

SEMINAR REPORT

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 13TH MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STOCKHOLM, 19 AUGUST 2004

I. INTRODUCTION

There can be no sound development without better access to water and sanitation in developing countries – water is a key to sustainable development. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) selected water, sanitation and human settlements as the focus areas for its first two-year cycle following the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In April 2004, the first meeting in the cycle – CSD-12 – took stock of progress made in achieving international targets in these areas and identified the challenges ahead. The Norwegian Minister of the Environment, Mr. Børge Brende, was chair of CSD-12.

CSD-13, to be held in New York in April 2005, will undertake policy discussions which will expedite further action and implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). Minister John Ashe, Antigua and Barbuda, chairs CSD-13.

To provide a bridge between CSD-12 and CSD-13 the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment and the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) convened a seminar during the World Water Week entitled "Preparations for the 13th Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development". The purpose of the seminar is to keep the momentum created at CSD-12 where water, sanitation and human settlement issues were brought to the forefront of the international agenda. This seminar took as its starting point the challenges identified by Ministers at CSD-12 (included in the Chair's Summary Part II - High-level Segment of CSD-12) and discussed options for actions to respond to these challenges effectively and in a coordinated manner; and exchanged views on how to get an operational and focused output of CSD-13.

Minister John Ashe, Chairman of CSD-13, in his opening remarks, emphasized that the task of CSD-13 will be to map out a framework of policy options and actions to tackle the constraints and obstacles to reaching the targets on water, sanitation and human settlements. He underlined the importance of the ownership of government and civil society to the outcomes of CSD-13 and his wish to continue the innovative format of CSD-12.

The Panelists of the seminar included Bureau members of CSD-13, as well as senior officials representing WHO and WSSCC, UN-Habitat, UN Water, GWP and IWMI. Five representatives of countries also provided observations on the strengths of CSD-12 and their expectations for CSD-13. The participants pointed out that CSD-12 marked a bold departure from the past, and that it was a very inclusive session that invited participation from experts, practitioners, policy makers and major groups. There was great support for the learning centres, side events and partnership fairs which had provided a venue for knowledge and experience sharing. The participants felt that those activities should continue through CSD-13.

II. KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY CSD-13

Participants attending the seminar in Stockholm highlighted the need to bring to the attention of political leaders the importance of access to water and sanitation for domestic and productive use as an engine of growth. Water and sanitation (within human settlements) can contribute to poverty alleviation, improved health, gender equality and livelihoods. Participants felt that the broad participation of all stakeholders that made CSD-12 in 2004 such a good session should continue at CSD-13.

The seminar participants suggested that the following important issues should be included in the policy discussions:

1. It is crucial to convince ministers of finance and top politicians of the importance of water, sanitation and human settlements to poverty alleviation, health and sustainable development. They should be encouraged to attend the CSD. Finance ministers need to be involved in allocating limited budgets to low-cost settlements and investments in water and sanitation. The costs and benefits of investments in sanitation should be clearly demonstrated to them and in particular there is a need to focus on water as a good investment opportunity and not only as a cost.
2. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) need to be integrated at the national level in developing countries, so that water, sanitation and poverty are clearly linked. Each country will have to do some calculations on what level of investment is needed – financing and how to overcome bottlenecks.
3. Many countries are now in the process of decentralization of political and economic decision-making to sub-national levels. This provides opportunities for institutional change, increased democratization, more openness, more participation, a greater voice for the civil society, and increased willingness to engage in regional cooperation efforts.
4. Recognition of the importance of linkages among water, sanitation, and human settlements was a clear accomplishment of CSD-11 and CSD-12. The provision of water for domestic needs and food security is a necessary condition for creating sustainable rural communities, and in turn reducing migration to peri-urban and densely populated urban settlements.
5. A focus on the role of women in planning and managing water, sanitation and human settlements was needed, in order for their voices to be heard. Women's empowerment would depend on their access to land tenure, credit, energy, water and housing.
6. Gaps in capacity building need to be closed, especially among local authorities and utilities, and the legal and regulatory framework needs to be improved. Revenue collection and governance are part of the rehabilitation and reform of the system.
7. Focus should be on implementation. Implementation will be different in each country – there is no 'one size fits all'. The outcome of CSD-13 should provide a number of options for country-level action.
8. The issue of sustainable consumption and production should be a priority, especially in the context of preparing water efficiency plans and in increasing the water use efficiency in agriculture, the largest water-using sector.
9. How to keep water and sanitation on the international agenda after CSD-13? Participants suggested that every partnership, event and other opportunity (e.g. 'Water for Life' Decade', 4th World Water Forum) should be used to move the process of implementation forward. All

stakeholders need to be brought together – local level, agencies, donors, NGOs and the UN – to keep the momentum high. Another opportunity would be to link water negotiations to existing conventions, such as the Ramsar convention.

10. Donors and governments need to listen to the people – they may want different solutions from what is being offered. Let them (especially rural women) decide on the appropriate water and sanitation solutions. Progress must be made at the household level.
11. Monitoring of implementation and improvements in data collection to measure progress towards meeting the MDGs are needed. Monitoring should concentrate on the quality of the service delivered, e.g. changes in use, behaviour, improvements in health, and not only on number of taps or toilets.
12. Coordination among the 24 UN system agencies involved in water and sanitation needs to be improved; countries should be able to get the best value from the UN system in support of their efforts. It is important to remember that what the countries bring to CSD is the key to success; it is not up to the UN system. The future role and contribution of UN-Water was raised.
13. The MDGs in water, sanitation and human settlements should be directly linked to the other MDGs in education, maternal health, women's empowerment and poverty alleviation. The importance of water for the other MDGs needs to be communicated to decision-makers.

In addition to issues related to the enabling framework and crosscutting issues mentioned above, the participants addressed water resources management, including integrated water resources management (IWRM), water and sanitation, and human settlements specifically.

III. WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING IWRM

Water is an engine for economic growth and water resources management is an effective entry into other sectors, e.g. agriculture, industry. Participants pointed out the need to develop an overall common understanding on the importance and benefits of water resources management and that a shift in attitude among stakeholders is required. Governments need to take urgent steps to improve the way water resources are managed – a new thinking is required. Business as usual will not help us to reach the MDG targets.

The seminar participants suggested that the following important water resources management issues should be included in the policy discussions:

14. Water resources, and water resources management practices, have broad poverty and macro economic impacts, affecting both the structure and performance of economies and a country's ability to eradicate poverty.
15. Better governance is essential for improving water management and water and sanitation services. This requires legislation, institutions and financing structures for water resources management to be in place. Effective public sector institutions and utilities that are accountable, representative and transparent are essential for managing and regulating the water sector.
16. Increasing competition for water resources caused by an increasing number of users and uses, depletion of some resources and loss of others because of pollution, have already led many countries to strengthen and reform their water resources management framework. Focus has been on improvements of legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks. Examples from Burkina Faso and Kenya were presented at the seminar.

17. Sustainably meeting the food and livelihood needs of a growing population will require some very difficult choices about how water is developed and managed. More food will be necessary, and more food translates into more water needed for agriculture. More water for agriculture will in many cases mean less for the environment. Furthermore, food production is a major source of livelihood for the rural, as well as for the urban poor. The issue of sustainable food production and water as a source of livelihoods should be given higher priority at CSD-13. Water for agriculture should not be forgotten as a key to improving livelihoods in rural areas.
18. Bilateral and multilateral donors should make a big effort to begin the process of developing IWRM plans in a selected group of countries before CSD-13.

IV. WATER AND SANITATION

Poverty and disease are inseparable from inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene; indeed, the sustained contributions of water and sanitation provide the foundations of health and sustainable development. Expanding and sustaining service requires clear, consistent financial policies for which the extent and manner of cost recovery is central. Participants emphasized that there is a need to focus on domestic and local level resource mobilization.

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme report on progress towards achieving the MDGs on drinking water and sanitation will be released Friday, 27 August 2004. The report is the first of the mid-term reports on progress towards the MDGs and contains detailed new information on progress by region and by country. The report will show that the world is on track to reach the safe drinking water target; however, the sanitation target will not be met unless considerable resources are provided. Africa is the key challenge. The majority of the unserved are in rural areas.

The seminar participants suggested that the following important water and sanitation issues should be included in the policy discussions:

19. The main barrier to water and sanitation is not lack of resources; it is a lack of willingness to learn from past failures and to listen to those who have pioneered the new approaches.
20. Water and sanitation are not defined as national priorities in most developing countries. Investments in water and sanitation are cost-effective.
21. Development of accountable and efficient utilities is key to service delivery. Utilities need to work with the urban poor and informal settlements to meet their water supply and sanitation needs.
22. Appropriate, affordable sustainable technology for water supply and sanitation needs to be developed and its use promoted.

V. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

CSD-12 through its broad-based participation managed to put the issues of human settlements and slum dwellers firmly on the agenda. Participants underlined that while the urbanization process is irreversible, we should look at urban areas and slums as engines of growth and a positive resource.

The seminar participants suggested that the following important human settlements issues should be included in the policy discussions:

23. Water and sanitation need to be integrated into the urban planning process. This could include a smaller sub-division of mega cities into manageable autonomous units.
24. Partnerships between local authorities, communities and small-scale providers will be needed to broadly extend access to water and sanitation at the local level. Local authorities and communities will be key players in providing access to water and sanitation and need to be mobilized.
25. Making “illegal” settlements legal would encourage communities to build and maintain their own facilities.
26. The rehabilitation of existing and aging infrastructure is crucial to meeting the needs of the population, especially in urban areas.

ANNEX

PROGRAM

I. Opening of the Seminar:

- Welcome – Anders Berntell, Stockholm International Water Institute
- Opening address - Minister John Ashe, Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of CSD-13

II. Panel Discussions:

Chair: Hans Olav Ibrek, Norwegian Ministry of the Environment

Water resources management, including IWRM

- Panellists:
 - Margaret Catley-Carlson, Global Water Partnership;
 - Frank Rijsberman, International Water Management Institute;
 - Francis D. Bougaïré, Burkina Faso
 - Anna Macqueen, United Kingdom;

Water and sanitation:

- Panellists:
 - George Krhoda, Kenya;
 - Jonathan Margolis, USA;
 - Gourisankar Ghosh, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council;
 - Jamie Bartram, WHO, Chair UN-Water.

Water and human settlements:

- Panellists:
 - Dagmara Berbalk, Germany, CSD-13 Bureau Member;
 - Dennis Mwanza, Water Utility Partnership
 - Kalyan Ray, UN-HABITAT;

III. Closing:

- Closing remarks - Minister John Ashe, Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of CSD-13