

Session Topic: Multi-stakeholder Dialogue

Wednesday May 3, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Comments from Australia

- We agree with the contribution by the women's groups that gender inequality restricts a country's economic growth. Removing such inequalities gives societies a better chance to develop.

When women and men have relative equality, economies grow faster, children's health improves and there is less corruption.

To achieve sustainable development requires an understanding of both men's and women's roles and responsibilities within the community and their relations to each other.

This approach recognises that gender equality is not just a women's issue, but a goal that requires the participation of both men and women.

Australia recognises that supporting gender equality is an important part in reducing poverty and increasing the well-being of women, girls and their families. The Australian aid program ensures that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered at all stages of development activities.

- The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate involves Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and the United States and is a model that directly engages industry in addressing climate change, energy security and air pollution challenges, whilst maintaining economic growth and reducing poverty.

At the inaugural meeting in January 2006, an important component of the meeting was the Business Dialogue that brought together ministers as well as CEOs of major organisations and observers from the partner countries to discuss how business and government could work together on the issue of climate change.

Key outcomes of the Dialogue were a commitment by business to the Partnership, a commitment to work within sectors and across countries to disseminate best practice and a call from business for concrete action to start as early as possible.

- Australia has had extensive experience working with Industry Associations to develop voluntary eco-efficiency agreements. These have worked well because industries involved have realised that eco-efficiency makes good commercial sense.

For example, the Energy Supply Association of Australia (ESAA) which represents businesses in the electricity industry supply chain including state owned and private businesses covering generation, transmission and retailing, has signed an eco-efficiency agreement with the Australian Government. Under the Agreement, the ESAA has committed itself to promoting eco-efficiency tools and

concepts, develop eco-efficiency indicators for the sector and work with members improve the reporting of eco-efficiency issues in annual environment reports.

- The Australian Government has a unique research funding mechanism – the Cooperative Research Centre’s programme. The programme brings together research, industry and government organisations in a formal collaborative partnership over seven years to address areas of national interest and produce commercial outcomes for industry, economic benefits to Australia and significant capacity building for both industry and research sectors. There are or have been four such Centres focussed on climate change matters, and a new Centre on climate change adaptation strategies for plant-based industries is in development.