

# Commission on Sustainable Development

**Report on the twentieth session  
(13 May 2013 and  
20 September 2013)**



[20 September 2013]

## Contents

| <i>Chapter</i>  | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| I. Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention . . .  |             |
| A. Draft decision recommended by the Commission for adoption by the Council . . . . .   |             |
| 1. Adoption of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its<br>twentieth session . . . . .  |             |
| II. Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the way forward   |             |
| III. Conclusion of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development  |             |
| IV. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twentieth session . . . . .   |             |
| V. Organizational and other matters . . . . .   |             |
| A. Opening and duration of the session . . . . .  |             |
| B. Election of officers . . . . .   |             |
| C. Agenda and organization of work . . . . .  |             |
| D. Attendance . . . . .   |             |
| E. Documentation . . . . .  |             |
| Annex I: Chair’s summary of the key points of the high-level dialogue on “Lessons learned from the<br>Commission on Sustainable development, and the way forward” |             |



**Chapter I**

**Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social  
Council or brought to its attention**

**A. Draft decision recommended by the Commission for adoption by  
the Council**

1. The Commission on Sustainable Development recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decision:

**Draft decision I**

**Adoption of the report of the Commission on Sustainable  
Development on its twentieth session**

The Economic and Social Council takes note of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its twentieth session.

## **Chapter II**

### **Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the way forward**

At its 2nd meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Commission considered item 3 of its agenda, entitled “Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development”, and held a high-level dialogue.

The high-level dialogue was opened with a short commemorative video presentation of images on the history, accomplishments and legacy of the Commission.

At the same meeting, the Commission heard a videotaped statement by His Excellency Valli Moosa (South Africa), Chair of the eleventh session of the Commission.

Also at the same meeting, the Commission heard presentations by the following panellists: His Excellency Bedrich Moldan (Czech Republic), Chair of the ninth session of the Commission; Achim Steiner, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, United

Nations Environment Programme; Nikhil Seth, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity; and Barbara Adams, Senior Policy Adviser, Global Policy Forum.

Following the presentations by the panellists, statements were made by representatives of Norway, Italy, Japan and Malaysia, as well as by the observers for Fiji (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), the Islamic Republic of Iran and Switzerland. A statement was also made by the observer for the European Union.

Statements were also made by the representatives of the following major groups: women; non-governmental organizations; business and industry; and children and youth.

The Chair's summary of the key points of the dialogue is contained in Annex I of this report.

## **Chapter III**

### **Conclusion of the work of the Commission on its twentieth session**

At the 2nd meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Commission was informed that in Council resolution 2013/19 of 24 July 2013, the Economic and Social Council requested the Commission to conclude its work at its twentieth session and last session on 20 September 2013 and further decided to abolish the Commission with effect from the conclusion of its twentieth session, and to transmit its final report to the Council on the same day.



## Chapter IV

### **Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twentieth session**

At its 2nd meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Commission had before it the draft report on organizational and other matters of its twentieth session (E/CN.17/2013/L.1).

At the same meeting, the Commission adopted the draft report (see chap. I, sect. A, draft decision I).

Also at the 2nd meeting, the Commission was informed that the Chair's summary of the key points of the high-level dialogue on "Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the way forward" would be finalized by the Bureau in collaboration with the Secretariat and included in the final report of the Commission on its twentieth session to be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council later on the same day, in accordance with Council resolution 2013/19 of 24 July 2013 (see chap. II, sect. A).

## **Chapter V**

### **Organizational and other matters**

#### **A. Opening and duration of the session**

The Commission on Sustainable Development held its twentieth session on 13 May 2011 and 20 September 2013. The Commission held 2 plenary meetings. At the 1st meeting, on 13 May 2011, the Chair of the nineteenth session, László Borbély (Romania), opened the session and made a statement.

At the same meeting, the Deputy Chef de Cabinet of the Office of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, His Excellency, Noel Sinclair, made a statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency John W. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda).

Also at the 2nd meeting, a statement was made by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Wu Hongbo.

Also at the same meeting, a statement was made by the Representative of Major Groups, Joao Felipe Scarpelini.

**B. Election of officers**

At its 1st meeting, on 13 May 2013, the Commission elected the following members of the Bureau by acclamation:

*Chair:*

Mazhit Turmagambetov (Kazakhstan)

*Vice-Chair:*

Bosiljka Vuković (Montenegro)

At its 2nd meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Commission elected, by acclamation, His Excellency Bektas Mukhamejanov, Vice-Minister of Environment Protection of Kazakhstan, to replace His Excellency Mazhit Turmagambetov (Kazakhstan), as Chair of the twentieth session of the Commission.

At the same meeting, the Commission also elected, by acclamation, Miloš Nikolić (Montenegro) to continue with the unexpired term of Bosiljka Vuković (Montenegro) and Paolo Soprano (Italy), as Vice-Chairs of the Commission for its twentieth session.

Also at the same meeting, the Commission was informed that the Vice-Chair, Paolo Soprano (Italy), would also assume the responsibilities of Rapporteur.

**C. Agenda and organization of work**

At its 2nd meeting, the Commission adopted the provisional agenda for its twentieth session, as contained in document E/CN.17/2013/1, and approved its organization of work, which was circulated during the meeting and made available on the Commission's website as an informal paper in English only. The agenda was as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the way forward.
4. Conclusion of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.
5. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twentieth session.

**D. Attendance**

The session was attended by representatives of the 53 States members of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Observers for other States members of the United Nations and for the European Union, representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and observers for intergovernmental, non-governmental and other organizations also attended. A list of participants will be issued in document E/CN.17/2013/INF/1.

**E. Documentation**

The documents before the Commission at its twentieth session are posted on the website of the Division for Sustainable Development:  
<<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1211>>

**ANNEX I**

**Chair’s summary of the key points of the high-level dialogue on  
“Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development,  
and the way forward”**

1. The high-level interactive dialogue was held during the twentieth and last session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). As decided at the Rio+20 Conference, the new high-level political forum on sustainable development will replace the Commission. It will meet for the first time on 24 September 2013, a few days after the session of the Commission.

2. The interactive dialogue commenced with the projection of a commemorative video celebrating the legacy of the Commission and recollecting the important accomplishments of the Commission during its 20 years of existence. It also set the stage for the inauguration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as the successor of the Commission. The commemorative video can be accessed at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

3. Valli Moosa, Chair of the Board of the World Wildlife Fund, South Africa, and former CSD-11 Chair, addressed the meeting via a recorded video. He reflected that in the early days of the Commission, only environmental ministers were interested in sustainable development; and today that has changed, largely due to the CSD's work to link the environmental dimension with its social and economic counterparts. He further highlighted the growing accountability of large corporations for their actions and stewardship of the environment, noting that the practice corporate social responsibility was rare in the very recent past. Although there are weakness and goals not yet achieved, he called upon participants to carry their successes forward and ensure continued commitment to sustainable development.

4. Bedrich Moldan, Director of Charles University, Prague, and former CSD-9 Chair, said one task—if not the main task—of the CSD was to monitor the implementation of Agenda 21. He discussed the progression of formulating indicators of sustainable development, which the Commission undertook from 1996 until 2006, recalling that it was not easy to convince colleagues to develop this set of indicators. He remarked that now it has become clear that these are very useful. The involvement of the scientific and technological community in the development of measurements and indicators directly correlated to the development of policies at the global

level. The notion of planetary boundaries is also increasingly central to sustainable development. He concluded that analysis of CSD's impacts over 20 years and its legacy should help to bolster the success of the high-level political forum.

5. Achim Steiner, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, United Nations Economic Programme (UNEP), underscored that the major groups have been a central part of the identity and passion of the CSD. The closure of the CSD is but an evolutionary step, part of the progress whereby this functional commission is being raised to a higher and more effective political level. It is thus a reason to celebrate. He noted that the genesis of sustainable development could be traced to the 1980 publication of the *World Conservation Strategy— living resource conservation for sustainable development* (IUCN, UNEP, WWF), which included issues of intra-and inter-generational equity that still underpin the responsibility of sustainable development today. Environmental roots are part of the constraints and legacy of the CSD, part of a new frontier and an effort to develop a different standard of development. Rio+20 succeeded in elevating sustainable development above the notion of “three pillars”— which contributed to “silo thinking” and trade-offs—to a more integrated set of ideas, particularly with regard to sustainable consumption and production. New institutional frameworks have been born as a result of



Rio+20, including the strengthening of UNEP, where universal membership has created a UN environmental assembly. He highlighted UNEP's work building on the science-policy interface and forming partnerships in support of government reform, and expressed his commitment to future successes.

6. Nikhil Seth, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, recalled the euphoria and excitement of the days when the CSD was created, noting negotiations were long and arduous, and some countries had strong objections to creating a new UN body. Ultimately, it was the engagement and energy of civil society that made the difference; their unwavering commitment convinced member States to embark on this new endeavour. The Rio Conference had been marked by unprecedented participation of civil society, and the creation of the CSD provided a home to allow its continued involvement. He highlighted key lessons learned from twenty years of CSD and recommendations for the High-level Political Forum. Those related to increasing the effectiveness of review and monitoring progress through better data collection, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development through better representation, preserving the traditions of multi-stakeholder inclusiveness, and enhancing the science policy interface to place science in the service of the poor.

7. Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity, reviewed his participation in discussions that created the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the United Nations Forum on Forests. He said that the launch of the High-level Political Forum and the development of SDGs is an important moment to promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity, and link it to issues of poverty eradication, food security, access to water, health, promoting human well-being, and adaptation to climate change. He called on the new forum to continue the good work of CSD and to create an enabling environment for biodiversity issues.

8. Barbara Adams, Senior Policy Advisor, Global Policy Forum, reflected on the success of the CSD in promoting the notion of sustainable development that is universal and captures interest of people at all levels, and supported reviving the tradition of more integrated and substantive multi-stakeholder dialogues. As the CSD drifted toward environmental issues, it lost vital constituencies of actors to trade and climate change negotiations, and it neglected to examine the complex roles of the IFIs, the UN Human Rights Council, and the trade and investment regimes, which are all connected to sustainable development implementation. She recommended that the High-level Political Forum do more to address

investment agreements that undermine sustainable development; engage the G-20 on issues of decent work, job creation, and policies that enable States to meet their rights obligations; and increase the focus on women's rights, accountability frameworks and equity. Goals and targets should provide incentives to address areas for long-term social change, measure progress beyond GDP and incorporate reporting mechanisms. Since the UN is increasingly looking to partnerships as part of its implementation strategy, she suggested that the Secretary-General's proposed multi-stakeholder initiative for a partnership facility might report to the High-level Political Forum, challenged participants to be aware of areas where conflict of interests must be addressed, and proposed that the Forum should adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to agenda-setting.

9. During the interactive discussion, Fiji (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), European Union, Iran, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Norway, Switzerland, and representatives of Major Groups of women, non-governmental organizations, business and industry, and children and youth made comments.

10. A key message of the debate was that the new High-level Political Forum on sustainable development should build on the achievements and lessons learned from the CSD so as to discharge the functions assigned to

it at Rio+20 .

11. All referred to the many achievements and lessons learned of the CSD. They recognized the CSD's broad scope of work as unique and challenging and provided their views on how CSD had impacted policy and development at national levels.

12. Overall, many speakers said that the CSD had demonstrated the importance of having a central UN forum entrusted with sustainable development issues.

13. Speakers were unanimous in affirming that the multi-stakeholder approach has proven to be one of the main added values of the CSD. Major groups and the establishment of partnerships have fostered mutual understanding on many issues over the years.

14. The Commission has set the agenda in several areas of sustainable development. It has been successful in paving the way for further implementation of sustainable development within the post-2015 development agenda. Many said that sustainable development should be integrated at the centre of the fight against poverty, and should underpin efforts to build more resilient societies.

15. Discussion was also generated on the shortcomings of the CSD—namely its inability to address economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated way as well as its lack of flexibility to address new and emerging issues. Speakers also referred to CSD's protracted negotiating sessions and the absence of a mechanism to implement and review implementation of its outcomes. Lack of commitment by member States to implement its decisions and their own commitments have limited the impact of the work of the Commission. The need to further integrate the environmental, social and economic dimensions was underscored by many, as was the need for improved means of implementation through application of clear targets and indicators. Also important are regular review by regional commissions, voluntary national reporting and more robust connections at the country level.

16. The need for more flexibility in addressing new and emerging challenges was also underscored. Some noted that giving higher political standing and priority to sustainable development would require broader spaces for participation by major groups and increased attention to inter-linkages notably with ECOSOC functional commissions, particularly the UN Commission on Statistics, the UN Commission on Population and

Development.

17. Several agreed that women's voices should be given more prominence, stressing that the rate of inequality is growing. They urged governments to address not only gender mainstreaming, but also women's rights, calling for issues of inequality to be addressed at the highest level.

18. Knowledge of the advantages of sustainability within the private sector has also been deepened by the CSD, due to a growing awareness of interconnectedness. Sharing experiences, engaging more strongly with the economic and social dimensions, and institutionalizing the science-policy interface can also be brought to the High-level Political Forum, where global cooperation can mobilize resources of the private sector, drive innovation, spur partnerships and bring new standards of engagement with the United Nations.

19. Finally, as youth become more and more involved in sustainable development, their inclusion within country delegations continues to rise, and is to be further encouraged moving forward.

20. In closing the Commission, speakers looked forward to an inclusive and effective High-level Political Forum - a Forum that provides the new

home for governments and all stakeholders to cooperate and advance the sustainable development agenda.

---