

**SIX SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOOD SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT (CFSSD – 6)**

UNDESA AND UNECA SIDE EVENT

**STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR PARTICIPATION OF REGIONALLY BASED
MAJOR GROUPS IN THE CSD-18/19 IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE**

WEDNESDAY, 28TH OCTOBER 2009

*Summary Report of Side Event by Rose Mwebaza (PhD)
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Background:

I was sponsored by the UNCSO to participate in the above captioned event as a major groups representative. I was specifically assigned the responsibility of hosting a side event aimed at strengthening the capacity for participation of regionally based major groups in the CSD 18/19 implementation cycle.

The preparations for the side event was facilitated by both the UNCSO and the UNECA who were extremely useful and made sure that all the logistical arrangements for the side event were put in place.

The side event was held on the 28th October 2009 from 13:00 -14:00 in conference room 6. A representative from the Economic Commission for Africa officially opened the event. She emphasized the importance of major group participation in the CSD process since they were closer to the people affected by the decisions made by governments at the UN level. She said that for this reason, they were better placed to bring the lessons from their practical experience on the ground into the decision making process at the UN.

She noted that in order to give the major groups better efficacy within the UN process, she would ensure that their participation is mainstreamed into the overall agenda of the RIM in the next cycle as opposed to relegating them to side events which she noted were not always attended by the government delegates who view them as a purely major group activity.

The side event was attended by 20 people and included the deputy chair of the CSD Bureau from New York, the newly elected chair of the CSD African bureau, two representatives from the African Union Commission, a representative from UNEP, the president of the African Round Table on Consumption and three representatives from the Economic Commission for Africa. The rest were government delegates and major groups participating in the RIM.

It is important to note on the onset the side event was a success for two reasons:

- 1- **Participation:** The side event had 20 people participating in it. This was a considerable turnout given that the actual number of governments that was represented in the CFSSD/CSD-RIM was less than half the

governments on the African continent. In fact government representation was so low that at the end of the opening ceremony on the first day, the meeting was moved to a smaller meeting room.

- 2- **Major Group Participation:** There were 10 representatives from major groups who attended the CFSSD/CSD-RIM, six of whom were funded by the SCD secretariat in New York.

The Side Event

The side event commenced with welcome remarks that were given by a representative of the Economic commission for Africa. This was followed by a presentation by Dr. Wilson Kipkore, of the Institute for security studies, in Nairobi. The presentation focused on the importance of major group participation in UN processes. Some of the highlighted benefits of major group participation in UN processes highlighted in the presentation included:

- To influence the text that will be negotiated;
- To build and cultivate alliances for future work;
- To showcase studies of successes that major groups have achieved;
- To learn about how intergovernmental negotiations work;
- To get to know our government
- To raise funds for our work

The full presentation by Wilson is herewith attached for your information.

Following the presentation by Wilson, I proceeded to make a presentation of the key emerging issues from NGOs on the thematic issues under discussion in the CSD 18/19 implementation cycle. The key messages for this presentation were drawn from a discussion paper that is being prepared by the SDIN group to which the Institute for Security studies is a member. The presentation is herewith attached for your information.

Issues raised by delegates and other Participants in the side event:

The two presentations were followed by a vibrant discussion by the participants in the side event some of which are highlighted bellow.

The vice chair of the CSD 18 congratulated the NGOs for successfully hosting the side event. He said that the CSD bureau was reviewing its work programme and would include a ministerial dialogue where they would like to involve major groups. He said that the CSD bureau in New York was committed to continual support of major group participation in the CSD processes.

Ms. Sarah Olembo of the department of rural economy and agriculture in the economic commission for Africa noted that she was delighted to participate in a side event organized by major groups in Africa. She noted that this interaction had also provided her with an opportunity to network with NGOs that they could partner with in their future work. She noted that NGOs play a crucial role in guiding policy since they work closest to the people on the ground. She

highlighted the importance of developing eco-labeling policies for Africa, development of recycling, the banning of the use of plastic as is the case in Rwanda and the need for greater sensitization to consumers in order for them to make better consumption choices.

Prof. Migiro, the President of the African Round table on consumption highlighted that the problem on sustainable consumption and production requires attitudinal change and this should form the basis for a lot of the work in this area. A representative from UNEP reinforced the important role that NGOs play in bringing their experiences from the grass roots to feed into the decision making policy process and called upon the major groups to ensure that their position papers always contain enough case studies that can be used to direct policy formulation processes.

Contributions from the major group participants emphasized the importance of integrating traditional knowledge and practices into all initiatives relating to sustainable development. It was observed that many communities in Africa are repositories of important information, which can play an important role in the ongoing discourse on sustainable development especially the thematic issues under discussion in the CSD – 18/19-implementation cycle.

In closing, the representative from the economic commission for Africa reiterated the importance of integrating major group activities in the overall programme of the RIM and committed to making sure that this happened in the next cycle. She also advised that when major groups make their contributions to the CSD process, they should couch them in terms of the different roles of all the actors and stakeholders involved in the CSD process. Accordingly, she advised that there should be key messages addressed towards what governments are required to do or should be doing, what the role of major groups is and should be and where the possible areas of joint cooperation and implementation.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, it can be said that the side event was a success. Given that less than half of the 53 African countries had delegates present at the main event and given the fact that no more than 10 major group representatives were present at the RIM. What was lacking in numbers was however made up for by the quality of people who participated in the side event.

Lastly, it is important to note that all the representatives of the major groups were participating in a CSD event for the first time. It was therefore a major task for me to ensure that they were on board with the process and the issues under discussion for this cycle of the CSD. This was a clear manifestation of the need for continued capacity building for Africa major groups to actively engage in the CSD process.

The major groups participating in the side event held two meetings during the RIM. The first meeting that I facilitated on the first day focused on me providing a brief orientation to the major group participants all of whom were

participating for the first time. I also presented to them the side event programme and a brief review of how the side event would proceed.

I facilitated a second meeting of the major groups after the side event and a considerable amount of time was spent on trying to identify why there was low government and major group participation at the RIM and if this was an exception or if this is the norm. While no definite answers were forthcoming on this very important issue, it was agreed that something needed to be done to ensure greater government and major group participation within the RIM. It was agreed that it would be important for me as the major groups organizing partner for Africa to attend some of the other RIMs to learn from them and see how best to better organize the African RIM. It was also recommended that with the commitment to integrate the major group event into the overall programme of the RIM, it might be important to facilitate the major groups coordinator for Africa to secure funding to hold a pre-RIM African major groups meeting that would develop a position statement that would feed into the RIM.

Finally, great thanks and appreciation, were directed to the CSD secretariat in New York especially, the vice chair of the Bureau for coming to the RIM, Federica for handling all the logistical support and Kiara for her support and guidance through the RIM process. Great appreciation was also extended to the Economic Commission for Africa and all the other UN agencies in Addis Ababa that worked hard to facilitate a smooth side event.