

UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THURSDAY, 21 JUNE 2012

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) continued on Thursday, 21 June 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Eighty-five Heads of State and Government, and Ministers were scheduled to address the Rio+20 plenary on Thursday. The high-level participants also took part in two roundtables. In addition, the Rio+20 Partnerships Forum opened, SD-Learning at Rio+20 continued, numerous side events convened and multiple events took place throughout Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

PLENARY

As of 6:35 pm, 48 speakers had addressed the meeting. Thirty-one Heads of State and Government represented the following countries: Guyana, Principality of Monaco, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Micronesia, Gabon, Haiti, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Turkmenistan, Cape Verde, Cuba, Montenegro, Portugal, Norway, Jamaica, Grenada, Russian Federation, Morocco, Qatar, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria, Comoros, Marshall Islands, Madagascar, Dominican Republic, India and Lebanon. Vice-Presidents represented five countries: Seychelles, Tanzania, Myanmar, Burundi and Venezuela. Ministers represented the following 12 countries: Gambia; Honduras, Estonia, Slovenia, Mauritius, Finland, Pakistan, Albania, Cameroon, El Salvador, Palestine and Egypt. This section highlights some of the topics raised and commitments presented.

Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President, Guyana, highlighted Guyana's 2017 target for achieving a reduction in carbon emissions. Prince Albert II, Head of State, Monaco, highlighted Monaco's 2008 commitment to become a carbon-neutral country, noting the impacts of climate change on human health, and the overexploitation of oceans on food security.

Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President, Colombia, presented national actions to manage water, mining and deforestation, noting the SDGs will make it possible to identify needs and opportunities. Evo Morales Ayma, President, Bolivia, urged countries to nationalize natural resources, presented a view of environmentalism as a new form of colonialism, argued that the green economy would commodify natural sources of life in a way that would unfairly burden the global South, and proposed a move to a development model based on "humanism."

Rafael Correa, President, Ecuador, explained the meaning of CBDR, lamented the lack of political will, and stressed the need to: talk about "environmental rescue" as a complement to "banks rescue;" recognize nature not as an object but as a subject; use incentives for environmental protection; and change the notion of development.

Rosen Plevneliev, President, Bulgaria, noted that Bulgaria was the only European country to increase its credit rating during the financial crisis. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President, Indonesia, highlighted its commitments on emissions reductions, combatting deforestation, and supporting the regional Coral Reef Triangle Initiative launched in 2007 with neighboring countries. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President, Turkmenistan, proposed an inter-regional energy dialogue under the aegis of the UN, and increased efforts to manage the Caspian and Aral Seas. He offered to provide infrastructure for a proposed inter-regional center on climate change issues.

Raúl Castro Ruz, President, Cuba, outlined the need to: move towards disarmament, build societies based on social justice, and ensure sustainable development particularly for countries from the South. Mohamed Gharib Bilal, Vice-President, Tanzania, said his country was committed to focus on agriculture and food security, and to scale up efforts to address challenges on the energy sector. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister, Grenada, presented Grenada's commitment to becoming a carbon-neutral country by 2030, to protect at least 20% of marine and coastal habitat by 2020, and to begin construction of a green Parliament building, adding that its hotel sector has a target of zero emissions.

Dmitry Medvedev, Prime Minister, Russian Federation, declared his country's willingness to participate actively in UNCLOS. Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-thani, Prime Minister, Qatar, underscored the importance of the Global Dry Land Alliance launched earlier in 2012. Gordon Darcy Lilo, Prime Minister, Solomon Islands, emphasized the importance of ensuring SIDS participation in the process of defining the SDGs.

Urmas Paet, Foreign Minister, Estonia, said sustainable development is only possible if all States recognize and promote human rights and good governance. Erkki Tuomioja, Foreign Affairs Minister, Finland, welcomed the adoption of the 10YFP and said a number of green economic instruments have been introduced in Finland, including taxes on activities polluting the environment.

Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, Foreign Minister, Cameroon, read a statement from President Biya that urged that the UNCCD be given emphasis equal to that of the CBD and UNFCCC, and called for an autonomous international environment organization. Moustafa Hussein Kamel, Environment Minister, Egypt, called for the framework and criteria for SDGs to be defined in an open and transparent intergovernmental process overseen by the UNGA, and for clear mechanisms to be adopted for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Rio+20 commitments.

Jacob Zuma, President, South Africa, said upgrading UNEP should take into account characteristics such as an enhanced mandate, and enhanced synergies across MEAs, and that the



African Union will present concrete proposals in this regard. Goodluck Jonathan, President, Nigeria, said the green economy is an agenda for employment generation and should be aligned to clear national objectives.

ROUNDTABLES

Two roundtables convened to consider the theme “looking at the way forward in implementing the expected outcomes of the Conference.” In the morning, Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and María Ignacia Benítez, Minister of Environment, Chile, chaired the roundtable. Among the suggestions offered by Heads of State and Government, and Ministers were: that the outcome document should be translated into a timely, result-oriented process; the SDGs should include a goal on water and sanitation, and the energy, food and water nexus; and the need to arrive at a definition of green economy, taking account of the rights of developing countries to define their national priorities.

They also highlighted: the need to design principles for the SDGs, including proposals that they be aspirational and non-prescriptive, realistic and inspirational, flexible, measurable, easily understood, universal, involve the participation of all, including the private sector, and the application of the principle of CBDR; the enlargement of Rio Principle 10, and its adoption by the Latin American and Caribbean region; small island states and the blue economy, including their role in conservation and renewable energy; MDG and SDG linkages; MOI; and the 10YFP.

One speaker emphasized that Brazil has demonstrated drive and leadership, and appreciated that the high-level participants are already able to think about how the agreement will be implemented. Many countries related their experiences implementing sustainable development, with one highlighting the value of the One UN pilot model and another calling for the establishment of centers of excellence. Other speakers emphasized, *inter alia*: forests and oceans; health; energy; and education.

Heads of international organizations highlighted: health and well-being; children’s needs for nutrition and education; green growth; and the impact on jobs of the transition to a green economy, including the linkage of environmental and social policies around the concept of the social protection floor. One speaker suggested that each industry should develop its own sustainable development goals.

Major Groups emphasized: the need to focus on women in farming and ensuring that development aid provides the types of assistance farmers need; and the unprecedented availability of knowledge, including information on climate impacts that will pose risks for humanity, together with other tipping points. Another speaker described the Anthropocene era in which humanity has become the primary geological force on a planetary scale – knowledge that was not available in 1992 – and described the launch of the international science initiative, Future Earth, with a call by science to co-design knowledge with stakeholders.

The rapporteurs of the Sustainable Development Dialogues highlighted recommendations developed during that event, including: promote tax reforms that encourage environmental protection and protect the poor; create a tax on international financial transactions; and develop SDGs that will be shared by all actors. The recommendations related to the high seas were also highlighted. One speaker suggested that the 30 recommendations from the Dialogues be attached as part of the permanent record of Rio+20.

The afternoon session was co-chaired by Dalia Grybauskaitė, President, Lithuania, and Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President, Costa Rica. Catherine Gotani Hara, Minister of Environment, Malawi, acted as rapporteur.

Speakers stressed the importance of: a green and inclusive economy for achieving sustainable development; the role of the private sector to spur and finance innovation and green solutions;

disaster risk reduction; defining SDGs through a transparent, inclusive and participatory process; avoiding two parallel tracks for MDGs and SDGs; recognizing limits to growth; a strong voice for local and regional authorities; secure land rights; and learning from indigenous peoples’ lifestyles for sustainability.

Several speakers identified the need for: finance and technology resources; stronger commitment for strengthening IFSD; job creation; valuing of volunteers’ contributions; building trust in institutions; and support for SIDS and other developing countries in recognition of historical wrongs.

The Nobel laureate and The Elder stressed, respectively, the need for a new narrative for the Anthropocene and inclusion of the voices of wider constituencies. UN entities and international organizations noted the need for accelerating gender responsive goals, the value of nature and human dependency on nature to be included in GDP, and strengthening of environmental monitoring and evaluation systems. Major Groups stressed the anger and frustration from civil society on the draft outcome document, how small-scale fishing reduces poverty and contributes to sustainability, and the absence of seabed mining in the text.

Specific goals, targets and initiatives were identified by some speakers, including: the Aichi biodiversity targets, including the one for establishing marine protection areas; improvements in mass transportation systems; and partnerships on clean water and waste management for the poorest communities in cities.

Speakers made the following requests concerning process: including the recommendations generated in the Sustainable Development Dialogues in the report of the roundtable to the summit; establishing an intergovernmental committee that includes high-level civil society representatives to follow-up conference decisions on strengthening UNEP; and organizing a summit in five years, possibly on the margins of the UNGA, to review progress made since Rio+20.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On the eve of Rio+20’s closing ceremony, the focus for many in RioCentro turned from the proposals they had hoped for to the implementation efforts that will be required in the coming months and years. And for the first time ever, the daily coordinating meeting for the Major Groups hosted UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and each Group had the chance to weigh in on the issues they have been promoting for the past two years.

In the corridors, some expressed frustration at the lack of urgency displayed by negotiators over the past months, and a sense of anti-climax that the text had been closed three days before the end of the conference. Others considered that finalizing the text early provided a stable foundation for the rest of the conference to focus on implementation, allowing heads of state to do what they do best - announce commitments and network for new development partnerships. For example, within 24 hours of the closing of the text, the Governments of Brazil, Denmark, France and South Africa announced a new group, “Friends of Paragraph 47,” to promote corporate sustainability reporting – the name referring to the relevant commitment in the outcome document.

Not all leaders are at the table, however. Some noted that debates at the G20 summit in Mexico on the Eurozone crisis and other immediate economic issues have somewhat overshadowed the longer-range issues being discussed here. Nevertheless, said one delegate, “the political impetus of the G20 may be useful for speeding up the UN processes.” And a veteran representative of an NGO observed, “It is critical not to equate Rio+20 with a document...Rio+20 is a gathering of people, a catalyst, which can convert to action.”

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of UNCS D will be available on Monday, 25 June 2012, at: <http://www.iisd.ca/uncsd/rio20/enb/>
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY & PRACTICE: A knowledgebase of international sustainable development activities: <http://uncsd.iisd.org/>