Dear Colleague,

We are writing to you as former Chairs of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development to invite you to a workshop on "sustainable development in the context of UN reform," taking place on 1 May in Conference Room A from 3:15 to 5:15 pm at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. The event is organised by Stakeholder Forum. FBOMS, ANPED and UN NGLS.

The background paper enclosed aims to explore how we might address the current challenges related to sustainable development governance.

We believe that the upcoming General Assembly debate on the High Level Panel Report should be an opportunity to initiate a more fundamental discussion on sustainable development governance throughout the UN system. The CSD meeting also offers an opportunity to start to look at how the CSD itself could be reformed to address the issues that are now challenging us.

We hope you will attend the workshop and look forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely,


Borge Brende CSD Chair 2004
Valli Moosa CSD Chair 2003
Bedrich Moldan CSD Chair 2001
Juan Mayr CSD Chair 2000
Simon Upton CSD Chair 1999
Henrique Cavalcanti CSD Chair 1995

**THE UN SYSTEM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**
**Proposals for a Sustainable Development Institutional Initiative**
24 April 2007

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This discussion paper contains a number of proposals for strengthening the UN's sustainable development architecture within the context of overall reform of the economic, social and environment pillars of the UN. While a number of short term remedial measures have been proposed and adopted for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), what is now required is a bold transformation of the UN's sustainable development framework, and particularly the role of the CSD. Sustainable development institutional reform should be one of the highest priorities of the current UN reform processes. With the recent emphasis on UN reform and system-wide coherence, discussions regarding the future and relevance of sustainable development, and the CSD,  should return to the question of how best to implement the intergovernmental system's (here referred to as the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and CSD) mandate for integrating environment and development into decision making. The debate needs to mature, moving from purely a discussion on follow-up to UN conferences and summits on sustainable development towards a meaningful and honest discussion on the appropriate institutional arrangements for sustainable development.

The paper suggests that the aim of a sustainable development institutional initiative would be to enhance 'confidence building' between industrialized and developing countries in an effort to produce practical outcomes and to define the areas in which the UN's institutions, and the CSD in particular, could make a distinctive contribution to the implementation of sustainable development. The paper proposes that such a process is needed to move the CSD's agenda from the dominant environment perspective to address the CSD's original mandate of integrating environment and development in decision making.

As a first step, the paper proposes the establishment of an incremental process under the CSD, in the form of an open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group to address a range of issues focusing mainly on the future and role of the CSD. The primary objective of the process would be to ensure that the CSD can fulfill its mandate as the high-level forum for sustainable development in UN. Secondly, the paper proposes, as a complementary step, an incremental process to identify the building blocks of a more robust intergovernmental framework for sustainable development. Such a process would be conducted under the auspices of the General Assembly and would be empowered to address the lack of coherence in the normative, analytical and operational approach to sustainable development across the UN's decision-making and operational bodies.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT'S INSTITUTIONAL DILEMA

In 2002, the UN General Assembly adopted sustainable development as a key element of the overarching framework for the UN, particularly for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), under the chapter on the institutional framework for Sustainable Development, called on the General Assembly to give overall political direction to the implementation of Agenda 21 and its review. The World Summit 2005 Outcome Document also committed Member States to promote the integration of the three components of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars. The General Assembly further reaffirmed that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and

protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development. In 2005, the thirteenth session of the CSD, and consequently the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly, reaffirmed "the mandate of the Commission as stipulated in Agenda 21, General Assembly resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation as well as Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/61 on the future programme, organization and methods of work of the Commission."

The CSD has over the years proved to be an important 'home' for keeping the broad sustainable development agenda under active review, and has been instrumental in launching a number of new initiatives and securing intergovernmental cooperation. The Commission can claim some success in exerting influence on the multilateral agenda such as: advancing the cause of Small Island Developing States (SIDS); initiating the global freshwater assessment (now the World Water Development Report); establishing the open-ended process on oceans and the law of the sea; introducing multi-stakeholder dialogues and promoting the role of Major Groups; recommending that relevant bodies seek a legally-binding status for the Prior Informed Consent procedure; the setting up of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the UN Forum on Forests; supporting the Washington Global Plan for Action on protecting the marine environment from land-based activities; setting a date for National Sustainable Development Strategies to be produced and implemented; pioneering national reporting; developing a set of indicators for sustainable development; and agreeing on new consumer guidelines to include sustainable development. According to Carpenter (2002) "two of the CSD's most notable areas of successes stem from the CSD-7 decisions on oceans and tourism, both of which led to actual changes in the manner in which the UN considered these issues. Its decision on oceans, *inter alia*, recommended that the General Assembly establishes an open-ended informal consultative process to facilitate the consideration of matters within the General Assembly's existing mandate. For tourism, it actually introduced the issue into the Rio process and developed an international work programme on sustainable tourism. In both examples, the CSD focused on how it could contribute to integrated decision-making by providing better consideration of the overall policy matrix."

While the intergovernmental mandate on sustainable development is clear and has been unananimously agreed to, the development and maturation of the UN's pillar organizations has stagnated. Despite the successes of the CSD, it remains an institutionally and politically weak global authority on sustainable development. The new multi-year process has highlighted inherent flaws in the interpretation of its mandate; the secretariat is weak and under funded; and the debates continue to be dominated by the Ministries of the Environment, who are in most cases the weakest in governments with inadequate funding[1]. Rather than adding value, the CSD is often seen as increasing fragmentation in the intergovernmental system. This may actually have the opposite effect of mainstreaming sustainable development concerns; in fact, it may further isolate these issues from financial and economic discussions and greatly lessen their credibility (Carpenter, 2002).The format of CSD meetings does not stimulate open and vivid discussions, focusing on options rather than solutions to move issues forward. The CSD has been unable to deliver on its original mandate (of monitoring and reviewing Agenda 21 implementation) and on its assumed role (of negotiating decisions that move sustainable development forward) (Najam *et al*, 2006). The deviation from the original mandate, particularly as it relates to financing, means

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[1] It is worth nothing, however, that the issue of the domination of environment ministries is an issue best addressed at national level and should not necessarily be seen as a shortcoming of the CSD's institutional arrangements.

of implementation, and overall direction on sustainable development to the UN system, remains a concern for many participants.

Despite being the highest level forum on sustainable development, the CSD has struggled to appropriately address the three pillars of sustainable development, and as a functional commission of ECOSOC often lacks the appropriate political decision making powers of the General Assembly or its subsidiary organs. The possibilities for the CSD to successfully carry out its mandate are in many ways shaped and defined by its traditional, bureaucratic institutional surroundings. Its power and limitations derive in large part from its place within the UN system (INTGLIM, 1997). The CSD and its parent body ECOSOC are currently failing to effectively oversee the system-wide coordination of sustainable development, as well as the balanced integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of United Nations policies and programmes. Attempts to reform both bodies have provided limited remedial benefits and the renewed focus on system-wide coherence in light of the World Summit 2005 and the urgent need to meet the MDG and JPOI targets point to a problem with the current system. The lack of an operative function, particularly at the country-level, for sustainable development within the UN system and the fragmented coordination of the UN's work has led to overlap, duplication, confused priorities and 'turf wars'. The CSD has also not managed to influence the processes that govern development today, such as economic and trade policies.

As a functional commission of ECOSOC, the CSD has no power to require action from its decisions, particularly as it relates to giving instructions to UN agencies, programmes and funds. Unlike other related UN agencies, it does not report to the UN General Assembly and it does not have sufficient financial resources. This then begs the question, posed by participants to the intergovernmental process almost 10 years ago:

> **"If we accept the fact that sustainable development is an overarching principle, the question becomes why the CSD was placed within the ECOSOC framework, as a functional commission. This seems very contradictory: if sustainable development is an overarching principle, then why is the CSD not given a 'higher' place in the hierarchy of the UN system? Logically speaking, the CSD should be in a position to give political guidance to and integrate the sustainable development policy and work not only of ECOSOC and it commissions, but of all the agencies, programmes and bodies of the UN system** (INTGLIM, 1997)**."**

There is growing concern that the CSD has avoided certain discussions on issues that remain critical to sustainable development, and in particular for developing countries. The CSD has been particularly inefficient in addressing issues such as the means of implementation, including finance and technology transfer, as per its UNCED/WSSD mandates[2]. It has also been weak at, or in certain cases avoided, identifying new and emerging issues and addressing 'politically sensitive issues.' During the first cycle, for example, the almost total lack of discussion on

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[2] A/RES/47/191 specifically mandated the CSD to: (3c) review the progress in the implementation of the commitments set forth in Agenda 21, including those related to the provision of financial resources and transfer of technology; (3d)review and monitor regularly progress towards the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for official development assistance; this review process should systematically combine the monitoring of the implementation of Agenda 21 with the review of financial resources available; and (3e) review on a regular basis the adequacy of funding and mechanisms, including efforts to reach the objectives agreed in chapter 33 of Agenda 21, including targets where applicable.

international waters, the role of large-scale water infrastructure, subsidies, trade, etc., due to the 'political sensitivity' of such issues, clearly demonstrates one of the great weaknesses of a body like the CSD and why so many actors do not see it is as 'the authoritative body on sustainable development.' This demonstrates that the goal of the CSD meetings has rather become to develop an agreed document rather than addressing and critically analyzing core sustainability issues. If the CSD is to remain relevant, its member States must have the political will to discuss sensitive issues and deliver advice, which must now include more coordinated and substantive advice to the UN decision making bodies, both vertically and horizontally. Many commentators have suggested that the CSD remains a forum of environment ministers and is predicated towards the environment pillar of sustainable development. Given this tendency, questions still remain on the precise relationship between the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum and the CSD, particularly the high-level segment and its outcomes.

While the above situation points to institutional inertia, the real problem is the lack of political will and the erosion of confidence between industrialized and developing countries on the global partnership for sustainable development. Among the obstacles that continue to hamper the 'partnership' are the growing discrepancy between commitments and action, particularly the resource gap, and the lack of a strong political base. This has contributed to a failure to effectively mainstream and integrate the environment and development (sustainable development) into the wider macro economic arena, and particularly within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and international financial institutions. As the president of the Group of 77 (President Mbeki, South Africa) said in his address to the General Assembly in 2006, " precisely because of the absence of a global partnership for development, the Doha Development Round has almost collapsed……… we have not implemented the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, thus making it difficult for the majority of the developing countries, especially those in Africa, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and have reduced the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to an insignificant and perhaps forgotten piece of paper."

## OUTLINE OF AN INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVE

Over the years several ideas have been proposed for strengthening the UN's sustainable development infrastructure and efforts. These have ranged from the conversion of the UN Trusteeship Council to a council on environment and development; a new body in the UN responsible for overall coordination of environmental, development and economic policy, limited to approximately the same number of countries as the Security Council; and the creation of an Economic Security Council. While many of the proposals met favour with some governments, there was no general consensus on the proposals.

In September 2005, Stakeholder Forum organised a workshop on the CSD, in which participants expressed concern that the CSD is losing the political traction it once had, and that ineffective processes are weakening its ability to focus and carry out its mandate. Participants worried that the CSD's power of persuasion is being eroded by "ineffective multilateralism"– a phenomenon that permeates the global intergovernmental system. Workshop participants were very candid about the need to reinvigorate the CSD's political saliency and moral authority. The CSD has an important role to play in setting and guiding norms that ultimately influence decision-making. But this role is undermined when political will and institutional effort is lost. There is a perception that the organisational reforms which followed WSSD have not yet enabled CSD to regain its early focus. Participants felt that recapturing the CSD's political relevancy requires a number of things, namely: striving to balance normative and non-normative outcomes, creating continuity and momentum in the process, identifying champions, building linkages, and giving direction to the roles of the Secretariat and Bureau. In April 2006, Stakeholder Forum produced a review of

the first cycle of the CSD new programme of work, which included 19 recommendations for strengthening the CSD's work. The Paper also included a number of recommendations related the CSD Regional Implementation process (see Annex 1).

Following CSD-13, there were increasing calls for a 'stock-taking' and an honest reflection on the first cycle. Developing Countries, in particular, drew attention to the need for such discussions. The Group of 77 and China's statement during the General Segment of the ECOSOC Substantive Segment (20 July 2005) urged "all to take detailed stock of the outcomes of the CSD-13, with a view to guiding our work in future sessions," and noted that "we are at a juncture where we can assess the outcome of that first cycle, including lessons learned and the implications for future cycles of the Commission." During the General Debate of the General Assembly's Second Committee (3 October 2005), the Group reiterated that "the methods of work of the Commission should also be further reviewed in order to enhance the impact of our decisions."

To address many of the systemic obstacles a more detailed assessment of the UN's work in the area of sustainable development is required. The goal of a sustainable development institutional initiative could be phrased as follows:

> **The aim of a sustainable development institutional initiative would be to increase confidence-building between industrialized and development countries, overcoming traditional and political cleavages that have marked decades of debate on sustainable development. Such a dialogue must cut across customary groupings and positions, in an effort to produce practical outcomes and to define the areas in which the UN's institutions, and the CSD in particularly, could make a distinctive contribution, reflecting on their comparative advantages as multilateral organizations, to the implementation of sustainable development.**

**THE '157' MANDATE**

Rather than the nature of design, the greatest problems affecting the current situation is a lack of institutional memory, particularly when it comes to the implementation and interpretation of past decisions, and political will. Take for example the JPOI mandate on sustainable development governance. The JPOI (paragraph 157) affirmed that:

> **"strengthening of the international institutional framework for sustainable development is an evolutionary process," and that "it is necessary to keep relevant arrangements under review; identify gaps; eliminate duplication of functions; and continue to strive for greater integration, efficiency and coordination of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development aiming at the implementation of Agenda 21."**

The current mandates are not purely restricted to the CSD, but in fact cover the broad spectrum of normative and operational bodies dealing with sustainable development. The institutional framework outlined in the JPOI includes a set of nine objectives and measures on: strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development at the international level; the role of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council; the role and function of the Commission on Sustainable Development; the role of international institutions; strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable development at the regional level and national levels, and the participation of Major Groups. CSD-11 agreed that issues relating to the 'institutional framework for sustainable development' would be addressed as a cross-cutting theme in each cycle. Participants to the intergovernmental process would be hard-pressed to identify when and where

the implementation of 'Para 157' has been discussed in the CSD, ECOSOC or the General Assembly. Nevertheless, the important element here is that an intergovernmental mandate already exists to review the institutional framework for sustainable development governance. The unfortunate scenario is that governments are either over-burdened by the current reform-debates, particularly with many participants to the CSD process engaged in the five year long process on reform of environmental governance, or lack the political will to make sure that sustainable development remains as the overarching priority of the intergovernmental process is losing political traction.

In addition, the emphasis and mandate in the World Summit Outcome Document on system-wide coherence at the operational level and the recent release of the UN Secretary-General's report on the views expressed by the High Level Panel on System Wide Coherence will increase the anticipation for a substantive discussion on all the elements of the institutional framework for sustainable development governance. As the G-77 noted in their statement to the 2007 Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting "implementation remains the biggest challenge for development. Unfortunately, our declarations and commitments have not translated into local action on the ground." In this, the role of other UN bodies is crucial and it is likely that future successes of the CSD will be closely inter-linked with the cooperation of those bodies

**A STRENGTHENED CSD**
The first proposal for strengthening the CSD is an incremental reform process, established under the CSD in the form of an **open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group**, to address a range of issues focusing mainly on the future and role of the CSD. The process would have as its primarily objective ensuring that the CSD returns to its original mandate of integrating environment and development in intergovernmental decision making. The *Ad Hoc* Working Group could conduct a 'stocktaking exercise' of the first and second cycles and identify lessons learnt and obstacles in the implementation of the CSD's core mandates. The aim of such a process would be to identify areas where the way CSD operates and works could be improved, without any new reform-type initiatives or processes being launched. This initiative would be a learning process and could include a continuous discussion on the CSD and sustainable development in the UN system. The process could lead to a set of changes to the CSD to make ensure its mandate is properly fulfilled and that the CSD becomes the authoritative voice for sustainable development in the intergovernmental system. The process should focus both on content and process – how can the CSD meetings become more innovative, inclusive, and stimulating, and how can the CSD ensure its outcomes are relevant? Such a process could be launched at CSD-15, and initially report back to CSD-16 with a proposed set of measures that could be implemented during the third multi-year programme of work. From a procedural perspective, such a process could be loosely modeled on the process established under the UNEP Governing Council to address international environmental governance. This would allow for time for reflection and the identification of priority areas that could then be continually addressed and evaluated by members of the CSD. Regarding the substantive issues up for discussion, the *Ad Hoc* Group could focus on how the multi-year programme of work is implemented in terms of the original CSD mandate as outlined in A/RES/47/191, UNGASS-19 and JPOI. The discussions could focus on the following five thematic areas: influence on policy/action; approach to governance; political/science/knowledge interface; means of implementation and financing; and participation.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COHERENCE**
Under the JPOI (paragraph 143) the General Assembly was tasked with giving "overall political direction to the implementation of Agenda 21 and its review." To date sustainable development issues are generally discussed within the Second Committee, but in most cases the outcomes are procedural and not substantive. The second proposal for addressing the institutional framework

for sustainable development would be based on an **open-ended consultative group on international sustainable development governance** under the auspices of the General Assembly. This process would aim to addresses the building blocks of a more robust intergovernmental framework for sustainable development and provide the General Assembly with a mechanism to assess and review the workings of the UN's normative, analytical and operational functions with regard to sustainable development. A core function of the consultative group would be to assess the new and emerging developments in sustainable development matters, particularly with regard to identifying areas where coherence and coordination at the intergovernmental and UN system levels should be enhanced. Procedurally, this process could be modeled on the Open-Ended Consultative Process on Ocean and the Law of the Sea that was initiated by the CSD in 1999[3]. The benefit of a General Assembly process would ensure that sustainable development reforms were placed on an equal footing and synergies could be explored within current discussions on system-wide coherence and international environmental governance. In addition, a process under the general Assembly might be more favorable than the proposal to establish a sustainable development board under ECOSOC. Substantively, discussions could focus on the institutional framework outlined in the JPOI, which includes a set of nine objectives and measures on: strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development at the international level; the role of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council; the role and function of the CSD; the role of international institutions; strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable development at the regional level and national levels, and the participation of Major Groups.

**CONCLUSION**

No other UN institution, other than the CSD, tries to examine head-on the inter-linkages between environmental, social, economic, and political arenas at the global scale (Dodds *et al*, 2004). However, some barriers still remain in ensuring that the Commission is able to fulfill its large and challenging agenda. Former chair of the CSD-5 preparatory process, Chair Derek Osborn, has stated that the task for all those actively engaged with the CSD and with the advancement of sustainable development in the world is to help the CSD become a more effective instrument for progress in that direction. The paper has clearly shown that a new mandate is not required to launch an institutional initiative on international sustainable development governance; as such a mandate is already well articulated in paragraph 157 of the JPOI. The most serious challenge for launching a sustainable development reform process is how to overcome the political inertia and avoid the tendencies of participants to the intergovernmental process to maintain the status quo. Meeting the JPOI goals and the MDGs without a process to re-invigorate the UN's sustainable development architecture will remain a difficult task. Addressing system-wide coherence without creating a overarching sustainable development structure, more empowered and willing than the CSD to focus on systemic issues and to provide guidance, the international community will continue its dialogue without the 'keys' to maintain relationships between the varied sustainable development institutions. Achieving the balance between the three pillars (economic, social, and environmental) of sustainable development will, therefore, continue to be an elusive dream.

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[3] CSD decision 7/1 of 1999 "Oceans and seas"

**Annex 1: Stakeholder Forum Recommendations for the Second and Future CSD Cycles**

**1. Standing Agenda Item on 'Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development:** There is little doubt that issues of international governance for sustainable development received an important boost from the WSSD process. Despite the importance given to institutional issues in the JPOI, there is a growing concern that the Commission has yet to sufficiently operationalize and define the JPOI and CSD-11 decisions in this regard. The challenge for the Commission is to define a working method to provide guidance to, and receive guidance from, other UN and international decision-making fora, while simultaneously respecting their unique mandates, authority, and independence. Maintaining a systemic discussion on these issues could be resolved by having a standing agenda item on 'Institutional framework for sustainable development,' which would focus on the institutional framework outlined in the JPOI, namely:

   a. Strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development at the international level (the role of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council; the role and function of the Commission on Sustainable Development; the role of international institutions)
   b. Strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable development at the regional level and national levels;
   c. Participation of Major Groups

**2. Balancing Normative and Non-Normative Outcomes:** The first cycle resulted in an outcome that contains both normative (the negotiated decision) and non-normative outcomes (the Matrix and voluntary commitments). While each is important in moving the sustainable development agenda forward, each also has an appropriate place in the process. There is a need to streamline, not eliminate, the negotiation process. This means identifying areas where advances are possible on the normative side, and using non-normative channels to create change where negotiation is not a helpful method. Making progress on a set of specific issues within a cluster – thus prioritizing the work among each particular theme - would help reinforce the CSD's political relevance. Suggestions for balancing the outcomes could include:

   a. Spending more time in informal processes to assess which areas could be advanced through normative means and to generate work to bring to the CSD;
   b. Using the formal multilateral sessions to advance text on issues identified in the informal processes;
   c. Using the normative process to clarify and specify: "Who is responsible? For what? By when? How much will it cost?"; and
   d. A more elaborate preparatory process where important actors receive the necessary support in order to make an active contribution to the preparatory negotiation process

**3. Address Politically Sensitive Issues:** The fact that the CSD is currently avoiding certain discussions on issues that are still critical to sustainable development remains a challenge. During the first cycle, for example, the almost total lack of discussion on international waters, the role of large-scale water infrastructure, subsidies, trade, etc., due to the 'political sensitivity' of such issues, clearly demonstrates one of the great weaknesses of a body like the CSD and why so many actors do not see it is as 'the authoritative body on sustainable development.' If the CSD is to remain relevant, it must have the political will to discuss sensitive issues and deliver advice.

**4. Ensuring Continuity and Momentum between the Review and Policy Years:** The key challenge for the second multi-year programme of work is to ensure that the debates, discussions and proposals from the CSD Review Session are adequately translated into meaningful policy recommendations and actions by the IPM and the Policy Session. Experience from the first cycle indicates that more thinking is required before an effective and adequate linking and transition

period is developed. More attention to building bridges and ensuring that the outcomes of the RIMs and Review Session are captured in the Policy cycle are still required. A key consideration in this regard is the structure and use of the Chairperson's Summary from the Review Session and IPM and their influence and application during the Policy Session. Among the options for adequately addressing this concern could include:

    a. Using a standardized format for constructing the Chairperson's Summary, based on the elements outlined in the CSD-11 decision;

    b. Allow for Annexes or even a Matrix to identify intergovernmental, regional and Major Group priorities;

    c. Enhance the Ministerial Segments in the Review Session to identify priorities for the transition between Review and Policy Sessions; and

    d. Explore other alternatives for presenting the outcomes of the Review Session.

**5. A Two-Year Process:** There is strong consensus that the CSD should be viewed as a two-year process that mobilizes international, regional, national and local attention to the CSD's thematic areas. Indeed, the large number of intergovernmental meetings and processes that focused on the first cycle themes provides a positive signal of the Commission's ability to galvanize international attention. As such, the support mechanisms to the CSD must re-evaluate their roles, and the Secretariat needs direction and guidance from governments in order to shift its mandate to support a two-year process. The Secretariat also needs to be encouraged to be more proactive in terms of bringing information to relevant parties and organizing it in a user-friendly manner. The CSD Secretariat can also play a critical role by disseminating knowledge and information, and making greater use of web-based technologies (Margolis, 2005).

**6. Identifying Champions:** The identification of 'Champions' is seen as critical to reinvigorating the CSD process and building political will. Champions—whether individuals, organizations, governments or intergovernmental organizations—provide leadership for action. However, the current system does not do enough to identify, motivate and encourage champions. Agreements are reached, often without identifying responsible agents of change – making their impact uncertain. In the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and other bodies such as the Human Rights Commission, the technique of 'co-sponsored' resolutions is used effectively to match responsible parties with particular initiatives. This was deemed a helpful but insufficient example considering the scope of CSD's current work. While it is the ideal for champions to emerge voluntarily, participants felt they need to be identified and actively encouraged throughout the CSD process with the Secretariat playing an 'ear to the ground' and information relay role to relevant parties (Bureau, governments, UN system, stakeholders).

**7. Linkages with other Meetings and International Bodies:** Given the broader scope of issues and intergovernmental fora dealing with the themes of the current (and future) CSD cycle, there is a need for the CSD to address the congruence between its work and that of other international forums, in particular the governing bodies of UN Agencies, Programmes and Funds, as well as multilateral treaty bodies. The CSD Secretariat has made working level linkages with all the other international bodies that interact with the sustainable development agenda, and representatives of those bodies frequently participate in the CSD meetings. But the CSD as a whole has never managed to achieve an overarching influence with other bodies commensurate with the overarching nature of its subject matter. Other international bodies and agencies have continued to advance their own agendas and priorities and to give such attention as they deemed appropriate to sustainable development without much reference to the work or suggestions of the CSD (Osborn, 2005). Similarly, International Financial Institutions, such as regional banks, the World Bank and the International Development Association should be drawn into the process more closely to enable resources to follow CSD agreements. Their early input and collaboration was

considered vital to creating a financial basis for future implementation results. The practice of Ministerial dialogues on finance should be continued and greater links need to be pursued between the Commission and the Follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus. Much of this discussion could be addressed under the cross-cutting issue of 'Institutional Frameworks for Sustainable Development.'

**8. The Role of the Bureau:** Strong management and coordination by the Bureau has long been recognized as a major factor in determining the success or failure of the CSD. While the Bureau's role is managerial and not substantive, Bureau members still have a vital role in ensuring linkage and continuity, as well as stimulating action in countries and regions. They have an essential function to support governments and regional coordinating bodies to stimulate discussion on priorities and initiatives. While CSD participants did not have strong feelings about the current practice of changing the Bureau for each CSD session, some have suggested that the Chair and members be elected as early as possible so that there is overlap with the previous Bureau, thereby ensuring some continuity.

**9. Enhancing the Contribution of Major Groups:** The common and recurring theme about stakeholder involvement in the CSD process is the need to create more qualitative space and better cooperation among governments and stakeholders. While stakeholders have a role on paper, governments are often too busy with official negotiations to really listen to stakeholder input during the CSD sessions. Creating a space for stakeholders is essential to generating action and giving appropriate space for nongovernmental input—these are issues that deserve the attention of both the Bureau and Secretariat. Stakeholder involvement should also be reinforced at the national and regional levels, but this was a matter for relevant institutions to decide–not for global processes to mandate. Considerations for enhancing Major Contributions include:
   a. Relatively equal division of the time for debate between governments and stakeholders;
   b. The Chair should be enabled to draw some of the key outcomes from the dialogues into the official text and/or using other pre-determined mechanisms of linking stakeholder contributions into intergovernmental decision-making; and
   a. Ensuring predictable funding for effective participation, and a transparent nomination mechanism for the allocation of such funding.

The second cycle Review Session should also consider the proposals made in the joint statement from the nine Major Groups to CSD-12, which contains several options for ensuring the consistency in the level of Major Groups participation between sessions and cycles, and also for enhancing their contributions to the CSD process. Major Groups requested that the CSD establish some ground rules for all future participation of the Major Groups, mirroring the openness and participatory nature of the CSD-12, and that such rules should include productive involvement and participation in official working groups including structured and predefined purposeful moments of input at consequential times. They have proposed that the CSD systematically integrate in the Chairman's summary a resume of the contributions of the Major Groups. They also propose a session during the IPM, devoted to reviewing and improving the role and contribution of Major Groups in the practical implementation of the JPOI and MDGs. These sessions, which would ideally also be replicated at the Policy Session, would provide an opportunity to build on the Major Groups submissions and prompt further policy discussions.

**10. The Role of the Secretariat:** The position of the CSD Secretariat needs to be strengthened and enhanced to address the new programme of work and to continue the innovative practices that have featured in the Commission's methods of work since the WSSD. Changing the scope of the Secretariat's responsibilities will require a clear change of mandate, additional resources, and clear guidance from the Bureau and the Member States.

**11. Partnerships:** Partnerships are one of the most important non-normative outcomes of the CSD process. While there has been significant emphasis on the idea, many CSD participants feel there should be more analysis done to understand which partnerships are actually delivering results, and how issues of reporting, transparency and accountability are being addressed. The Commission has yet to find adequate mechanisms to ensure accountability, transparency, and a process for lesson sharing and enhancing such partnerships. The lack of a mechanism to address this at the global level is replicated at the regional level, with none of the RIMs addressing the implementation of regionally-relevant partnerships. While the Secretariat provides a database of partnership initiatives, many feel this was not user-friendly enough or in-depth enough to create learning and guidance for practitioners. The Secretariat, however, is not able to make value judgments about partnerships, which is why the initiative of governments and stakeholders in this regard is critical. There is still a need for a mechanism that would review the lessons of 'failed partnerships' in order to help ongoing ones succeed.

**Recommendations for the Regional Implementation Meetings for the Third and Future CSD Cycles**

**12. Enhance High-Level Participation and Ownership:** The second cycle RIMs had limited high-level participation by Ministers, as well as from intra-governmental bodies. With almost 2 years until the third cycle RIMs, further consideration by the CSD, as well as from governments at the regional level, on how to enhance high level interest, participation and impact of the regional processes needs to be urgently discussed.

**13. Coherence in the RIM Outcomes:** The CSD-11 decision on the RIMs does not provide sufficient guidance on how the outcomes of the regional processes are integrated into the cycle process. Experience from the first two cycles' has highlighted inconsistent approaches to how the RIM outcomes are structured, which has led to difficulties in translating the regional information into concrete measures and policy actions for consideration by the Commission. A standardized, but flexible, format for the RIM outcomes, include the following headings, could be considered:
   a. Challenges and Constraints;
   b. Cross-Cutting Issues;
   c. Progress and Achievements; and
   d. Lessons Learned and Way Forward for each theme.

**14. Responding to the Regional Inputs:** There has been limited focus or evaluation on how the regional outcomes are addressed at the global level through the Regional Implementation Forums (held as part of the official CSD programme). The Bureau and Secretariat should re-consider how they organize these discussions during the current cycle and ensure wider participation from delegates across the regions, thus allowing for the discussion of inter-regional and cross-cutting issues of importance. Further consideration on the effectiveness of the SIDS day and its possible replication for all five UN regions should also be considered for the third cycle Review Session.

**15. Enhance the Contributions from Major Groups:** The Major Groups' contribution to the RIM process requires further clarification and the necessary institutional and financial support from the Regional Commissions and the CSD Secretariat. Ways to further enhance the role of Major Groups in the RIMs could include:
   a. Clarifying the Rules of Procedure related to Major Groups participation in the RIMs;
   b. Hosting official Major Group dialogues during the RIMs and the inclusion of a chairperson's summary of the discussion;
   a. Requesting Major Group inputs into the Regional Commission Reports;

b. Facilitating participation of Major Groups in the RIM;
c. Identifying Major Group focal points for regions and sub-regions; and
d. Utilizing the DESA Major Groups and other UN bodies Focal Points and Civil Society Liaison bodies to enhance the participation of Major Groups, including through increased access to information

**16. Regional Information:** There is currently no process and therefore limited opportunities for governments and stakeholders to submit national-based reports or other relevant information for inclusion in the regional processes. Options for regional-based reporting processes, while remaining cognizant of the existing reporting burden, need to be considered.

**17. Addressing the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development Governance at the Regional Level:** A commonality of all the second cycle RIMs was the lack of attention given to effectively addressing implementation and governance coherence at the regional level. While this is not required, per se, by the CSD-11 decision, JPOI paragraphs 158-161, call for *inter alia*, improving intraregional coordination and cooperation among regional commissions, the UN system, regional development banks and other regional bodies and institutions. Given the increased attention on regional and subregional cooperation, the RIMs should attempt to ensure institutional coherence among these processes and could provide an opportunistic vehicle for bringing together such processes and bodies. The CSD Bureau should also consider how the Commission can support the capacity of the Regional Commissions to facilitate the RIM processes and the implementation of the JPOI at the regional levels. Such a discussion could lead to a CSD recommendation to ECOSOC to address regional capacities as part of its annual discussions on the activities and programmes of the Regional Commissions.

**18. Generating Awareness and Supporting Capacity Building:** The CSD Secretariat in cooperation with the Regional Commissions, UN-NGLS, UNDPI and relevant UN agencies and programmes should adopt a more proactive approach to outreach and dissemination of information regarding the CSD's cycles and the themes on discussions. This should also include information on past CSD cycles and their related outcomes. A more detailed outreach programme may assist in addressing the low-level of awareness about RIMs and the CSD processes in general.

**Pulling It Together**

**19. An Integrated Two-year Cycle:** The 'Recommended Flow Chart for the CSD two-year Cycle' was developed by participants during the September 2005 workshop to suggest how different stages of the cycle might contribute to a more effective and efficient CSD, in particular streamlining the negotiation process at the CSD and strengthening the focus on implementation. This process flow was discussed in the context of the upcoming Cycle, though it provides a model for all future cycles. The outcome of the CSD process was identified as a negotiated normative text as well as a 'Matrix' and 'Champions.' To reach this outcome, the CSD goes through several stages: two CSD sessions (upcoming CSD-14 and CSD-15), an Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM), and regional and national preparatory processes. It also receives input from multiple stakeholders and other initiatives. Major support and coordination for this flow are provided by the Secretariat and Bureau in particular. Working backwards from the desired outcome of CSD-15, the flow chart identifies specific ideas and recommendations for each major stage in the two-year cycle.

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