

Introductory Remarks by the Chair
H.E. Aleksi Aleksishvili
1 May 2006

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased and honored to work with you as Chair of the 14th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as we review and assess progress made on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Vice Chairs in the Bureau and the CSD Secretariat for their commitment and efforts in preparing for this session. I might also add that I have received comments and suggestions from a number of individuals and groups, and I appreciate that input and advice.

The Commission on Sustainable Development has completed one full cycle of the new Programme of Work adopted at CSD-11. This session is the first in the second cycle and it provides us with the opportunity to build on successes of the previous two years. The review process began with Regional Implementation Meetings in Africa, Western Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and Europe and North America, in which relevant concerns and constraints as well as best practices and lessons learned were brought forth.

A number of Governments have worked together with interested groups on the issues in this thematic cluster. They are too numerous to list here in entirety but they include, most recently, Azerbaijan on energy efficiency and Qatar on natural gas earlier this year. Germany hosted the Bonn meeting on renewable energy in 2004, and China followed-up in Beijing in late 2005. I would also point out that the Government of the Netherlands hosted “Energy for Development” in 2004 and there have been meetings in South Africa on parliamentary legislation, in India on climate change and in Egypt on electricity interconnection, among others. Energy Week by the World Bank in March also provides a direct input to this session, and we are fortunate to have the results of the World Bank’s Development Marketplace on-site next week.

We are here to review, assess and take stock of progress made in implementing goals set forth in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and decisions taken at the ninth session of the Commission and at the Johannesburg Summit. To facilitate this review we have a number of interactive discussions planned in our Programme of Work. These will benefit from eminent experts and on-the-ground practitioners who will lead off the discussions as Panelists.

The regular sessions of CSD now include the Partnership Fair and the Learning Centre both of which are intended to complement the interactive discussions, and I strongly urge you to participate in these as well the very interesting side events.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The subjects we will deliberate during these two weeks are unparalleled in their importance for achieving sustainable development goals. The issues are complex and inter-linked. Energy use and industrial development are essential for economic growth and social development, but care must be taken to avoid or minimize adverse air pollution and atmospheric, climate change and other environmental effects.

This basic dilemma just touches the surface of the complexity of the issues in this year's cluster of issues. A major goal is to improving access to reliable and affordable energy to those unable to obtain modern energy services. Energy efficiency and how to transfer cleaner energy technologies are also integral facets of the issue. There has been some progress on energy as noted in the Secretary General's report, but much work remains. Investment and transferring modern technologies could play a major role in improving development prospects. The International Energy Agency estimates that investments amounting to about \$550 billion per year to 2030 will be required to satisfy energy needs. Investments in energy infrastructure can also reduce concerns about energy security.

Improving access to modern energy services for the 1.6 billion people still without electricity and the 2.4 billion who rely on traditional biomass for cooking and heating is essential for achieving sustainable development goals and, in fact, underpins the potential of successfully achieving all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including poverty alleviation. The social dimensions of access to modern energy services cannot be understated. Its effects on improving living standards for women and children, health and education are proven time and again, and we have the opportunity to make a real difference in this respect.

Industrial development covers a wide range of issues ranging from lessons offered by rapidly industrializing countries, energy efficiency successes, cleaner production methods and corporate social responsibility. Again, we have seen spotty progress with some countries adapting quickly to globalization trends, the demand for environmentally-friendly products and ability to garner funds from sophisticated financial markets. However, other countries have not fared as well and opportunities to reduce poverty and improve living standards remain elusive.

Our review of air pollution/atmosphere and climate change must be thorough without duplicating efforts underway in other intergovernmental fora. There has been some progress in solving air pollution and atmosphere problems in urban areas and trans-boundary problems have been addressed, but obstacles remain. Socio-economic development is accompanied with a concurrent increase in the use of vehicles, more industrial activity and greater electricity use, air pollution and climate change will be affected.

Reducing air pollution and GHG emissions could be facilitated by increasing use of renewable energy technologies, but renewable energy remains a small share of total

energy used. We will benefit from relevant supporting work undertaken in Bonn and Beijing as we identify barriers and constraints to a more widespread use of renewable energy. Our considerations should include assessing ways to facilitate the transfer of renewable energy technologies as well as advanced and cleaner technologies to improve atmospheric conditions and to lower GHG emissions.

Climate change discourse at the inter-governmental level typically takes place in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and we will not duplicate those discussions. I was pleased to note the recent progress made at the Montreal meeting in November/December 2005. We will focus on climate change within the context of sustainable development.

The issues in this thematic cluster are closely related and interlinked. Discussions of one cannot take place in a meaningful way without consideration of at least one of the remaining issues. The Bureau has devised the organization of work to enhance our review and assessment of progress made in achieving sustainable development goals on these issues following a more integrated approach than in previous sessions. However, I assure you that we will have time to give each issue its due consideration.

Distinguished delegates, let us begin a frank and fruitful exchange of ideas based on practical experiences and lessons learned. I look forward to hearing about barriers and constraints as well as progress made on the thematic cluster of issues that will provide a sound basis for policy considerations next year.