

**CSD13 High level segment, 21. April
Interactive dialogue with Major Groups**

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Your excellencies, Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

We have a lot to do and very little time.

Will we be able to make 2005 a turning point?

This is clearly the responsibility of governments – in the North and in the South, but governments cannot do it alone.

To make it happen we need the active participation of all of civil society.

Full integration of Major Groups into the Commission's work is very valuable. It ensures that our themes are addressed broadly and from several viewpoints. I congratulate the Major Groups with the substantial input you have made to this session.

Your participation is also vital because you - the Major Groups - are very important as a channel to the world outside these conference rooms.

Even in fora where Major Groups cannot be as integrated as here, transparency should be assured. We support an active role for civil society at the MDG Review Summit.

I would like to address two issues:

- 1) The rights-based approach to water access;
- 2) Decentralisation – the role of local authorities and local communities;

Firstly:

One contentious issue at this session is the rights-based approach to water access. I believe this idea will gain in acceptance in the years to come. However, as stated in the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural rights, implementation of measures to fulfil rights may take place gradually, taking into account the resources that are available to each individual state. Having said that, our goal should still be to achieve rapid fulfilment of rights.

My government recently presented a white paper to Parliament about international development. This paper supports a rights-based perspective on development. It is a challenge to integrate this perspective into development cooperation, and Norway will seek to further strengthen this broad perspective.

Although limited, there are experiences with rights-based approaches that can be drawn on in policy development.

Secondly:

There is no way to provide appropriate and sustainable water and sanitation services, nor improve living conditions in slums, without:

- decentralising responsibilities – and resources – to city and local authorities;
- involving local communities fully in design and upkeep of facilities; and
- building capacity at local levels to take on these tasks.

My ministry is responsible for regional and urban planning. We believe strongly that decentralisation is the right approach. I hope that the policy options and recommendations from CSD will be very clear on this point.

It also important that policy development at the national level is informed by local experiences so that successful local projects and approaches can be scaled up.

And, of course Mr. Chairman, women must be involved as key agents for change at all levels of decision-making.

Rounding off, Mr. Chairman :

I recognise that the NGOs miss deadlines for our decisions.

But we do have a timeframe – 10 years – and very clear targets to be measured against.

And I fully expect that we will agree on a follow-up process in which Major Groups will be fully involved and can “hold our feet to the fire” as you, Mr. Chairman put it.

Professor Sachs emphasised the growing momentum to reach the MDGs – and the responsibility of donor countries to fulfil their responsibilities. The decisions agreed at CSD13 is part of our contribution to this momentum.

You - as civil society representatives - must help us keep up the efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman