

REFORM PAPERS



ER 4

UN Side-Event Report

Crisis in Global Governance: Challenges in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

12th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

There is general agreement that the international environmental governance architecture is in need of reform. The current system is criticised for being fragmented, lacking political authority and commitment, having inadequate resources and being driven by institutions which lack definition in their mandates. Strong and appropriate governance at all levels has been high-lighted as a being a pre-requisite to and underpinning the achievement of sustainable development agreements, in particular those contained in the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). The JPOI contains an entire chapter (Institutional Frameworks for Sustainable Development), which outlines mechanisms, reforms and activities to strengthen sustainable development governance.

A broad range of ongoing and innovative processes exist to address international environmental governance these include:

- UNEP International Environmental Governance Ministerial Dialogue;
- French proposal and New York Work Group on the formation of a United Nations Environment Organisation;
- Swedish dialogue on Universal Membership;
- Finnish consultation on Strengthening Sustainable Development Governance;
- United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination;
- High-Level Discussion on enhance coordination between ECOSOC, the Brettonwoods Institutions, and the WTO;
- UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN Reform.

Whilst significant, to date these processes have been of little consequence in bringing about real change to the international sustainable development governance architecture. However, 2005 offers a unique window of opportunity to advance these discussions, and to enact many of the constructive recommendations arising from these discussions.

2005 Agenda

In 2005 a broad range of multilateral processes relating to the implementation of sustainable development agreements will come to ahead. These include:

- 5 Year Review of the Implementation of Millennium Development Goals (September 2005)
- Report of the Secretary Generals High-Level Panel on Global Security Threats and Reform of the International System (September 2005)
- Conclusion and Implementation of the Work of the Secretary Generals Panel of Eminent Persons on UN Civil Society Relations (March 2004)
- The Copenhagen and Beijing 10 year review;
- Proposed conclusion of the Doha Development Round (January 2005)

- Istanbul+10 Prepcom (May 2005)
- High level GA session on Financing for Development (Nov 2005)
- New Presidency of the World Bank
- Report of the Africa Commission
- UK Presidency of the G8
- UK Chair of the European Union

However, a number of questions exist around the 2005 agenda these include:

- Will the different processes coalesce or be played out in parallel?
- What actions need to be taken now to ensure coordination in their work, coherence in their approach and consistency in their outcomes?
- What will be the role of UNEP in the review of the Millennium Development Goals?
- How do we ensure greater coherence between the implementation of the MDGs and the JPOI?
- How do we ensure stakeholders are fully engaged with and provided with the opportunity to meaningfully participate?

In order to begin to answer some of these questions and to raise the awareness of stakeholders and governments of the 2005 agenda, Stakeholder Forum hosted a UN Side-event during the 12th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, New York, 19 – 31 April 2004.

Stakeholder Forum

Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future is currently facilitating a three year analysis and evaluation of the international governance architecture in the area of sustainable development. The overarching goal of the Governance Programme is to seek out ways to enhance governance systems and structures for the effective implementation of sustainable development agreements. The programme has the principle aims of:

- Encouraging greater vertical and horizontal integration within and between governance systems and structures;
- Supporting and encourage effective and equitable participation of stakeholders in governance processes;
- Analysis and evaluating current global governance structures and systems;
- Contributing to debates and research on global governance issues in the area of sustainable development for submission to the UN CSD, UNEP; IEG debate and Bretton Woods and WTO;
- Promoting the recommendations and findings of the WHAT reports;
- Informing, sharing ideas, identifying options and making recommendations to help push forward the debate on global governance for sustainable development over the three-year period beyond the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) from 2003 to 2006 (duration of the work programme).

It is therefore appropriate that Stakeholder Forum engage stakeholders at the earliest opportunity in the 2005 agenda, particular with regards to the governance related aspects of this.

2.0 OVERVIEW

Through interactive discussion between governments, NGOs, business, youth, trade unions, women's groups and other stakeholders the event aimed to enable dialogue and gather early stakeholder views on the challenges, barriers and obstacles to the implementation the MDGs presented by inappropriate governance.

The event was attended by in excess of 30 delegates, the majority of which were from northern and southern government delegations. NGO's, business and trade unions were also represented.

The meeting was introduced and Chaired by Georgina Ayre, Head of Policy and Research for Stakeholder Forum. Presentations were provided by Felix Dodds, Executive Director of Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future and J Gustav Strandenaes of ANPED (Northern Alliance of NGOs).

3.0 KEY ISSUES

The following issues were raised during the presentations and the pursuant interactive discussion:

- A new form of democracy is developing – “stakeholder democracy”;

create and reinforce the norms of stakeholder involvement;

- The 2005 agenda needs to be seen as an integrated whole;
- The question of what will be the outcome of 2005? Needs to be addressed;
- Addressing the links between human and environmental security could be a useful way of drawing the link between the different 2005 agendas;
- There is a need to agree upon a clear definition of governance;
- Problems arise in discussions when the qualification 'good' becomes attached to governance;
- Organised civil society needs to be including in the debate about global governance in a meaningful and constructive manner;
- A strengthened international governance system requires adequate financing, any discussions on governance therefore need to be accompanied by discussions on finance;
- NGOs need to discuss representation and accountability issues to help them participate fully on a positive basis;
- Different NGO / Major group approaches to outreach and involvement with constituencies differ significantly;
- The equity and parity of stakeholder participation in processes is of particular importance to the 2005 agenda;
- Policy coherence and intra-governmental communication at the national level is weak (in both developed and developing countries) this negatively impacts on the adoption of coherence decision at the international.

1.0 CONCLUSION

Whilst the meeting was well attended, and by the right people a challenge was met in initiating interactive dialogue amongst delegates. It is all too apparent that governments are very much in a listening mode. Whilst the 2005 agenda has been a long time in coming, and governments have been aware that the 5 year review of the Millennium Development Goals would most likely take place in September of that year – other priorities have occupied their time. Consequently it seems little strategising has taken place on how to approach 2005, and what individual governmental positions are on this.

With the 5 year review of the MDGs only 18 months away, a great deal of work is required both in capitals and in New York to provide an enabling environment for a successful meeting. Clearly the role of civil society will be fundamental in that process. However, before we get to that the fundamental question of – what exactly is the review seeking to address and achieve needs to be answered.