

UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
Second Prepcom Meeting, New York, 7 – 8 March 2011

**HIGHLIGHTS OF SIDE EVENTS**

*7 March*

**Green Economy: Promoting Sustainable Urban Development and Investing in Green Urban Infrastructure**

Sponsored by UN-HABITAT and UN-ECE

The side event was moderated by the representative of UN-ECE. Among the panellists were the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, the Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, representative of ICLEI, on behalf of the Mayors of Quezon City, Philippines and Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the CEO of Green Star Recycling on success in San Antonio, United States, and the Mayor of Nault, France. Recognizing that the decisions made today have long-term consequences and that current urbanization is the highest in the history of the planet, the panel focused on promoting urban development in economically viable ways, drawing on the experiences of successful practices in medium-sized urban centers.

Among the city panelists, there was consensus that natural green areas must be protected in-stride with economic development when planning for urban growth. To achieve such greening, a broader perspective that considers minimally regional, and possibly national or international planning interests must be considered, as urban sprawl does not have hard and fixed borders. Also essential to effective urban planning is an engaged citizenry whose interests and movement patterns on-the-ground are considered by policy-makers; the most effective plans to “green” urban transportation involve reducing the amount of time involved to get from one location to another.

In planning for an urban structure in which human need and environmental carrying capacity are balanced, the following seven strategies were proposed: a. embrace land mosaic patterns that provide for large green land patches and more sustainable urban development (i.e. flood prevention), b. promote compact cities and planned extension of urban areas, c. balance strategic facilities with diversified local economic opportunities, reducing the demand for mobility, d. expand network infrastructure while getting the most out of existing networks (i.e. multi-modal transport system), e. construct greener built environments that use water and energy efficiently, f. protect valuable ecosystems services and biodiversity hotspots while increasing resilience to some natural disasters, g. promote clusters of green industries and green jobs (i.e. “magic triangle between university, business, and administration). Other actions include retrofitting urban buildings for more sustainable energy usage. In brief, the right balance must be found between green harmony living and GDP for practical success.

To measure the success of programs, capacity-building in the form of measuring emissions per capita and emissions per GDP were presented. Cities that have made significant strides toward green economy include: San Antonio, United States in area of recycling to stimulate job growth and reduce CO2 emissions the equivalent of removing 130,000 cars annually;

Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain by instituting green transportation structures that have increased in the use of public transportation by 43% since 2003 and have maintained a relatively low unemployment rate; Quezon City, Philippines by reducing waste 38% via community volunteer, schools, and institutional engagement, and Belo Horizonte, Brazil in sanitation cleanup and poverty reduction. As debates ensue at the international and national levels over the extent to which the environment or employment should be fore-grounded in planning for a green economy, it is apparent that local governments and civil society are embracing both approaches to better quality of human life in an environmentally sound manner.

## **Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Earth Summit 2012**

Sponsored by National Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

This side-event aimed to highlight the parallel debates on climate change and sustainable development in the lead-up to Rio+20 and focused on civil society/ NGOs and national-level efforts. The discussion began with a quick summary of the difference between Rio 1992 and the current political, social, scientific and environmental climate forming the context Rio 2012. Fundamentally, the science behind climate change, and the events that have occurred mean that climate change is now acknowledged as a reality, and the need to change to a low carbon economy is clear. However, some states are still apprehensive as to what policies need to be implemented to achieve green economy, and how these changes will effect them economically. It is within this gap that civil society is able to pursue change towards a green economy.

The first of the presentations called for a “coalition of the willing” to commit to the implementation of new actions on key energy and climate opportunities. Concrete commitments are necessary, and preferred over individual government action and there is a need for civil society to put pressure on national and international government processes to effect change in a sustainable development framework. It was recognised that the concessions inherent in political processes were unlikely to provide breakthroughs in negotiations before Rio+20 next year, and it is only through other means that momentum on the topic may be built up. Specific commitments are seen as a key element of any action, with commitments being made by countries, communities and companies alike. Strong accountability frameworks are needed however in doing this, with follow-up systems implemented to provide tracking and accountability of such commitments.

The image of sustainable development being a thread, and the creating and strengthening of the thread happening in 1992 was used to describe the relationship between Rio1992 and Rio2012. The needle that is needed to make this thread useful is to be created at Rio+20. That is, the implementation of sustainable development must be articulated at Rio+20 through the green economy framework. To achieve this political will, vision and current political gridlocks all need to be overcome in order to achieve truly sustainable development.

The example of China was given, and the stark change in its production and pollution levels when compared with 1992. Being now the largest polluter and producer, China’s role within the Rio+20 both at the national level and with Chinese NGOs has changed dramatically. Examples were given at the industry level within China, where technical innovations and self-applied industry standards are being seen where no government legislation is forcing these behavioural changes. The Green Economy race was compared to the Arms Race and Moon Race, with the one key difference being that the competition between nations is not the same as in previous rapid technological races, but rather fosters an environment of innovation and collaboration between nations, private companies and civil society. The

benefits of this being that innovations can be applied across nations, and synergies can be created.

The timing of Rio+20 was acknowledged to be crucial, with the momentum of Copenhagen and Cancun in the climate talks leading to broader discussions of sustainable development and greening the economies as an avenue to mitigate climate changes. The strong connection between climate change and sustainable development means that any action needs to link the two, along with the eradication of global poverty as an intertwined goal. To achieve progress in all of these areas concrete commitments must come out of Rio+20 that transition away from carbon-intensive economic growth. The representative from NRDC called for commitments from countries, communities and companies that jointly work together to achieve the goals of Rio+20.

The representative from Brazilian Sustainable Cities highlighted the situation in Brazil where private business has a strong influence on the politics of Brazil, and the benefits this has had to the green economy debate. The interlinking influences of society, business and government are a strong signal, as demonstrated by the example of the Brazilian Governments Copenhagen policy. Four months before going to the Copenhagen Climate talks, the Brazilian Government expressed its intention of not presenting any emissions reductions targets. However, due to business pressure to establish targets and create regulations on this issue so that technological advantage could be gained, the government changed its official position. This example articulated the drive for private companies to achieve economic advantage, and the utilisation of this drive for environmental ends can be achieved.

During the interactive discussion, frustration was seen at the use of the same processes and talking points that are repeatedly not getting the results needed. After Rio in 1992, there was strong political will for change, but little environmental institutionalisation was seen. How is change going to come about if we are not changing processes? The role of youth, and environmental education was put forward as one way in which the discussion could move toward the implementation.

## **Whose Green Economy?**

This side event sponsored by the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group) and the Third World Network (TWN) featured speakers and inter-active discussions on a range of topics related to Green Economy. Among them were "Can Green Economy Provide Foundations for Equity and Sustainability on Earth? Who Owns the Green Economy? Control, Impacts and Governance of New Technologies".

The representative of CED stated that the topic of Green Economy emerges suddenly in all kinds of dialogue mechanisms after 2008. The situation described and the language used in reports within the UN system cause worries in the world. There is a need to clarify the role of the Green Economy towards sustainable development. The representative of the South Centre focused on the social equality. Green Economy was regarded as an opportunity to justify our developing model. It was also pointed out that Green Economy should be taken into the sustainable development context. Creating new international discipline for new economy would take the risk to undermine the existing discipline of sustainable development. Regarding the gap between the North and the South, more efforts should be put to bring the two poles on an effective dialogue mechanism.

The panelists from ETC Group addressed the ownership of the Green Economy and the governance of new technologies. Big companies hold important quantity of resources and technological advantages to promote Green Economy. It should be carefully questioned whether benefits go to the people. To have a better sustainable governance of technology, an on-going discussion on the International Convention for the Evaluation of New Technologies (ICENT) was driven by ETC Group. Also, women's vulnerability to assess new technologies and the sustainable consumption and production (SCP) were addressed. It was recognized by the panelists that there is an urgent need to change the mindset to secure and continue efforts on the issues.

The Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations expressed concerns of financial commitment to support the non-LDC developing countries facing climate change challenges. The Permanent Representative of Bolivia to the UN criticized the promotion of the concept of Green Economy within UN bodies without a universally agreed definition by Member States.

## **How the Green Economy Depends on Water**

Sponsored by UN-Water and UNSGAB

The primary purpose of the session was to highlight how the green economy and water are dependent, featuring the linkages among drinking water, water resources and sanitation. Among the panellists were representatives of UN-WATER, UNSGAB, the World Bank, the French ambassador for the Environment and the Vice-Chair of UNCSD Prepcom from Pakistan. The Executive director of UNEP addressed the meeting.

Recognizing both that agriculture consumes on average 70% of water resources in developed countries and up to 90% in LDCs, as well as the symbiotic relationship between water and energy, calls have been made for a nexus approach linking water, energy, and food security. In addition, primacy must be given to the full water cycle, including treatment, consumption, and sanitation; thus, the 1990s problem of overemphasizing water treatment and sales can be avoided. Efficient and adequate treatment for potable water, reduction of consumption and waste on the everyday level and in manufacturing processes, and proper treatment to reduce pollutants from re-entering vital and ocean sources should be considered within the full life cycle of water use and management. To facilitate this shift in attention, the full economic costs of not treating waste water, especially in regard to marine ecosystems and food, must be measured.

In the context of green economy, the role of the government regarding consumption versus the degree of privatization was posed as a heuristic question; from an ethical perspective, should a natural resource as essential to life as water be bottled and sold? It was iterated that regardless of humanitarian values, as water resources become more finite, cost and violent competition will increase, foregrounding social issues.

Water availability will increasingly become a limiting factor for environmental resilience, food production, energy supply and economic growth. Global phenomena such as climate change and urbanization will intensify the impacts of these trends...Being prepared for a resource scarce future and meeting today's access challenges requires solutions that take into account all three sides of water, food, and energy nexus.

Government Ministries and civil society groups will continue the discussion of the water-agriculture-energy nexus at the upcoming conferences on water in Istanbul (16-22 March 2011), Bonn (16-18 November 2011), and Marseilles (March 2012), in preparation for Rio 2012.

## **International Environmental Governance (IEG) in the Context of the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development.**

Sponsored by the Government of Finland, Government of Kenya, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), UNEP

This side-event highlighted the importance of gaining a meaningful outcome from Rio+20 on the issue of governance. The term governance was defined in a broad sense to include all institutions, rules, finances, resources and participants that affect global governance, and more specifically IEG. The benefits of addressing IEG from a broader governance perspective allows for critical cross-cutting values that cover all sustainable development governance to be included, such as the need for transparency, participation, accountability, justice, equity and human rights.

Examples from the Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome were given, outlining the Consultative Ministerial Process to cluster the number of chemicals mandates that had accrued since the 1970s into a manageable system at the national level. This IEG process was pursued at both the expert level, and at the Ministerial level, with discussions being split between the themes of what the function of the institution should be, as well as what the institution should look like. By the end of the process, it was acknowledged that the Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome needed to be presented to Rio+20, for a strong analysis of the options and to have these incorporated into the Rio+20 process to endorse the outcomes and form a basis for bold political decisions on the matter.

The need for change in the current Stockholm process was acknowledged by the representative from Kenya, as the current status is not working well for members states. Particularly trying on the capacity for small states to meet the requirements of all mandates, the aim of the IEG process is to strengthen the existing structure, or set up a new one. The complexity of the current structure, and the multiplicity of organisations were highlighted as two key areas that put unnecessary strain on national resources.

The role of UNEP was also discussed, as well as criticisms of its current structure. There was general agreement on the soundness of the initial UNEP mandate of 1972, but the need to emphasise the global authority of UNEP over environmental matters needs to be enshrined. Although this is essentially UNEPs mandate, systemic failures have restricted its ability to be such an authority. As an example, the current situation whereby the Governing Council in Nairobi can at best provide policy directions is not seen as adequate, as it relies on the General Assembly in New York to formalise anything related to IEG. Reform of not only the mandate, but the ability to act on the mandate was therefore called upon. The role of the UNEP in the area of sustainable development was also acknowledged by panelists.

The role of civil society was also addressed within the context of IEG. The representative from the Major Stakeholders Advisory Group used the example of Copenhagen, and the failure of trust and trustworthiness that resulted from governments' previous inability to meet environmental agreements. The effect this had on the ability of the process to move forward was seen as critical in the lack of results. Additionally, issues such as the international nature of business, the separation of developing and developed countries' aims and the debates over equitable resource use were all discussed within the framework of civil society inputs to IEG.

The role of civil society and science in political decision-making, as well as the power science plays in the international processes was also discussed with the role of scientific assessment playing a vital role that could be institutionalised. Currently, the role of civil society and the importance of science is recognised, but not legislated. The role of civil society in keeping politicians honest needs to be institutionalised and accepted as part of the system to fully integrate governance ideals. These issues are beyond national sovereignty, and to properly assess governments' requirements for a green economy, all views must be included into a sustainable development framework. Importantly, civil society must work with science to change people's behaviour.

In the discussion Rio+20 was seen to be an opportunity for fundamental reform, due to the size and breadth of the issues expected to be discussed. Although incremental reform is usually favoured on the international level, it was acknowledged that Rio+20 was a once in a generation opportunity to push for more rapid reform. Within this discussion, the role of governments, and the need for environmental issues to be incorporated into a greater foreign affairs policy was also emphasised.

The role of civil society and data was also raised in discussion, with rapid technological gains seen as having a positive impact on data sharing. Examples of UNEP putting information on Google Earth, as well as the World Conservation Monitoring Centre were given to highlight the adoption of new technology in knowledge sharing. The point was made that although not everyone in the world has access to computers, this is not a reason to disregard the available technology. Additionally, the role of science in articulating the current unsustainable human enterprise was highlighted, and the need to back up policy with concrete data.

## **Redefining Sustainable Development Governance: Increasing Transparency, Participation and Accountability**

The objective of this side event sponsored by the stakeholder Forum and the World Resources Institute was to push forward the Principle 10 of Agenda 21 of environmental information accessibility into the legal system and protect the right to access to environment related information of each individual.

Important progress has been made in the European region on the issue. Three options were stated in the side event, which include:

- 1) To encourage non - UN Economic Commission for Europe countries to access the European regional legal instruments;
- 2) To establish regional conventions of environmental information access and strengthen inter-regional communications;
- 3) To achieve a global information treaty of the Right of Environmental Information Access.

The side event highlighted as well how the commitments made by Governments can improve the environmental information publishing and the communications through national, sub-national, regional, sub-regional, global and institutional levels. In addition, the need for new instruments was underscored, which should be built on the basis of a popular participation of the civil society.

8 March

## Towards a Green Economy

Sponsored by the Government of Germany, UNEP and the Environment Management Group.

This side-event explored the concept of 'green economy', and the opportunities arising in the build-up to Rio+20 in 2012. Panellists discussed the recent report issued by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), "Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication", as well as national examples from South Africa and Ecuador in implementing Green Economy Policies. A representative from the World Bank also spoke on the key transitions needed to green an economy, while the USG for UN-DESA and SG of UNCSD2012 spoke of how the UN system overall can contribute to the Rio+20 process. Other speakers included Panellists included the Executive Director of UNEP, the Minister of Coordination of Heritage of Ecuador, the Director general of German Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety and a representative from South Africa

The UNEPs Green Economy report was acknowledged as a substantive contribution to the Rio+20 process as it clearly articulates the economic case for a transfer toward a green economy. By providing a manual for action by actors both within the UN system and within nations, the UNEPs paper has outlined the need for further action to pursue a green economy framework as well how it is to be implemented. It contributes to the UNCSD 2012 process by clarifying what is required of states for the transition. The issues raised by nations within the Green Economy context include; trade and the competitiveness of countries, the benefits and cost of greening the economy and how they will be distributed, and what international institutions will do to facilitate an equitable transition.

The experiences of South Africa and Ecuador were shared in attempting to move toward a green economy. Both countries highlighted a move towards sustainable development being a national priority, and the vital importance of green job creation as a justification for the new economic models being put forward. The importance of technology and science were also emphasised, along with the need for an institutional framework at the national level to facilitate the transition to a green economy.

The representative from the World Bank highlighted four key transitions needed to move toward a green economy which were echoed in the other presentations;

- The need for **technological transfer** that is commercially viable.
- The need for **infrastructure transition**- particularly important for developing countries that are locking in transport consumption patterns for the longer term with investments at the current time.
- **Natural resource management transition** from unsustainable GDP growth accounting to 'wealth' accounting that takes into account the natural resources that provide livelihoods in the long run.
- Lastly, the **human capital transition** needed to be able to seize green job opportunities, as well as the capacity to implement green economy policies.

It was also stressed that the green economy transition does not replace the sustainable development framework, but rather is an implementation of it by bringing in Finance Ministers and other groups who had not previously be present for sustainable development talks.

The single greatest issue that can accelerate efforts towards a green economy was agreed by all panellists to be capacity building. The need for skills transfer, and an increase in capacity resources was highlighted as a key step in reaching green economy targets, but the issue of financing this transition was also raised as an impediment to change. It was highlighted that this financing although immediate, would be far cheaper in the long run than the 'business as usual' option. The issue of leadership from the national governments was also deemed important as an accelerator of change, as from this position policy reforms can be pursued that institutionalise green economy goalposts while also providing funding for initiatives. The role of pricing mechanisms were also discussed, but their applicability in different countries and across different sectors varies, very often only impacting on the margins due to stronger signals to consumers such as existing infrastructure and existing subsidies in areas such as petrol, fisheries and agriculture. If global subsidies such as these are removed, a more balanced assessment of pricing signals and consumer choice can be corrected. Although subsidies themselves were not attacked, the consensus was that most current subsidies benefit the affluent and not the poor.

## **Accountability and Implementation, The Keys to Sustainable Development, Institutions for a Green Economy for Rio 2012 and Beyond**

The central aim of the session was to address the question, "How can we make accountability and implementation more central to IEG, including in the Rio +20 process, in ways that address different stakeholder perspectives?" Among the featured panelists were the Director of the Pardee Center of Global Public Policy, Boston University, the Austrian Ambassador for Development Cooperation, the General Director for Energy of the Brazilian Minister of External Affairs, the Vice-Chair UNCSO from Pakistan, the Chief of Environmental Law Division of UNEP and the Executive Coordinator, UNCSO2012 Secretariat.

The session began with the common premise that "accountability is the lever that can unleash the focus on implementation that we all want"; institutional frameworks should be established to hold nations accountable to the conventions to which they have pledged agreement, turning attention away from indicators privileging international agreements to grounded impact. A plan of accountability and institutional *mechanics* was presented. Accountability mechanics include the following: a. improved and well-defined metrics (of how resources were used and how the environment has changed for better or worse) and reporting mechanisms, b. improved transparency (to communicate to the public what was committed to and how were those commitments were fulfilled), and c. improved compliance mechanisms. Institutional arrangements to promote accountability will: a. establish a compendium of best practices (recognizing and supporting best behavior), b. create a registry of commitments (by all countries), c. make accountability and implementation the focus of the CSD (rather than a negotiating forum), and d. make a move towards a global Aarhus-type convention instrument for accountability.

Discussion featured the candid positive and negative experiences of seasoned development professionals, who agreed on the need for a registry, but debated the impetus and consequences for such. Suggestions, sometimes contradictory, from amongst the 55 national, international, and civil society groups in attendance included the following: a. government awareness of the full cost of implementation of the commitments being made prior to signing, b. reformulate the policy-making apparatus to indicators that focus on grounded results to improve the human condition, rather than written agreements, c. create



regulatory mechanisms to address capacity-building for non-compliance, d. self-regulation should occur to promote a more “soft” approach and uphold national sovereignty, e. self-regulation should not occur, due to bias, political, and funding consequences, e. to ensure effective implementation of an accountability mandate, a business model should be followed (rather than political / policy or academic), as such models tend to be more on-the-ground results-oriented, f. institutional frameworks must be set up in which environmental protection measures inform success indicators over financial ones, g. we should be careful in making the assumption that quantitative indicators of accountability result in actual accountability; qualitative indicators to measure the relationship between mandates and their achievement are needed, h. to garner participation in an international registry, “soft” compliance measures should be used that encourage information exchange over punitive measures.

## **Planetary Boundaries and the urgent need for societal transformations - Sciences in Support of Rio 2012**

This side event sponsored by the International Council for Sciences (ICSU), the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) and the United Nations University-International Human Dimensions Programme (UNU-IHDP) introduced the pressure on the planet and the role of science to drive the societal transformation facing environmental and developmental challenges.

The speakers, including the Executive Director of IGBP, a representative of UNU-IHDP and an expert from ICSU triggered an interactive discussion on Planetary Risks, Green Economy and Sciences and Policy. During the discussion the following emerged:

- Human activities have accelerated to a point that they are pushing the Earth's system beyond natural boundaries, interconnected perspective is needed to deal with interconnected planetary risks. The establishment of a contract between sciences and society was encouraged to develop solutions for planetary stewardship.
- The indispensable societal transformation towards a green economy should base on the sustainable social system and economic model. Involvement of broader understanding of human need such as dignity and equality is needed for a stable transformation.
- Policy making and implementation must be based on the best available knowledge. Scientific leadership can go along with the governing actors to strengthen the sciences-policy interface towards sustainable development.

The interactive discussion further highlighted how the scientific community guarantees its independence and credibility when it is engaged into policy deciding process. The need to assist developing countries with capacity building in sciences and new technologies in the sustainable development context was recognized as a key responsibility of the scientific community.

## **Towards Rio+20: Brazilian Civil Society Initiatives Related to UNCSD 2012**

Sponsored by Vitae Civilis Institute and Civil Society Facilitating Committee for Rio+20 (CSFC2012)

During the side event a range of speakers covering a wide range of issues and ideologies spoke, representing the diverse nature of the UNCSD Major Groups. This side-event was essentially a platform for different voices within Brazil's civil society to articulate their vision

on the Rio process, and how best to engage civil society as a whole using a multi-stakeholder strategy.

Panellists included representatives from the key civil society groups within CSFC2012; Vitae Civilis Institute; Kari Oca indigenous peoples gathering; Workers and Trade Unions (CUT); CSFC2012; World Social Forum; Brazil and United Nations Preparatory Process for UNCSD 2012 (BR UN); Global Green Economy Coalition (BR National Dialogues); and the Global Union for Sustainability (GUS).

Many of the civil society groups engaged with the Rio+20 process engage in dialogue with each other, with the UN and with the Brazilian Government, but these are all parallel activities. Each parallel dialogue has its own roadmaps toward Rio, and these need to be incorporated to gain as many perspectives as possible in the build-up to Rio+20, as well as create effective agendas for action after the conference. It was noted in discussion that although Rio+20 will only go for three days, there should be a focus on the whole year as an opportunity for change.

The need to inspire world activities, not just Brazilian activity was stated as one key aim of the CSFC2012. Representing all minority groups such as women, youth, workers and indigenous peoples must be a priority if an equitable framework for sustainable development and a green economy can be achieved at the Rio+20 summit. The opportunity of such a big gathering of political and civil society leaders was highlighted as a key opportunity that must be maximised for the benefit of all groups within society. The CSFC2012 sees its role as achieving this aim.

An impediment to mainstreaming the Rio+20 civil societies message for some groups was the lack of ability to communicate to key groups, such as youth. The move to mainstreaming the debates was accepted by all as key to future positive outcomes, but the need to deepen discussion and spread it beyond NGOs to the public was considered the next crucial step in the lead-up to Rio+20.

The role of the Brazilian Government was seen to be important, and the power of civil society in forming the policies and stances of the Government were detailed. Specifically, the role of business in forming policy through economic incentives for greening the economy was explained, with examples of previous efforts being outlined. Not all those present however saw the role of business as central to the civil society mobilisation in preparation for Rio+20. During the discussion, the relationship between social civil society groups and business civil society groups was examined, with some discussion about pursuing separately the goals of social civil society groups. Opinions on this however were divided with some seeing the division of productive and non-productive groups within society necessary to capture all concerns, while others saw the advantages of combining efforts for maximised results.

A representative from the indigenous people of Brazil also spoke, highlighting the need for respectful collaboration between all sectors, internationally and nationally in the build-up to Rio+20. Development for indigenous peoples was defined as an 'equality to life'. That is, equal access to food, water and medicine, and a respect for the elements of the earth such as wind and sun. It was agreed upon in the discussion that these qualities be central to the Rio+20 agenda by bringing a degree of spirituality to the proceedings and respect for resources that has been absent in other debates. The audience was encouraged to look at the future not in a time sense, but by looking to your children and grandchildren and envisioning the kind of economic, social and environmental world you would wish them to inhabit. This point was brought up further in discussion, with the wish for the attendance of

youth at the Rio+20 summit, specifically the chance for attendees to be able to bring their children to such a momentous event.

The CUT representative spoke of the importance of jobs within a green economy framework, and how this is the key criteria that must be addressed when institutionalising a sustainable development framework politically and socially. Workers and trade unions have specifically been looking at how to use markets and fiscal mechanisms to finance sustainable development, with a focus not only on how to create green jobs but decent jobs. Translating international agreements on concepts such as green economy and sustainable development was seen as challenging, but equally so is the application of these ideas onto a national platform. The BR UN representative acknowledged the slow start the Brazilian government had on a sustainable development agenda in the lead up to Rio+20, but stated that the momentum has increased due to civil society actions.

## **Diversity and Sustainable Development - from Hindrance to Part of the Solution**

The objective of this side event sponsored by the Government of the Netherlands, the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), the University of Tilburg, and the European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) was to find out positive effects of diversity on the way towards sustainable development.

The interactive discussion was focused on how diversity can become part of the solution to sustainable development governance instead of a hindrance and what this implies for the existing institutional framework in the UNCSD 2012 preparatory process.

During the side event the discussion highlighted the interactive relation between sustainable development and diversity. On one side sustainable development should link to diverse contexts, traditions and values and make sense to people, while on other side diversity should become a governance principle and a major objective of sustainable development.

An institutional diversity involving various dialogue mechanisms in different levels and geographic regions might be a solution to push forward the governance implementation under the UNCSD 2012 preparatory process framework.