

UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

18th Session, New York, 3 – 14 May 2010

Highlights of Side Events

3 May

Santo Domingo Metro System as a model for sustainable mass transport

The President of the Dominican Republic Dr. Leonel Fernandez, recognized in 2004 that the capital city had serious problems to face as a result of rapid urbanization that had resulted in concentrations of low income groups in areas around the centre that were isolated from employment and paying such high costs for transportation (>25%) that they were deterred from taking jobs in the city centre. The cost of commuting was high due to heavy congestion and many smaller operators servicing the transport demand.

Santo Domingo embarked on an ambitious light rail metro project to link several of the large lower income areas with the centre of the city and 5 universities. The first line was completed in 2009 and a second is under construction. Along the first line, use of road vehicles has been cut in half, low income groups are the largest users and pay only 12% of their income to travel to work. Students especially can benefit. Pollution has been cut by about 70%. Time savings alone for both metro users and road users that experience less congestion will be equal to the project cost over a 40 year period.

Santo Domingo has set up a commission to reform the transport sector and very importantly to regulate the industry so that smaller vehicles are more efficient and act as feeders to the light rail system. Santo Domingo presents a useful model to transform urban transportation for sustainable development and low carbon emissions.

4 May

Partnering for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Production: Exploiting the Links between Fertilizers, Climate Change and Dead Zones

Based on four presentations on sustainable agriculture, the use of nitrogen and the challenges to climate change and dead zones, the discussions also presented lessons learned and best practices that could be shared to advance sustainable agriculture and ensure food security while at the same time addressing dead zones and the challenges of climate change.

Agriculture is the major driver through the use of synthetic nitrogen and phosphorous for fertilizer, key to crop production for food, animal and energy (bio-fuels) needs. However, much of the fertilizer simply runs off to the wider environment helping to create an excess of nutrients in many parts of the world. Other major sources of excess of nutrients are nitrous oxides produced by the burning of fossil fuels, and

the phosphorous and nitrogen in the wastewater produced by humans, livestock, aquaculture and other industrial processes. The amount of these excess nutrients entering the air, soil and water cause a range of harmful impacts, including polluted water and seas, fish kills, acid rain and soil, loss of biodiversity, destruction of ozone, and additional global warming potential.

The challenge of “unsustainable production and use of nutrients” is complex, and set to accelerate with population growth, urbanization and increased food demand. Strategic attention and advocacy is required at the global level in order to help mobilize change in approaches by countries. For the benefits of nutrients to be realized, including their contribution to food security, countries need access to improved information and assessment of the multiple and linked impacts and linked impacts of nutrients, to more integrated management approaches, and to tools and training to deliver knowledge based remedial action.

The Global Partnership on Nutrition Management (GPNM) that was launched at the Commission on Sustainable Development’s 17th Session was also mentioned as an endeavour to raise awareness and foster integrated approaches and solutions. The GPNM through its web-based knowledge platform aims to provide stakeholders access to effective tools, approaches and training to close nutrient cycle from soil to crop and back to agricultural soil based on the principle of 4Rs – “right nutrient” at the “right time, in the “right place” and at the “right rate”. The Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA-Marine) was also highlighted in the meeting. The GPA-Marine is the sole global intergovernmental initiative addressing the emerging issue linking watersheds, coastal waters and the open ocean.

5 May

National Cleaner Production Centres: advancing Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production in developing and transition countries

Based on five presentations on national cleaner production centres, the ensuing discussions centred on sharing of concrete best practices from around the world and highlighting those presented at the side event: Kenya and Viet Nam.

The implementation of the joint UNIDO/ UNEP programme on national cleaner production centres for developing and transition countries endeavoured to establish and operate a global network. The activities under this joint programme cover some 50 developing and transition countries. The evaluations of the programme have confirmed its usefulness in promoting the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and corresponding policy changes in some developing countries. The practical experience of the NCPCs confirms that cleaner and sustainable production is possible and that collectively and individually the NCPCs provide a platform for advancing sustainable consumption and production patterns and facilitating the transition to resource-efficient and low carbon industries.

The NCPC is highly relevant to most of the themes addressed by the current cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development, namely: Transport, Chemicals, Waste Management, Mining, and 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. The NCPCs contribute to improved environmental performance and resource efficiency of enterprises and other organizations, which also increases productivity and competitiveness. These are professional centres that deliver and coordinate services in regard to cleaner production methods, policies, practices and

technologies. The following provides a summary of NCPCs services: (i) technical assistance and in-plant assessments, (ii) training; (iii) information dissemination and awareness creation; (iv) policy advice; and (v) cleaner production technology and investment promotion.

In Africa, NCPCs lead the process of regional institutionalization of sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The NCPCs have been instrumental in the creation of the Africa Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production (ARSCP). In Latin America, CPLatinNet has been created to bring together cleaner production centres that had been established under the UNIDO-UNEP Programme as well as other bilateral initiatives.

6 May

Asbestos – who pays the bill? : Testimonies and dialogue on policy recommendations

Based on the presentations and testimonials regarding asbestos, the ensuing discussions centered on sharing of concrete lessons learned from countries that already phased out the use and production of asbestos. The occasion provided a forum for dialogue among international policy makers, agencies and civil society representatives, in order to address the challenges posed by asbestos use in developing and transition countries. The discussions and presentations also provided insights on the gravity of the problems associated with asbestos and highlighted the work of NGOs in the main asbestos mining, producing and processing countries.

Chrysotile asbestos mining and use is expanding in a number of developing countries, waste is uncontrolled and users are not informed about health risks. Developing and transition countries are not aware of imports and exports since asbestos has not been added to the list of commodities requiring prior informed consent under the Rotterdam Convention. Over 45 mostly industrialized nations have banned chrysotile asbestos. The impact on human lives is expected to be felt in most developing and transition countries in the coming decade. The economic costs for cleaning up are astronomical. WHO and ILO have underscored that the most effective way of eliminating asbestos-related diseases is through a ban of all types of asbestos.

7 May

Prevention, Preparedness & Response to Chemical Accidents

One of the most densely populated countries in the world, Israel, has a developed chemical industry. To protect the population from chemical accidents, the Israeli Government has developed an effective emergency contingency plan for integrated emergency response. The plan delineates the tasks of the various bodies and teams that respond to such incidents, including police, ambulance, fire and rescue services, local authorities, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

The side event featured the screening of a short film on how these teams integrate their work in order to ensure a swift and safe response to any chemical accidents. After the film, presentations were given by representatives of the various agencies involved in the emergency response plan.

Each presentation discussed specific details related to the actions and coordination that take place between the different agencies, preventative and response equipment, the different personnel involved

and their role during any response, as well as a step by step account of how an emergency response is implemented.

The presentations emphasized that clear and fluid cooperation between the public sector (government ministries and emergency response teams) as well as the private sector (such as the chemical industry and the media) is crucial for prevention of accidents and for successful responses. Public education and information sharing play a key role in ensuring the public's safety. This national emergency response plan can be replicated and serves as a transferable model both to developed and developing countries.

10 May

The Value of Partnerships in pursuing environmental sustainability – Leadership and commitments by island countries

The side event highlighted the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), an innovative partnership which brings together island countries and countries with islands to work together in implementing conservation and sustainable livelihoods. Presentations provided examples, through the actions and achievements of GLISPA, of best practices in using the partnership mechanism to support sustainable development and the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

Since its inception in 2005, GLISPA has engaged more than 50 governments, NGOs and IGOs and helped catalyse over US\$70 million in commitments to island conservation, including such initiatives as the Micronesia Challenge, the Phoenix Islands Protected Area in Kiribati, and the Sea Level Rise Foundation.

Panellists shared both donor and SIDS government perspectives on the particularly effective strategies employed by GLISPA, such as the celebrating achievements and sharing best practices, as well as providing visibility and impact evaluation to donors. The discussion on GLISPA was tied into an overview of the CSD partnerships mechanism and the need for its revitalization.

International Transportation and Climate Change: The impacts of the regulation of aviation and shipping on developing countries' and especially SIDS' Trade

While international transport has been a main driver of trade and development, and is vital to the food security and economic development of SIDS, it has also contributed considerably to climate change and the resulting sea level rise which threatens the very existence of some SIDS. The side event gave an overview of the main options for regulating emissions from international transport, particularly through market-based mechanisms such as cap-and-trade, levies and energy efficiency indices.

Presentations explored the effects of regulating emissions on transportation costs, identifying commodities with the largest cost increases and reviewing the cost effects on trade, competitiveness and food security, especially for SIDS. Ways to offset costs of climate regulations for vulnerable countries were discussed, including through rebates, route-based exceptions and size thresholds.

Presentations also reviewed attempts to integrate international transport in a wider climate policy framework and looked at current trends in the global governance of international transport, as well as in forums such as the IMO, ICAO and UNFCCC.

11 May

Eco-Footprints & Solid Waste: Making tracks to achieve sustainable patterns of production and consumption

The presentations at the side-event and the ensuing discussion discussed a wide range of issues related to sustainable consumption and production. It was highlighted that waste is an inherent byproduct of economic activities and that population and economic growth have led to over-consumption of natural resources. Unfortunately, scientific necessities and political feasibility were currently incompatible.

Some panelists called for a fundamental cultural change to move away from consumerism as dominant lifestyle. Other panelists promoted integrated sustainable waste management as way forward to move towards ore sustainable consumption and production and to contribute to the achievement of the MDGs, in particular the target on basic sanitation. Rather than a single magic solution, many existing good practices needed to be combined.

Challenges to solid waste management faced by developing countries were raised, such as importation of hazardous used products, inadequate management capacities, lack of awareness, and inappropriate disposal facilities. Local practical solutions as well as a partnership for knowledge sharing were advocated.

Measuring progress towards sustainable development goals: frameworks of indicators of consumption and production patterns and associated impacts

The four presentations at the side event covered different approaches on measuring progress towards sustainable development goals, namely sustainable development indicator sets developed and sustainable consumption and production indicator sets developed.

The importance of selecting appropriate indicator frameworks was stressed, in order to guide the selection of indicators, to provide structure, to highlight inter-linkages and to aid the interpretation of indicator trends. Policy-based frameworks, variations of driving force-state-response frameworks, and a SCP compass framework were discussed. The need to base indicators on existing sets rather than to try reinventing the wheel was highlighted.

The four commentators noted the relevance of the indicators for the CSD cycle, including the policy decision to be adopted in 2011. They also stressed the importance of stakeholder engagement in indicator processes, including in the provision of data, which are of particular importance in the area of sustainable consumption and production.

In the closing, the need of integrating or linking sustainable consumption and production indicators to sustainable development indicator sets was stressed, in order to increase policy coherence and to avoid duplication of efforts.

12 May

Ecolabelling to advance sustainable consumption and production

State Secretary of Environment of Sweden opened the event by presenting the Nordic Swan-ecolabel which is a Type 1-ecolabel that currently has 65 criteria for 200 groups and over 1000 of products. The criteria for the ecolabel are decided on an open process and are published for a review for all stakeholders. The criteria are revised every 3-5 years. It was pointed out the fact that Swedish customers do not understand SCP as a term but they, for example do understand the Swan-ecolabel. According to the latest consumer survey conducted in the Nordic countries, 91 % recognize the Nordic ecolabel. Hence, ecolabels are an important tool of information for SCP.

UNEP/DTIE gave a presentation called “Addressing the needs of developing countries: capacity building and technical assistance”. The importance of ecolabelling also in relation to opportunities for developing countries was recognized. UNEP currently provides capacity building and technical assistance to companies and governments in developing countries to seize ecolabelling opportunities.

In his presentation “African ecolabelling mechanism to improve environmental profile of African products and their market access”, ARSO agreed with UNEP/DTIE and stressed that the use of ecolabelling provides great opportunities for Africa. Besides the better market access ecolabels advance low-emission production patterns and consequently contribute also to adaptation to climate change.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion by Global Ecolabelling Network; Consumers International; and Boston Power. All the panellists agreed that consumers need encouragement and incentives to do the right thing; they need more ecolabels with reliable, truthful and verifiable information.

13 May

What is our contribution to the MDGs?

Based on presentations on the linkages between the MDGs and the CSD process, discussions highlighted the lack of equitable resource distribution systems in the world, poverty and hunger, as well as lack of delivery on commitments for means of implementation, unfair trade practices as some of the key issues that require a paradigm shift.

The discussions underscored concern that CSD-18, a major event before the holding of the MDG Summit in September 2010, was not discussing the MDGs and felt that there was a disconnect with all other major events that are to be held before the UNCSD (Rio + 20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012, including the conference on biodiversity in October 2010, the Cancun meeting on climate change in December 2010, the 2nd and the 3rd PrepComs of the UNCSD (Rio+20).

The discussions also stressed the importance that development and finance ministers also attend the UNCSD (Rio + 20) in order to be able to contribute to the formulation to decisions that would be reached at the conference. This will enhance the implementation of decisions of the conference. The discussions

underscored that because of a multitude of factors including the multiple crises and the lack of delivery of financing, many developing countries will not be able to meet the goals within the remaining five years.

The discussions also underlined that the objective of the MDG Summit in September 2010 is to accelerate progress to all MDG goals by 2015 and review successes, best practices and lessons learned, obstacles and gaps, and challenges and opportunities. The General Assembly will also hold a MDG Summit hearing involving NGOs, civil society, and the private sector in June 2010 as part of preparations for the Summit meeting. It was stressed that the UNCSD in Rio should try to come up with targets and also endeavour to change the economic models in order to achieve the eradication of poverty within a short period of time.

Regional Cooperation as one of the key conditions for achieving sustainable development in the Western Balkans

The presenters at the side event and the ensuing discussion provided updates in the progress of implementation of national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) in Montenegro and in the Republic of Serbia, highlighted regional initiatives on NSDS and presented options to strengthen systems for monitoring their implementation.

Both countries are making progress in implementing their NSDS since their adoption in 2007 and 2008, despite challenges exuberated by the recent economic and financial crisis. Given the shared history and similarities in challenges and institutional backgrounds, regional cooperation is seen as key in making progress towards achieving sustainable development goals in the Western Balkans.

Consequently, regional consultation mechanisms are being institutionalized. Monitoring NSDS is an important element of the strategies. Associated indicator systems and appropriate reporting tools can also be effective in raising awareness on NSDS.

14 May

Towards Global Sound Material Cycle Society

In this side-event the results of the “International Consultative Meeting on Expanding Waste Management Services in Developing Countries” and the Asian 3R forum “Regional 3R Forum in Asia” were presented. The meeting was an inter-sessional event of CSD18-19 and was organized by DSD/DESA, Ministry of the Environment/Japan and UNCRD.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss waste management challenges in developing countries; to support the preparation of the Chair’s summary of CSD-18; and to contribute to the preparation of the Secretary-General’s report for the follow-up session and to other related processes inside and outside the UN system scheduled for 2010. The meetings’ outcomes were enhanced awareness about options available to address waste management challenges and a framework for building partnerships to enhance technical and financial cooperation and developing communities of practice.

In order to promote the 3R in Asia’s developing countries, Japan proposed the establishment of a “Regional 3R Forum in Asia”. It was formally launched in 2009 and it is now the fundamental platform for 3R promotion in Asia. 15 Asian countries participate in the forum.

The aim of the forum is to promote the prioritized implementation of participants' 3R policies and actions through dialogues on policies; to encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience with implementation of 3R policy tools; to corroborate the effectiveness and benefits of 3R implementation; to assist developing countries by capacity building; and to build a mutual understanding for future regional co-operation in order to achieve healthy regional resource cycle.