Scientists should continue to participate as a major group as well
- Scientific and technical activities should focus on “best” scientific expertise on issues, including in expert forums
- Bring expertise from different scientific disciplines to assist the CSD in making practical recommendations, including inviting “eminent” scientists

Educators and other stakeholder groups:

- Involve educators in stakeholder panels and interactive discussions
- Create an informal learning centre for exchange of knowledge, capacity building and education
- Engage judicial and legislative governmental groups
- Engage the media

SF Comments

- *Scientific community:*
 - o The scientific community is not a homogenous group even *within* scientific and academic disciplines. Therefore all attempts should be made to be transparent about the interests and background of different scientific representatives – including transparency about whether they are publicly or privately funded research bodies as this can have implications on their focus of work and independence of viewpoint. This is important as the scientific community can have quite a degree of influence over policy making.
 - o There needs to be clarity about what “best” science implies as this term is ambiguous and subject to various interpretations. An over-emphasis on “modern” technological advances also risks negating considerable expertise and knowledge of a more traditional and/or cultural nature. Special effort should be made to ensure effective engagement of scientific groups from a more traditional, indigenous –

based, developing country backgrounds.

- *Education:*
 - o The informal learning centre is a great idea and one that could be significantly expanded to become an on-line resource for learning about sustainable development
- *Faith communities:*
 - o The new focus coming from the WSSD Plan of Implementation regarding the Ethical dimension of sustainable development needs to be supported through additional arrangements. This would further complement the expanded scientific and educational activities
- *Other stakeholder groups:*
 - o Implementation and partnership activities create an opportunity for a more nuanced interpretation of “stakeholder” or major group according to the issues being addressed – thus groups and representatives could be identified in a more flexible way. The question of who is a stakeholder needs to be carefully managed however, recognising that difference groups have different “stakes” interests.

CSD AS A FOCAL POINT FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Summary

Principles:

- The Guiding Principles should be assessed for applicability as a “filter” mechanism for partnerships, whilst retaining flexibility

Reporting

- A reporting framework may be developed. It should be voluntary and supported by guidelines
- It could include biennial reports to be inputted to an overview report on the progress of the partnerships
- An implementation up-date could be provided in the policy sessions

Partnership discussion should focus on:

- Lessons learnt
- Progress made
- Best practice

SF Comments

- *CSD role* – The CSD should take facilitation, reviewing and stocking-taking roles over partnerships. Reporting formats should be openly reviewed. Criteria for good partnerships should also be openly consulted with stakeholders to set benchmarks and assist comparison between initiatives.
- *Barriers and problems* - Discussions on partnerships should allow for discussion of barriers and problems preventing effective implementation, and ways to overcome them. This could be of relevance to the follow-up

policy discussions.

- *Resources for participation* - Significant support - including technical, capacity building, information and financial - should be provided to help major groups, especially women, youth, and indigenous peoples, to participate effectively in partnership discussions, reporting and implementation processes. The previously suggested major group trust fund might be used for this purpose.

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