

DIALOGUE WITH POLICY RESEARCH COMMUNITY

Tuesday, May 12, 3.00-5.15 pm

Summary

CSD Chair Minister Verburg opened by stressing the need to link science and research with application and policymaking. The links between local and indigenous knowledge and the science and research communities need to be reinforced. Agriculture has been neglected for too long. Too little research and development has been undertaken on technologies of interest to most farmers in developing countries. She stressed that agriculture is at the heart of poverty reduction and a driving force in social and economic development. It is also central to the climate change agenda.

Assistant Secretary-General Jomo Kwame Sundaram said the recent multiple crises have clearly shown the limits of the current economic model and made more urgent a fundamental rethink of economic development and global economic governance. Is the Agenda agreed at Rio still relevant, and does it provide us with the guidance we seek as we face these new challenges? Solving the food crisis is a priority for all countries, but especially for developing countries that are disproportionately affected. How can we avoid the recurrence of food crises in the future? The key to solving global food insecurity issues while simultaneously and durably curbing poverty is to ensure better livelihoods for hundreds of millions of small-scale farmers and rural communities. This approach also yields benefits in addressing climate change. How can the international community best support those farmers?

Four invited speakers from the policy research community reflected on: the future of the sustainable development agenda; how best to develop that agenda; the sustainable green revolution; and how to deal with the food crisis.

During the first part of the dialogue, participants discussed, *inter alia*, the long-term nature of the sustainable development agenda; the failure so far to significantly push this agenda forward; the impossibility to rely on economic growth to solve the problems caused by economic growth itself; the roles of science, technologies and local knowledge in informing us as to how to live within the ecological limits of the Earth; the establishment of a broad-based knowledge management partnership on sustainable development; appropriate incentives and the capacity for resilience and adjustment; how extremes of affluence and poverty both have major economic impacts on the environment; the lack of realism of the fine tuning approach and the need to leapfrog and make fundamental changes in mindsets and values; and inconvenient choices that need to be made about unsustainable consumption and lifestyles. It was suggested that the limits of nature can provide opportunities for new ways of doing things.

There was a sense that the momentum of Rio can only be regained by removing the increasing fragmentation of the issues and examining again the complexity of issues in an integrated way. Traditional knowledge has never fragmented the elements of sustainable development knowledge. A “wiring diagram” for the next 20 years of the sustainable development process was proposed by one speaker. It was mentioned that the Copenhagen meeting on climate change would be a litmus test of the sustainable development process.

During the second part of the dialogue, participants discussed, *inter alia*: the need for high-level executive leadership to improve agricultural performance and recognition that only coordination of key players at the national level can put agriculture back at the center; the need to create incentives to support the creativity of farmers; the recognition that agriculture is a knowledge-

intensive sector and needs entrepreneurial activity and investment in basic infrastructure; the need to bring research, teaching and extension under the same roof if we really want to extend agricultural information to the ground level. On the food crisis, it was mentioned that we tend to react only to crises, even if food insecurity is endemic. Coordinating information is an important issue, as is the lack of information needed by farmers, for example in Africa. The most important factor may be the inadequacy of the institutions at all levels to deal with the problems.