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UNCSD: The good, the bad and the ugly

The fight continues...

a multi-stakeholder
magazine on
climate change
and sustainable
development

outreach.

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pic: Alistair Knock

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About Stakeholder Forum

Stakeholder Forum is an international organisation working to advance sustainable development and promote democracy at a global level. Our work aims to enhance open, accountable and participatory international decision-making on sustainable development through enhancing the involvement of stakeholders in intergovernmental processes. For more information, visit: www.stakeholderforum.org

Outreach is a multi-stakeholder publication on climate change and sustainable development. It is the longest continually produced stakeholder magazine in the sustainable development arena, published at various international meetings on the environment; including the UNCSO meetings (since 1997), UNEP Governing Council, UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) and World Water Week. Published as a daily edition, in both print and web form, Outreach provides a vehicle for critical analysis on key thematic topics in the sustainability arena, as well as a voice of regional and local governments, women, indigenous peoples, trade unions, industry, youth and NGOs. To fully ensure a multi-stakeholder perspective, we aim to engage a wide range of stakeholders for article contributions and project funding.

If you are interested in contributing to Outreach, please contact the team (acutter@stakeholderforum.org or jcornforth@stakeholderforum.org)

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OUTREACH EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor	Amy Cutter	<i>Stakeholder Forum</i>
Assistant Editor	Jack Cornforth	<i>Stakeholder Forum</i>
Editorial Advisor	Farooq Ullah	<i>Stakeholder Forum</i>
Print Designer	Jessica Wolf	<i>Jessica Wolf Design</i>
Web Designer	Matthew Reading-Smith	<i>Stakeholder Forum</i>

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Prof. Maria Ivanova	<i>University of Massachusetts Boston</i>	Kiara Worth	<i>UN Major Group for Children and Youth</i>
Felix Dodds	<i>Fellow at the Global Research Institute UNC and Associate Fellow at the Tellus Institute</i>	Dr. Mayarani Praharaj	<i>College of Engineering and Technology, Bhubaneswar, India</i>
Nadia M. Osman	<i>Former Chair of G77 and China</i>	Jan-Gustav Strandenaes	<i>Stakeholder Forum</i>
Jakob Ström	<i>Former Presidency of the EU for Sustainable Development</i>	Amy Cutter	<i>Stakeholder Forum</i>
Mayumi Sakoh	<i>Millennium Institute</i>	Jack Cornforth	<i>Stakeholder Forum</i>
Saba Loftus	<i>UN Major Group for Children and Youth</i>		



Note from the Editors

Amy Cutter and Jack Cornforth
Stakeholder Forum

The opening of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly represents a key period for both Member States and stakeholders.

A wide range of events are taking place, with many relating directly to post-UN Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 (Rio+20) and post-2015 processes.

Particular landmarks include: the closing session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) twenty years after its first meeting (the focus of today's edition); the inaugural meeting of the High Level Political Forum, the body replacing the CSD as the new institutional home for sustainable development within the UN system; and the Special Event on Millennium Development Goals, which will centre on accelerating progress to achieving them, as well as the process for creating a successor framework to the MDGs when they expire at the end of 2015.

Every edition of Outreach will therefore be loosely based around the main topics of discussion for some of these key events. The below table provides more information on each of the five editions, including the main themes they will cover. If you are interested in contributing an article, please contact me at acutter@stakeholderforum.org for more information ■

Publishing Date	Event	Themes	Final deadline for content
Friday 20th September	Closing session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)	CSD retrospective; Looking ahead to the HLPF	Today's edition
Monday 23rd September	MDG Success: UNSG's High-Level Forum on Accelerating Action and Partnering for Impact	MDG retrospective; Accelerating success to 2015; Looking ahead to the Special Event and post-2015	Friday 20th September, 5pm EST
Tuesday 24th September	Inaugural meeting of the High Level Political Forum	Governance, accountability and participation; HLPF – from vision to action; HLPF's role in bridging Rio+20 and post-2015	Sunday 22nd September, 5pm EST
Wednesday 25th September	Special Event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the MDGs	Post-MDG and SDGs processes; Convergence of the processes; Data and measurement	Monday 23rd September, 5pm EST
Friday 27th September	N/A (Wrap up edition to be published online only)	Reflection on the week; Relationship between the HLPF and post-2015 processes; other key post-Rio+20 processes	Thursday 26th September, 9am EST

Reforming the institutional framework for sustainable development

Prof. Maria Ivanova
University of Massachusetts Boston

Sustainable development gained traction as the idea bringing together the environment, economy and social issues in the quest for human development in the 1990s.

At the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, governments outlined a broad, comprehensive vision for sustainable development, including the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), to monitor and review progress on the implementation of Agenda 21 (an action agenda for sustainable development agreed at the Earth Summit) at all levels of governance, to develop policy recommendations, and to promote dialogue and partnerships for sustainable development among governments and non-state actors.

Over the past 20 years, governments, UN agencies, and civil society have expressed different views on the role of the Commission. Some argue that the Commission lost momentum and effectiveness, attracting mainly environmental officials, but failing to create the originally envisioned cross-section approach to the three dimensions of sustainable development. However, observers also point out that the Commission was instrumental in promoting new initiatives and topics in intergovernmental debates and in facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues, which have now become standard UN practice.

Reform of the institutional architecture for sustainable development is a continuous process involving multiple variables. In the run-up to Rio+20, discussions on the sustainable development framework focused on whether to transform the CSD into a Sustainable Development Council or whether to abolish it. Governments eventually decided to close down the Commission and replace it with a High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), a hybrid body that will operate under the auspices of both the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly. The core functions of the new universal, intergovernmental HLPF would be to provide 'political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development,' to enhance and promote coordination in the UN system, support evidence-based decision making, and provide a platform for collaboration among multiple stakeholders.

Governments established an open and inclusive negotiation process to create a consensus around the structure of the Forum. While a General Assembly resolution launched the Forum in June 2013, a serious analytical effort to undergird its effective operations is still necessary. In particular, a clear division of labour between the environment and sustainable development institutions

will be important to avoid perpetuating the dynamic that led to the institutional reform in the first place. Without clear roles and responsibilities, there is a danger of overlap, duplication, and competition among the new HLPF, a reformed ECOSOC, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and other UN institutions and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Rio+20 affirmed the need for strong, legitimate, and credible institutions for sustainable development and created the necessary momentum for political and policy action at all levels of governance. Reform processes within the United Nations stretch out over time. Institutions able to link in a timely manner to different constituencies and actors through sustained, collaborative interactions would be better positioned to transform not only their public image but also their internal operations and impact on the world. This momentum could only be sustained through consistent leadership and a systematic process of accumulation and application of knowledge ■



pic: ewar-woowar

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Ivanova is an assistant professor of global governance at the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance at the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at UMass Boston. She is co-director of the Center for Governance and Sustainability and director of the Global Environmental Governance Project. Ivanova is an international relations and environmental policy scholar specialising in governance and sustainability. She focuses on international organisations, US foreign environmental policy, UN reform, and sustainability on campuses and in organisations.

UNCSD: The good, the bad and the ugly

Felix Dodds

Fellow at the Global Research Institute UNC and Associate Fellow at the Tellus Institute

I cannot believe that today will see the twentieth meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and its final session.

I write as a member of a very small group of people that attended the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and all of the CSD meetings to date, giving me a relatively unique perspective.

It should be remembered that the CSD was a compromise between the UK and USA, in particular, who did not want any UN institution for sustainable development, and Maurice Strong (Secretary General of Rio 1992), Norway and some developing countries who wanted to either transform the Trusteeship Council to an Ecological Security Council or create a new Council of the General Assembly. It was in fact a group of NGOs who came up with the compromise, handing the suggestion that this new body be a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to the great Malaysian Ambassador Razali, who then persuaded the G77 to support the creation of the CSD.

The first CSD was held under Ambassador Razali's chair-ship and hopes for what the new body could achieve were high, not least regarding the delivery of new and additional resources for sustainable development. However developed countries were going through a recession in 1992 (sound familiar?) and so said they could not provide funds for the delivery of Agenda 21 (one of the main outcomes of the 1992 Earth Summit) at this point but would oblige in the future. Maurice Strong had estimated the cost of implementing Agenda 21 to be \$625 billion a year, with \$125 billion to be transferred from developed to developing countries. Yet at the Rio Summit official development aid was only around \$60 billion, and it fell after the Summit, not returning to that figure until 2002.

But the first cycle of the CSD (1993-1997) was nonetheless seen as a success. Particular achievements included the push for new conventions on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedures for hazardous chemicals, and the creation of what has become the UN Forum on Forests - something that has ensured continual work on the forest issue ever since.

The second cycle from 1998-2001 also had some successes, mostly under the directorship of the wonderful Joke Waller Hunter. Twelve hours of negotiations were set aside at the beginning of the CSD for an interactive dialogue with stakeholders on the key policy issues that governments would be deliberating. The second cycle also saw some genuine progress regarding the adoption of national consumer guidelines on sustainable consumption, first by the CSD and then by the General Assembly (GA). It also saw the first UN-level discussions on sustainable tourism. On oceans, the CSD set up a GA process under CSD rules, thereby allowing for the far greater engagement of stakeholders than is normally possible under GA rules, increasing the normalisation of this practice.

The period of the last cycle (2003-2013), however, has seen two CSDs fail to deliver a substantive output, something which can be linked to a number of mistakes regarding the Commission's modalities. First, cycles should never be longer than five years due to the inevitable and quick loss of momentum. Second, the removal of mandatory reporting by national ministries on the delivery of sustainable development meant that government participation tailed off or saw them send only low level officials to participate. In addition, the agenda of the CSD did not allow for a change in direction or the adding of emerging issues, therefore seeing it locked into a cycle that was destroying its credibility year by year.

There have been valiant efforts by the UN Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) Directors Tariq Banuri and Nikhil Seth to push the CSD back in the right direction but the time had come to reconsider the UN body we need to take sustainable development forward in this next phase as the major driving force for poverty eradication. As the CSD's successor, we hope that the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will allow the dream of Rio in 1992 and Stockholm in 1972 to become a reality ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Felix Dodds is author of *Only One Earth: The Long Road to Sustainable Development via Rio*, with Michael Strauss and Maurice Strong.

And available in January 2014 is Felix Dodds, Jorge Laguna Celis and Liz Thompson's new book: *From Rio+20 to a New Development Agenda: Building a Bridge to a Sustainable Future*.

Towards an effective diplomacy for sustainable development: Lessons learned and experiences shared

Nadia M. Osman

Former Chair of G77 and China

Jakob Ström

Former Presidency of the EU for Sustainable Development

Over the next few months, a number of High-Level events are expected to substantively contribute to shaping the post-2015 development agenda, and hopefully in the process, accelerate the pace of sustainable development. Among these events are the inaugural meeting of the new High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development; a High-Level meeting on Disability and Development, which will examine the success of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs) for persons with disabilities; and a High-Level meeting on MDGs focused on accelerating action and partnering for impact, and continuation of the negotiations pertaining to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and consultations regarding the implementation of Rio+20 Outcome Document.

As diplomats from the North and South, respectively, we see an urgent need for more effective multilateral diplomacy geared specifically toward sustainable development – an overarching theme of the opening 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We base this observation on our personal experiences of facing each other across the UN negotiation table several years ago.

As Former Chairperson of the Group of 77 and China, and Representative of the Presidency of the European Union on Sustainable Development negotiations at the United Nations in 2009, we led our groups in traversing a challenging international environment marked by raging financial and economic collapse and food crises. As coordinators of developing countries' and European nations' positions, we sat through endless nightlong consultations both within and amongst negotiation groups. We led fierce confrontations and struck difficult compromises. Keeping our groups united while pursuing their strategic interests and enhancing the spirit of compromise was indeed a delicate balancing act.

In retrospect, we are struck by the convergence of our views related to the negotiation process.

As a general observation, diplomacy at the UN follows patterns that in many ways are as old as the organisation itself. A number of factors have changed, however. The agenda has expanded steadily, especially with the proliferation of issues and concerns with transboundary impacts, such as climate change, desertification, loss of biological diversity, and global health issues. There is general agreement that global solutions are needed to confront these common challenges.

Membership of the UN is almost four times greater than it was in 1945. Moreover, an increasing number of governments are willing and able to express their perspectives and pursue their national interests, which adds richness as well as complexity to problem solving.

The recent proliferation of information communication technologies (ICT) has also allowed negotiators to stay in touch both with their capitals and each other, as well as to browse and share information online during the course of negotiations. ICT developments help create a better flow of knowledge and enhance transparency, yet challenge negotiators' abilities to synthesise and process such a tsunami of information in a timely manner to stay abreast of the pace of negotiations.

While the workload has become heavier and the time pressure greater, there are legitimate concerns over the slow pace of progress in negotiations and the occasional irrelevance of outcomes to real developments on the ground. Such concerns should be taken seriously and debated openly. The UN must not be allowed to deteriorate into a talk shop of little political relevance. A vigilant effort must be made to ensure effective intergovernmental methods of work if we are to bolster global solutions to common challenges – solutions which can make a difference in people's lives.

We believe this can be achieved through the exchange of experiences and focused open debates.

Based upon our own experiences, we have identified ten major 'lessons learned' which we are certain, if elaborated upon and applied, can contribute to a more effective multilateral diplomacy on sustainable development, thereby leading to meaningful agreements.

1. There is a need to seek from the outset a thorough understanding of the major global political and economic developments and forces, including their impacts in shaping and reshaping international relations and national interests. These global dynamics have a direct bearing on our understanding of the negotiation climate and factors affecting it. Lead negotiators of country groups should set aside time early in the negotiation process to informally brainstorm and exchange views.

In 2009, building bridges between group members and between the major groups was a decisive factor in reaching consensus on many difficult issues. UN diplomacy for sustainable development is not a zero sum tug-of-war; rather, it more closely resembles a 'prisoners' dilemma' where cooperation is the most difficult and yet most rewarding path to take.

2. It is of paramount importance to seek to understand and appreciate each other's interests, concerns and priorities. There must be a keen effort very early on to identify areas of convergence and divergence. We encourage negotiators to initiate discussions, first within their constituency and then beyond, before a text is drafted. There should be an attempt to generate ideas and identify directions based on common gains and interests, and then allow draft texts to follow logically.

Confidence building, mutual respect and establishment of trust are essential. Ample time must be set aside for dialogue, not only as a courtesy, but also to understand the complexities underpinning disagreements. Identifying common ground and where further agreement could be sought, and moving these areas forward, can generate enthusiasm and incentive and can aid in maintaining momentum.

3. More time for negotiations rarely generates better decisions but more dedication to informal preparations across divides usually does. There is no perfect resolution. Negotiators must work within a limited timeframe towards an outcome that adds value to previous agreements and at least partially addresses each party's interests. As convenient and important as it is to use 'agreed language', which preserves the integrity of past agreements and the consistency in political positions, there is also the need for open-mindedness, new ideas and suggestions that seek the common good.
4. It is recommended that negotiators help their colleagues, when required, with procedures, articulation and access to information, to help level the playing field, as sometimes the lack of experience with formalities and routines can impede consultations.
5. Negotiators should seek to contribute to reinventing and reinforcing multilateralism, eschewing ineffective practices or cynical attitudes. Innovation and improvement in planning, negotiations, reporting and follow up is crucial. They should demand reports and evaluations that are relevant, readable and contain realistic recommendations that can inform collective decision-making. Deadlines for tabling drafts and concluding negotiations should also be respected.
6. The number of draft resolutions presented at the UN each year should be assessed periodically. Too many resolutions both overwhelm negotiators with work and reduce its impact through an inflationary effect.
7. In the area of sustainable development, it is important to allow time within groups and between them to share experiences regarding national relevance and implementation of decisions at the country level, such as the role of national development strategies, coordination at the country level, the role of International Financial Institutions, and the state of

human and institutional development, to name but a few. Indeed one important challenge has been the lack of implementation and follow-up of decisions and agreements related to sustainable development reached after such lengthy negotiation at the UN. Dynamic exchanges of experiences, including those pertaining to challenges and solutions around country-level implementation must be allowed to inform and guide negotiations if we are to make a real difference on the ground.

8. To chair a group of countries or to share the burden of negotiations on behalf of a group entails a particular responsibility with respect to outcomes. A good outcome requires a listening attitude towards both members of your own group and other players, as well as an attempt to lead your group to a compromise. The 68th Session of the General Assembly offers a multitude of issues on which all parties can secure outcomes that will improve their citizens' wellbeing.
9. Negotiators need to ensure that members of their group fully understand the evolving dynamics of negotiations and that reaching common ground will involve sacrifices, especially in national positions. Diplomacy is a craft that can always be improved. More emphasis could be given to training, both within and across groups.
10. Negotiators must offer total respect to each party in a negotiation and allow every country to voice its concerns freely. Moreover, they should treasure emerging consensus between parties far apart and never take lightly the breach of potential agreement. With willingness to sacrifice elements of national interest, there is a real opportunity to achieve common interest, while reminding representatives of the space for oral reflection of national concerns.

It is our sincere hope that these suggestions, inspired by lessons learned through our personal experiences, may encourage an open debate between diplomats and thus help improve the UN's methods of work and result in higher quality, more relevant outcomes ■

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nadia M. Osman is Program Director for Sustainable Development at the Research Council-Muscat-Sultanate of Oman

Jakob Strom is Deputy Director-Dept. of Security Policy-Ministry for Foreign Affairs-Sweden

Indian perspective for protection of Ozone layer: Lessons learned from the CSD

Dr. Mayarani Praharaj

College of Engineering and Technology, Bhubaneswar, India

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established in December 1992, tasked with ensuring effective follow-up to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Since 1993, the CSD has convened annual multilateral discussions on a vast array of issues that intersect the three interdependent “pillars” of sustainable development – the social, economic and environmental.

With renewed interest generated by the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the 2015 deadline looming for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international community is gearing up to agreeing a new global agenda which better addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development.

Nevertheless, there are still over two years to go before the existing framework expires, therefore governments and stakeholders alike must remain focused on achieving the MDGs. In this regard, under MDG 7 (ensure environmental sustainability), there is a target to ‘Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.’ One area that should be included under this is the protection of the ozone layer.

From the early 1970s, scientists were aware of the possibility that human actions could deplete the ozone layer, leading to damaging impacts on humans and the biosphere. The CFCs used as refrigerants, insulators and cleaning agents were identified as some of the most destructive agents, and the international community reacted promptly to this scientific evidence, leading to the 1987 adoption of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol has a clear and detailed compliance regime under which each party is required to report to the Ozone Secretariat its annual production and consumption of ODS. This data is used to measure ODS reductions against baseline data and therefore assess whether countries are meeting their phase-out obligations, and also contribute to the determination of “developing country” status.

The CSD has to date played an important role in the implementation of sustainable development at the national level, including regarding measures to protect the ozone layer. The UN Secretary-General’s report on Protection of the Atmosphere for CSD4 in 1996, for example, noted that the substantive prescriptions of the 1987 Montreal Protocol make it a landmark for international cooperation which embodies many of the core principles of Agenda 21. The report identified the Protocol as a good example of the precautionary principle in action, noted the marked decrease in overall production and consumption of ozone depleting substances (ODSs), but also drew attention to the issue of illegal trade in chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and the continued increase in CFC consumption in some countries.

The CSD also played a key role in the development of evidence-based indicators to track progress and support decision-making on the issue. An Intergovernmental Working Group on the Advancement of Environmental Statistics prepared a paper on Environmental Indicators for CSD in 1995. At the same CSD session, the creation of a menu of Agenda 21 indicators was proposed, also including the “consumption of ODS”, along with the development of methodology sheets which could then be used voluntarily by Member States.

India – Party to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer – is one of the countries that has felt the benefit of this work. India’s Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Rules, brought in in 2000, provide a comprehensive set of regulations to control and monitor production and use of ODS in the country. India’s Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has over the years been executing a nationwide initiative known as National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP). Annual average concentrations of sulfur oxide (SO_x) levels today are within the prescribed National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in almost all domestic territories. This reduction from earlier levels is due to various measures taken, including for example, the use of compressed natural gas (CNG) in public transport in Delhi, the reduction of sulphur in diesel and use of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) instead of coal as a domestic fuel.

This significant progress is a useful indicator to protect ozone depletion and boost sustainable development in future, and provides lessons that we can learn from ■

Sustainable development policy planning: Changing the conversation

Mayumi Sakoh
Millennium Institute

Building on the MDGs for the transition to the post-2015 development agenda, requires us to determine the most effective approaches to implement and review the progress of the multiple sustainable development commitments made at the global, regional, national, and local levels. Choosing the best pathway is becoming increasingly challenging. As societies and economies grow and become more interconnected, we can no longer rely solely on theoretical or sectoral models to develop appropriate policies and long-term plans to achieve sustainable development. The inherent complexity and integrated nature of sustainable development make it difficult to observe and interpret, thereby limiting the ability of decision makers to design, implement, and evaluate effective strategies and policies.



This limitation is at the root of development failure, where policies have created unexpected, often-undesired results. Well-intentioned strategies addressing the symptoms of a problem often only create short-term benefits that are ultimately defeated by the longer-term reaction of the broader system, resulting from the interplay of forces beyond the narrow boundaries of the focal area. For example, policies designed to promote food security, such as intensifying farming, expanding agricultural lands and scaled up irrigation systems, often including the application of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, have resulted in the emergence of unintended and unexpected challenges such as land degradation, depletion of aquifers, vulnerability to crop failure and wide spread health problems for farmers and consumers. Ultimately, these policies have often led to continued or even increased vulnerability to food shortages, thereby aggravating, rather than alleviating, food insecurity and extreme poverty.

Integrated simulation models support a broader understanding of development, thus enhancing the ability of decision makers to design and evaluate development plans and policies. Models that assimilate the three dimensions of sustainable development (environment, society and economy) mimic critical aspects of complex problems encountered in the real world, and allow us to study problematic behaviour patterns over extended time horizons. In other words, they function as laboratory replicas that can be used to perform virtual policy experiments that are impossible in the real world. Thus, by bringing together the social, economic, and environmental dimensions in one framework, holistic and integrated simulation models allow for broad, cross-sectoral and long-term analysis of the impact of alternative policies. Policies that address the causes of the development problems that need to be tackled can be thus designed, simulated, evaluated, implemented, and monitored over time.

Using these holistic simulation models, however, is not enough. The planning process must integrate the input and knowledge of the stakeholders who will be impacted by these policies. These stakeholders should include representatives from different government ministries, science, academia, private sector, civil society, and local communities, along with other societal groups. Together, these stakeholders can work to develop a customised simulation model that will provide highly integrated perspectives of the relevant sustainable development challenges and offer the possibility to view and analyse a broad variety of scenarios that will assess the effectiveness and resilience of policy options. This analysis enables decision makers to define, implement and monitor the best policies and strategies for their constituents. In addition, the model can be modified as future challenges arise. Also important is the ability of those using the models to understand, apply, and modify it, thereby ensuring ownership.

Member states and development partners should implement their commitments by utilising the best possible tools and approaches to enhance evidenced-based decision-making at all levels, thereby supporting comprehensive, integrated, and inclusive plans to achieve sustainable development. In their capacity as long-term, transparent and flexible planning tools, integrated, holistic and dynamic simulation models will prove invaluable and indispensable as a means of implementation and evaluation for the goals and targets developed in the post 2015 process, not least the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The fight continues...

Saba Loftus and Kiara Worth

UN Major Group for Children and Youth

For twenty years, there have been great deliberations on how to create a sustainable future. Change has been seen at all levels, ranging from information sharing, policy, implementation and processes. What has not changed, though, is the fierce commitment of young people to be involved in these discussions and the championing the voices of young people globally.

Youth form a vibrant and dynamic sector in the fight for sustainability, and the UN Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY), has been actively involved in advancing the participation of young people at all levels: local, national, regional and international, in the protection of the environment and the promotion of economic and social development. This includes trying to ensure concrete and meaningful youth participation in international planning and decision-making processes.

The MGCY is made up of volunteers, youth/child-led organisations, youth networks and individuals. Despite financial and logistical challenges, it has successfully networked and collaborated with tens of thousands of young people representing millions around the world to develop policy recommendations for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) process. The MGCY has subsequently participated in the CSD negotiations to lobby for the adoption of these recommendations, many of which have been accepted into the negotiating text over the years. In addition, the MGCY has systematically advanced a platform for youth involved in sustainability at a local level to share their ideas, tell their stories and voice their opinions. As the CSD comes to an end, it is an interesting time to reflect on what the MGCY has done and what still needs to be done.

Throughout the CSD process, the MGCY has strongly advocated for a number of key policy recommendations that we feel are cross-cutting issues across all topics. These include tackling youth unemployment, increased commitment to supporting formal and informal education systems for sustainable development, raising accountability for unfulfilled promises and inequalities, pushing for the 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), and trying to ensure that the most disempowered sectors of society are not forgotten in the negotiations.

In addition to actively contributing to the progress made at the CSD on a wide range of sustainable development issues, these meetings have served as a key entry point for young people into the UN system and the complex world of multilateral negotiations. What's more, the failures of the CSD have in many ways served to strengthen the resolve of the MGCY to participate and influence the intergovernmental process on sustainable development to achieve stronger, more ambitious outcomes that make a real difference to the lives of young people and other stakeholders on the ground.

Children and youth participated en masse at Rio+20 (a special high level event of the CSD) in person as well as virtually, signalling that young people were dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, but also keen to engage and try to push for an ambitious outcome. As well as being heavily involved in the formal Rio+20 policy processes, the MGCY also demonstrated their positions and beliefs through a range of 'actions' within the Summit's Riocentro venue. Yet, despite these efforts, much of what the MGCY called for seemingly fell on deaf ears, and for many young people the official outcomes of Rio+20 were deeply disappointing. The biggest criticisms are that the Outcome Document has few actions and commitments, was non-binding, failed to promise resources for sustainability, and did not reflect the urgency with which these issues needed to be addressed. Nevertheless, the MGCY has expressed a willingness to move forward, decisively and with action post-Rio+20.

As the High Level Political Forum begins a new era of intergovernmental action on sustainability, we hope that the positives of the CSD process such as civil society participation are strengthened and the negative aspects are left behind. The one thing that it must stay committed to, however, is the development of young people, by staying open to their ideas and participation. It is a time of change but the challenge now is to determine what that change will be, if it will reflect the views of the unheard and silenced, or if it will continue to reflect the voices of those seeking power at the expense of both the earth and its people. The MGCY is committed to creating a sustainable planet, marked by justice, integrity and respect for human rights. We recognise that while natural resources are finite, human potential is not, and we will actively continue the fight until this vision is achieved ■



UN General Assembly events calendar

Date	Time	Location	Event	Host
Friday 20 September	13:30 - 18:30	Orange Cafe, UNFPA HQ, 605 Third Avenue, (between 39th and 40th street)	Youth Blast	Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
		Participation is free of charge and open to everyone.		
	14:00 - 18:00	UNHQ Conference Building, Room 2	Major Groups and other Stakeholders Briefing Day	UN Division for Sustainable Development, DESA, CIVICUS and Stakeholder Forum
		Civil society registration has closed		
	18:30	RSPop, 501 Lexington Avenue, New York NY 10017	Screening of documentary film, Work with us: community driven research inspiring change	Participate - Knowledge from the Margins for Post-2015
		www.workwithus2015.org or Participate website: www.participate2015.org or contact Vivienne Benson, Events Coordinator, v.benson@ids.ac.uk		
Saturday 21 September	10:00 - 19:00	RSPop, 501 Lexington Avenue, NY 10017	Participate Exhibition	Participate - Knowledge from the Margins for Post-2015
		www.workwithus2015.org, Twitter: @workwithus2015, Facebook: FB.com/workwithus2015		
	11:00	Thomas Paine Park (Foley Square), 111 Worth Street, New York	People's General Assembly on Development Justice	IBON International, Rutgers, Campaign for People's Goals for Sustainable Development, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
	15:00 - 17:00	World Vision International, 919 Second Avenue - 2nd Floor, New York, N.Y., 10017	Beyond 2015 meet up and final advocacy planning for the Special Event	Beyond 2015
		Beyond 2015 Contact: smason@beyond2015.org		
Sunday 22 September	10:00 - 13:00	Trusteeship Council Chamber, UNHQ	Major Groups and other Stakeholders Briefing Day (Part 2)	UN DESA, CIVICUS and Stakeholder Forum
		Civil society registration has closed		
	10:00 - 12:30	One UN New York Hotel	EWEC Accountability Brunch	Every Woman Every Child
	14:00 - 17:30	Trusteeship Council Chamber, UNHQ	Advancing Regional Recommendations on Post-2015: A Dialogue between civil society, governments, and UN representatives on regional recommendations for the post-2015 development agenda.	UN-NGLS and the Post-2015 Development Planning Team of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General
		Civil society registration has now closed		
Monday 23 September	09:00 - 12:00	Church Center, 2nd Floor conference room	Civil Society Dialogue on Shaping the Development We Want: Voices from the Global South	Wada Na Todo Abhiyan and Global Call to Action against Poverty
	09:30 - 12:30	501 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017 (Roger Smith Hotel, @ Solarium room)	Financing for Human Rights and Sustainable Development in the post-2015	The Righting Finance Initiative
	13:15 - 14:30	UNHQ, Conference Room 1 (CB)	Civil Society Voices on Post-2015: Messages from the National Level	Beyond 2015, CIVICUS, GCAP and the IFP, co-sponsored by Colombia and Sweden.
		Please RSVP to laranatalebeyond2015@gmail.com by Monday, September 16th.		
	15:30 - 17:00	UNHQ Conference Building CR2	Discussion about findings from the Global Conversation on the Post-2015 Agenda: A Million Voices: The World We Want	The World We Want; UN Development Group
		Contact post2015events@undg.org for a special events pass, which will be necessary to enter		
	16:00 - 19:00	Permanent Mission of Turkey to the UN	HLPF Side event on Sustainable cities	UN DESA/DSD with Local Authorities Major Groups
		Online registration: http://bit.ly/163pwp		
17:00 - 19:00	Harvard Club	Launch of first Investments to End Poverty report.	Development Initiatives	
18:00 - 21:00	Church Center	What kind of a post-2015 development framework will bring about the real change we need?	CIDSE	
	Contact : Jean Saldanha saldanha@cidse.org			
18:30 - 19:30	African Union Mission, 305 East 47th Street, 5th Floor	The Role of Science & Higher Education the Post 2015 development agenda: the African context	The Planet Earth Institute and the African Union	
	RSVP required: valentina@planetearthinstitute.org.uk			

Stakeholder engagement: CSD successes may be carried into the future by the HLPF

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes
Stakeholder Forum

CSD – a successful institution

“The Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) – offers the world one of the most open and participatory intergovernmental processes on sustainability issues.” “The institution is nothing but a talk shop for narrow interests, a circus of statements and its outcome documents a hurried synthesis of political wishful thinking and clichés.” The two statements could be said to represent extreme ends of subjective views of the contributions of the CSD, which will close down today after two decades of hard work. Next Tuesday, the newly created institution, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), charged with carrying the weight of sustainable development issues into the future will be inaugurated.

One of the repeated criticisms made by governments against the CSD was its lack of implementation focus. But the CSD did not fail sustainable development and its implementation; governments did by slowly eliminating sustainable development from their national policy priorities and by ignoring the CSD.

The mandate for the CSD gave the UN the authority to establish an operative secretariat for sustainable development. This secretariat became the strongest asset in promoting global sustainable development policies. During the first ten years, more than twenty substantial decisions were taken, greatly affecting global policy setting.

Major Groups

Based on its mandate, the CSD introduced a number of instruments within the UN system aimed at expediting coherence and promoting governance modalities. No other institution in the history of the UN has allowed civil society to play such a proactive role. The system of the nine Major Groups (MGs) developed and agreed through the UNCED process in 1992 became the modus operandi for stakeholders. The CSD mandate gave the MGs full participatory rights, and since then many other UN institutions have adopted the concept of MGs, UNEP being the first to do so in 1996. During two CSD decades, stakeholders proposed a variety of modalities for participation in the official deliberations. The proposals were operationalised in close collaboration with the CSD Bureau, member nations and secretariat.

Two decades in two paragraphs

Two decades of governance modalities for participation found an excellent expression in two paragraphs found in two high-level UN documents. The first is paragraph 84 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document which states that the HLPF “must [build] on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development.” Thus the historic experience has been integrated into the HLPF. The other is paragraph 15 found in the General Assembly resolution which formally adopted the format and the organisational aspects of the HLPF. The paragraph states that Major Groups and other stakeholders will be allowed to: attend all official meetings of the forum; have access to all official information and documents; intervene in official meetings; submit documents and present written and oral contributions; make recommendations; and organise side events and round tables.

These two paragraphs represent a crowning achievement for stakeholder engagement at the UN and elegantly sum up all the rights stakeholders were granted through two CSD decades. It also enables Major Groups and other stakeholders to play a role in the future development of global sustainable development policies.

Future challenges for stakeholders

However, with rights come obligations and the paragraphs contain an implicit challenge for stakeholders – they need to deliver as well as governments do. Stakeholders have been given a critical mandate by the HLPF document – to help develop and implement sustainable development policies. In addition, the document encourages stakeholders to be responsible for the development of modalities for engagement, asking them to establish and maintain effective coordination mechanisms for participation in Forum. There is more; through the transparency of the HLPF, stakeholders may hold governments accountable. The same applies to stakeholders. They also need to deliver, to make sure sustainable development is implemented at all levels, and they need to be held accountable as well.

The next two or three years of the HLPF will be formative years for the new body. Most likely the HLPF will be home to the SDGs. Governments and stakeholders must carry out their promises of support to the HLPF. Only then will we be able to ascertain the correct interpretation of HLPF – whether it stands for “High Level Political Forum” or “High Level Political Failure” ■

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