

**Summary of the informal consultations to discuss the twentieth session of the  
Commission and  
to seek views of Member States on lessons learned from the Commission  
by the Chair of the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development  
Tuesday, 15 January 2013**

On 15 January 2013, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, H.E. Mrs. Byrganym Aitimova, held informal consultations on behalf of the Chair of the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable development (CSD20). The meeting aimed to discuss the twentieth session of the Commission and to seek the views of Member States on lessons learned from the Commission.

***Introduction***

The Ambassador referred to the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2012 which recommended that “the Commission on Sustainable Development hold its last session, which should be short and procedural, after the closure of negotiations on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum and immediately before the first high-level political forum, in order to ensure a smooth institutional transition” (67/203).

She stated that, in the view of the Chair of the Commission, it would be beneficial to hear views of Member States on the agenda of the twentieth session. Some views had been expressed that the session could be used to discuss follow-up to Rio+20 and to discuss substantive issues that were to be addressed during CSD20 as per its multi-year programme of work (forests, biodiversity, biotechnology, tourism and mountains). The Ambassador also said that the duration of the session would depend on the agenda, so the session could last one or two days if substantive issues are to be discussed. Regarding the timing, it might be considered to hold the last session of the Commission earlier than the first high level political forum as it is a busy time of the year with the General Debate of the General Assembly.

In connection with lessons learned on the Commission on sustainable development, the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development, Mr. Nikhil Seth, made introductory remarks drawing from the institutional knowledge of the Division.

He underlined that the Commission had succeeded in keeping sustainable development on the international agenda. This pointed to the importance of having a dedicated body for sustainable development. The first ten years of the Commission led to successful outcomes especially on important issues that would not otherwise have had a place in the UN such as forests, oceans and energy. The Director also underlined, as a success, the multistakeholder nature of meetings of CSD, the large involvement of Major groups in the work of the Commission as well as the creation of CSD Partnerships.

Regarding shortcomings in the work of the Commission, the Director pointed out that the rigid multi-year programme of work did not leave space for CSD to discuss new challenges. The work of the Commission had been too technical and almost exclusively focused on the environment after WSSD in 2002. A major challenge was

how to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development and build a much closer link between the national, regional and global levels.

The Secretariat was looking forward to hearing views of Member States on lessons learned from CSD. This would be an input to the report of the Secretary-General on that topic. The report was mandated by resolution 67/203 to support the consultations on the High-Level Political Forum.

### *Discussion*

#### *CSD20*

Regarding CSD20, a number of Member States believed that the General Assembly had pronounced itself this fall on the time, duration and agenda of CSD. They were of the view that Member States should now focus efforts on discussing modalities of High Level Political Forum (HLPF). If any further discussions were needed on CSD, they should take place after the negotiations on modalities of the HLPF conclude.

Other Member States stated that resolution 67/203 did not specify that the 20<sup>th</sup> session would be the last session of the CSD. They believed that some issues identified in the Multi-year programme of work of CSD (biotechnology, biodiversity and forests) should be still discussed. Others also said that there would be need for a platform to discuss what comes out of regional preparatory meetings that are taking place, for which CSD20 is an option. There was also a proposal to hold CSD20 in two parts: a substantive one (in May this year) and a one day procedural session before the first high level political forum. Some Member States also underlined the need for a smooth transition to the high-level political forum and expressed their concern that an institutional vacuum should be avoided. It was suggested to find innovative ways to discuss the substantive issues that were to be discussed at CSD20 such as biodiversity, such as through panels or high-level dialogues.

#### *Lessons Learned from CSD*

Member States agreed that lessons learned from CSD are important for the discussions high level political forum. A number of them expressed the wish to receive a formal letter from the Secretariat asking for their views so that it could be sent to their respective capitals. Sufficient time should be allowed for responding to this request. Other Member States shared views on lessons learned from CSD, especially the following:

- There needs to be a clearly defined body for sustainable development. It needs to avoid overlaps with ECOSOC and UNEP;
- The HLPF as stipulated in the Rio outcome document has to build its work on CSD. It needs to become a dynamic forum for agenda setting on sustainable development, and for strengthening synergies within the UN system, including with ECOSOC;
- Political will and political decisions are necessary, and should not focus only on technical issues if the institutional framework for

sustainable development and the work of HLPF are to be truly different;

- The Issues that were to be discussed in the two remaining cycles of CSD could be transferred to the high level political forum.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the Director indicated that, as requested by a number of speakers, a letter asking for Member States' inputs to the Secretary-General's report will be sent that very afternoon to all Missions. The deadline for submission would be the middle of next week as the report needs to be finalized shortly in order to be useful for the discussion on the HLPF (as mandated by the resolution 67/203).

The Ambassador suggested that more informal consultations should take place until consensus is reached about the modalities of the CSD20.

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