

After 20 years, Commission on Sustainable Development to conclude work, making way for new High-level Political Forum

New York, 20 September—The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development will wind up its two decades of work toward promoting sustainability at its 20th and final session this Friday, which is, coincidentally, 20 September. The concluding meeting comes just before countries will hold the inaugural session of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development on Tuesday, 24 September.

A bold and new idea that emerged from the 1992 Earth Summit, the Commission on Sustainable Development was the first UN body established to promote sustainable development. It broke new ground by including an array of participants from civil society in its deliberations. The CSD also served as the launching pad for a range of new initiatives, treaties, and organizations aimed at addressing particular facets of sustainable development. But over time, participants expressed concern that progress on sustainable development was lagging and that the issue needed to be addressed at a higher level.

The Chairperson of the final CSD session, Bektas Mukhamedzhanov, Kazakhstan Vice-Minister of Environment Protection, said "the CSD played a critical role to maintain the momentum on sustainable development. CSD taught us many lessons on how the Forum can deliver on this responsibility."

At Rio+20, in the outcome document "The Future We Want," Member States called for the creation of the High-Level Political Forum to ensure that sustainable development tops the agenda of the highest levels of government and is embraced by all actors.

"Rio+20 overhauled UN institutions for sustainable development," Mukhamedzhanov said. "We must effectively use the new High-Level Political Forum to ensure that sustainable development continues to be implemented and is integrated into the heart of the post-2015 development agenda. The forum must give strategic yet actionable directions for pursuing sustainable development. We have learned a lot from the successes and shortcomings of the Commission on Sustainable Development over the years. Now is the time to put this knowledge to good use."

"We are entering a new period in history," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo. "There is a realization that sustainable development—the integration of policies and actions that promote economic and social well-being that also protect the environment—have to have a prominent place on the international agenda at the highest levels. The Commission on Sustainable Development has served us well, yet we have to recognize that we need to urgently accelerate action. The High Level Political Forum will help us do just that."



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The Commission on Sustainable Development has been credited with helping countries share ideas and best practices and many believe that it provided a platform for inspiring action. The work of the Commission led to the establishment of the UN Forum on Forests, which has advanced progress on sustainable forestry through the adoption of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests in 2007. A recommendation of the Commission led to the process that established the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, as well as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

The Commission has also advanced progress in the areas of oceans, water and energy, and has worked to promote sustainable development in small island developing states.

According to a report of the UN Secretary-General on the lessons learned from the Commission, the contributions achieved by the CSD were also accompanied by a number of shortcomings, including the failure to fully integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The Commission, it found, was also weak on its review and impact on the implementation of sustainable development.

The concluding session will feature opening addresses by the CSD-20 Chairperson, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Hongbo and a representative from civil society. The Commission will then discuss lessons learned from the CSD and consider the ‘way forward.’”

On the web -- <http://bit.ly/18Xad1m>

MEDIA CONTACT

For interviews and more information, contact Dan Shepard of the UN Department of Public Information, 1-212-963-9495, shepard@un.org





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Issued by the UN Department of Public Information



United Nations

20-22 June 2012 • Rio de Janeiro, Brazil • www.uncsd2012.org