



A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the
First Round of 'Informal-Informal' Negotiations on the Zero Draft of the
Outcome Document and Third Intersessional Meeting of the UN Conference
on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20)

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Events convened on Friday, 23 March 2012

Towards the People's Summit at Rio+20: Alternative civil society perspectives on the zero draft

Presented by UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) and Social Watch



Barbara Adams, Social Watch, cautioned that SDGs may not take full cognizance of the complexity of the development debate.

Hamish Jenkins, UN-NGLS, introduced the event, noting its aim is to discuss alternate civil society views on the road to the People's Summit for Social and Environmental Justice in Rio +20, to be held in parallel to Rio+20, which will provide a forum to organizations and social movements to discuss the issues arising from Rio+20.

Iara Pietrovsky de Oliveira, Brazilian Civil Society Facilitating Committee, expressed concern regarding what will be agreed upon in the context of green economy and the proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs) and cautioned against the dilution of the human rights framework during the negotiations on the zero draft of the outcome document.

Andre Abreu, Brazilian Civil Society Facilitating Committee, cautioned that the debate surrounding green economy should be transparent and ensure accountability. He also urged that the views of small-scale farmers, peasants and others be involved in the process. Dena Hoff, La Via Campesina, lamented that there are no distinctions made between different agricultural systems and stated that "peasant farming" has always been a part of a green economy. She called for the transformation to a green economy to address underlying obstacles, such as those that prevent market access.

Paul Quintos, IBON International, noted that the principles agreed upon at the original Earth Summit held in 1992 are being lost during the negotiations on the zero draft. He said there is a need for strong integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, as well as less prescriptive language for civil society. Caterina Silveira, Brazilian Civil Society Facilitating Committee, underscored the necessity of social protection in the context of the environment, saying that the outcomes they wish to see at Rio+20 include guaranteeing basic rights to water, food and housing. She urged future green jobs to address safety to ensure fewer accidents in the work place.

Barbara Adams, Social Watch, said that possible SDGs need to be approached cautiously, as lessons learnt from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) show that such goals may narrow the development agenda and may not address the original issues originally intended by the goals.

More information:

http://www.un-ncls.org/spip.php?page=rioplus20&id_article=3760
<http://cupuladospovos.org.br/en/>

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In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed topics including the People's Summit and the human rights agenda during Rio+20.

Planetary and Social Boundaries: a Framework for Rio+20 and Sustainable Development Goals?

Presented by Oxfam, Sustainlabour and Vitae Civilis

This event, chaired by Rubens Born, Deputy Director, Vitae Civilis, looked at how new models of economic development that emerge from the Rio+20 process could strengthen efforts to reduce poverty and increase equity, while respecting natural resource thresholds.

Sarah Best, Oxfam, introduced a paper entitled “Can We Live Inside the Doughnut? Why the world needs planetary and social boundaries.” She presented a graphic proposing a set of nine earth-system processes critical for keeping the planet in a stable state, noting that putting excessive stress on these processes could lead to tipping points of irreversible environmental change, and that climate change, nitrogen use and biodiversity have crossed critical boundaries. She said that society is falling far below the social foundation, having analyzed eleven areas including, equality, equity, jobs, education and income.

Laura Martin Murillo, Director, Sustainlabour, suggested that there is “plenty of room to move inside the doughnut and within the boundaries.” She highlighted the role of ensuring decent jobs, wages and health care as key elements to enhance the social foundation.

Dámaso Luna Corona, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico, said a good outcome of Rio+20 would include SDGs, which should be: part of the post-2015 UN development agenda; fully consistent with the principles of Agenda 21; universal but allow for implementation adapted to national circumstances; and provide for periodic review to assess progress. He underscored that these goals should be adopted in a country-driven process and open to all stakeholders participation.

Márcia Muchagata, Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Poverty, Brazil, supported the consideration of the “socio-environmental protection floor” in Rio+20, underscoring the relevance of poverty alleviation and decrease of inequity.

In ensuing discussions, participants addressed, among others, how the earth systems proposed could be helpful to frame the post-2015 global goals and their purpose for social goals as well as sources of information for indicators.



L-R: Aron Belinky, Vitae Civilis; Laura Martín Murillo, Sustainlabour; Rubens Born, Vitae Civilis; Márcia Muchagata, Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Poverty, Brazil; and Dámaso Luna Corona, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico.



Highlighting the experience with the MDGs, Dámaso Luna Corona, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico, said goals adopted in the future should ensure the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development.



Márcia Muchagata, Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Poverty, Brazil, underscored national experiences contributing to both environmental protection and poverty alleviation, such as the “Bolsa Verde” programme.

More information:

<http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow/pressroom/pressrelease/2012-02-13/ending-poverty-need-not-be-expense-environment-oxfam-report>

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Roundtable Discussion on Equity and Sustainability

Presented by IBON International, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the United Methodist Church (UMC)

This event, moderated by Hamish Jenkins, UN-NGLS, addressed equity and its relationship with sustainability, and discussed the need to bring concerns on the distribution of resources to the centre of the debate at Rio+20.

David O'Connor, UN DESA, said the concept of sustainability is, at its core, about equity both intragenerationally and intergenerationally. He highlighted that intragenerational equity within countries is highly dependent on government policies. He drew attention to the question on whether the world's poor are getting an equitable share of the benefits from globalization. He underscored the need to work on the convergence between human development and the ecological footprint of nations.

Anabella Rosemberg, ITUC, supported a social protection floor as a first step for building intragenerational equity, particularly within countries. Azra Sayeed, Asia Peasant Coalition, said the primary issue regarding equity is how to change people's values and resist the forces that are responsible for the current state of the world, such as those that have promoted individualism over collectivism.

José Pineda, UNDP, described findings in the Human Development Report 2011, highlighting the strong connection between sustainability and equity. He underscored that a current trend in some countries to reduce inequality, but lamented that this trend could be adversely affected if environmental issues are not properly addressed.

Meena Raman, Third World Network, presented the example of the climate change regime currently under negotiation to depict how inequity is being threatened, as the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities" and "historical responsibility" are being wiped out from the new regime.

Sheng Fulai, UNEP, saying that inequity is a "pervasive enemy," drew attention to some causes for inequity and emphasized the role of strong taxation and redistribution policies to redress this. He underscored that green economy has relevant positive implications for equity, and noted that the "Green Economy Report," published by UNEP in 2011, highlights the importance to invest in people and social dimensions. Paul Quintos, Ibon International, cautioned against giving nature a price as this could end up exacerbating inequity.

In the ensuing discussions, participants addressed, among others, capitalism, regulations, a possible equitable share of sustainable development, and consumption patterns.



Depicting inequity implications in the current climate change negotiations, Meena Raman, Third World Network, said that an equitable access to atmospheric space should be ensured to all countries, taking into account historical responsibility.



Anabella Rosemberg, ITUC, called for rethinking development cooperation to direct it towards the empowerment of people.

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<http://iboninternational.org/>

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