



REPORT OF THE A RIO + 20 PREPCOM 1 SIDE EVENT

DATE: 17TH (Monday) May 2010 TIME: 6.15-7.45pm PLACE: Room D, UN North Lawn Building

EQUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN A GREEN ECONOMY

Including Commitments on Poverty Eradication, Sustainable Consumption and Production, and Climate Sustainability in the Rio+20 Agenda

EVENT SUMMARY

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How can Rio+20 save the earth?
 - a. Should 'green economy' be the key focus at Rio+20? If yes or no why?
 - b. Why should Rio+20 pay so much attention to 'environmental governance'?
2. What is a 'green economy'?
 - a. What are the 'equity' and 'poverty eradication' challenges for a green economy?
 - b. What are the 'sustainable development' challenges for a green economy?
3. Do we need a 10YFP on SCP or an international agreement on SCP at Rio+20?
4. Will 'poverty eradication' be made binding commitment at Rio+20? Should it or not?
5. Should Rio+20 address the so called post Kyoto agreement? Can or should 'climate sustainability' become a Rio+20 issue?

OPENING STATEMENT

Uchita de Zoysa (Climate Sustainability PLATFORM)

PANELISTS

Felix Dodds (Stakeholder Forum for Sustainable Development)
Dr. Palitha Kohona (Sri Lanka Permanent Mission to UN)
Chee Yoke-Ling (Third World Network)
Leida Renjout (Northern Alliance for Sustainability)
Jeffrey Barber (Intergrative Strategies Forum)
Lewis Akeji (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies)

EVENT MODERATORS

Uchita de Zoysa (Climate Sustainability PLATFORM)
Gail Karlsson (US Citizens' Network for Sustainable Development)

RAPPORTUER

Jenna Goodhand

ORGANIZING & SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Centre for Environment and Development (CED)
Climate Sustainability PLATFORM
Global Sustainability Solutions (GLOSS)
US Citizens' Network for Sustainable Development (CitNet)



Responsible Business Initiative – Pakistan (RBI)
Integrative Strategies Forum (ISF)
International Coalition for Sustainable Production and Consumption (ICSPAC)

REPORT

Uchita de Zoysa of the *Climate Sustainability PLATFORM* opened the discussion by discussing the years since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. He said that the train to sustainable development had been dismantled since and different compartments were placed on different track; climate change, biodiversity conservation, poverty eradication, economic prosperity, etc. Quoting from the Report of the Secretary General of the Rio+20 released the same day; “The green economy approach is an attempt to unite under one banner a broad suite of economic instruments relevant to sustainable development” he said that the UN is once again trying to mislead us away from the core of sustainable development. “Everyone is saying we do not still know what a Green Economy means. Why then aren’t we concentrating on what we very well know after 20 years of sustainable development negotiations?” he questioned. Four plus decades of sustainable development talk and half of the world is in poverty NOW! Mr. de Zoysa raised three critical questions to the panel. (a) Do we need more convincing to eradicate poverty as a prerequisite to achieve Sustainable Development? (b) The so called Marrakech process during the past 8 years has failed to consult nations and formulate a 10YFP. What do we need? Voluntary commitments or binding agreements to regulate unsustainable consumption and production (c) Can we bring to focus the Climate Change challenge into the Rio+20 processes? What is the so called post Kyoto challenge in the “Green Economy”? Or just get on to another compartment of a dismantled train?

The conversation was then directed towards **Felix Dodds of the *Stakeholder Forum*** who stressed the need to look at institutional reform that surrounds Rio +20. He believes this is not the end all be all of accomplishing the challenges ahead but that it will play a critical role in what we can or can not succeed in doing. The conversation surrounding transforming our economy should focus on seeing a world that is about fairness, equity and where everyone benefits from the planet, not just a few as our current system allows. In the past 20 years since the Earth Summit in Rio Dodds believes we have lost the plot and emphasizes that more people now have less than two decades ago. As the next 20 years unravel, if we do not commit to remedying the current state of the world immediately, the years to follow will see insecurity of water, food, energy and health worldwide. Dodds ends with a call to action for us to step up in this small window of opportunity that is presented to us to work together and use Rio +20 as the final piece to bring the family back together for a sustainable and secure future.

Chee Yoke-Ling of the *Third World Network* stressed how important it is to get governments moving as there is currently a strong political will to not go sustainable. She believes it is not just about Rio but also about all of the similar bodies and agreements of the United Nations that promote and work to achieve sustainability. There has not necessarily been a deficit to devise structures based on sustainable development but that the failure has come in the implementation of their mandates. Rich countries are continuing to run away from their obligations and responsibilities to the South. As a result there are more inequalities today that are suspended in outdated agreements, which promote unsustainable practices that developing countries are obliged to follow. The focus needs to be on working towards a new economic global system, one in which the ideas of a green economy are at the centre. Chee concluded with the emphasis on the need for the global systems to be collaboratively repaired, regulated and combined with a recommitment to the promises made in Rio 18 years ago.



Leida Rijnhout of ANPED – Northern Alliance for Sustainability brought to attention the wording of green economy and that perhaps it is the wrong choice of words to be used. Sustainable Development, which was a term that has taken shape and clear understanding these past 20 years is one in which we should continue to commit to. There is a need to reassess our economy and reshape it in a way that is sustainable but she supports a term closer to green and fair economy. Leida strengthens this point by pointing to the need for the new economy to be based on equity and real values that fit with the carrying capacity of our planet and social needs. The goal she leaves us with leading up to Rio+20 should not be about greening our greed but about expanding our thinking to adopting sustainable lifestyles respectful and responsible to global equality.

Dr. Palitha Kohona from the Sri Lanka Permanent Mission to the UN then gave a very raw depiction of the priorities that plague the South and developing countries in the context of development and greening we had been discussing. The struggles that exist for those in the South are of basic survival and immediate necessity. For those in developing countries, securing food and shelter are of primary concern and to bombard them with the pressure to green their economic and social activities is one in which cannot be realistically addressed until poverty for them has been eradicated. Dr. Kohona emphasized our need to look at the green economy in this context and not forget that over 1 billion go to bed hungry every night. This needs to be remedied before those who live in poverty can begin to focus on cleaning air and water. The North can think about the issues of conserving energy and water because they have the luxury of having reliable sources of it and are using it in its excess. He concluded by agreeing that summits are important in getting people talking about issues but that time should not be wasted trying to define specifically what green economy means. Sustainable Development is a term he believes we should continue to work with as it embodies the idea of the carrying capacity of our planet while preserving enough resources for those of future generations

Mr. Jeffrey Barber of Integrative Strategies Forum agreed with many of the other panelists in that the economic system we have relied on to prosper from is broken. The talks that have taken place in the two weeks of CSD-18 focused heavily on sustainable production consumption and how this fits into the new 'green' economy we are try to build. Jeffrey believes that this has to be at the heart of economic policy as the structures are rebuilt and reshaped. As well, the discussions leading up to Rio+20 need to be more than just about a 10 year framework. The goal of the 10-year framework that is currently without significant direction should be about reversing the worsening trends, which have emerged since its original proposition and to meet the targets that have yet to be met. We should measure these aims by the number of lives that are improved as a result of these endeavours. Jeffrey concluded with a very honest and bold statement that we need to create an economic revolution that moves us to a global system that addresses everyone's needs and that we must do this together.

Vicky Tauli Corpuz from the Asian Indigenous Women's Network also believes that the green economy concept is distorting what we have achieved with the concept of sustainable development. The economic model that has collapsed and we are trying to resuscitate is based on concepts that will inevitably result in our environmental collapse. We are talking about growth, but growth in the current sense is what Indigenous Peoples see as the source of the environmental problems we are facing. The developed nations encourage the developing nations to create products that we deem useless in just a matter of months. As a result those in developing nations, which are the most dependent on natural resources for survival are the ones suffering. If we continue to believe this is the process of growth, Vicky argues we will just continue to go down in the natural resources that support our planet. She believes we need a radical restructuring of the entire economic system underpinned by the concept of Sustainable Development, but that also ensures the support of human rights and the respect of mother earth.



Dr. Rubens Harry Born of *Vitae Civilis* touched on many of the other concerns the panelists had with using the term 'green economy' and reminded us that often times humans use different words to express the same feeling or action. What is most important is not that we agree to the term itself but that there is action to fulfill the aims this word is supposed to promote. When we look to 2012 and Rio+20 we need to start implementing a much more formal and bureaucratic process, which is bottom up participatory. Further, the representation of the current nine major groups is not enough to speak of the world's diverse people and human rights must become a foundation for the actions we take moving forward. At Rio+20 Rubens argues that the whole world should have access to what takes place. With our advances in information communication technologies there is no reason that anyone should be excluded. It is now possible that those whose voices are most critical, but do not have the funding to get there, can now be given the connection to be seen and heard in the most critical conversations that will take place this century.

Platform Dialogue

After the panelists completed their responses the audience participated in a very energetic and dynamic conversation. The issues that arose included the need for a regulated system in the wake of the collapse of our current system because of the catastrophe it created for so many developing countries who were dependant on the production of cheap manufactured goods for the West. From this idea came the discussion on the 'Big Shift' where an audience member created a dynamic representation of the focus she believes we need to take moving forward. To her we all have to begin working together in our respective causes like that of an orchestra, all bringing our various instruments to the table. Unlike a symphony though, we must recognize that there is not just one conductor but that we must work with one another to achieve our collective aims.

One audience member had an interesting perspective in response to the idea of a 'Big Shift'. His fear was that most people believe radical change is needed, but that radical change often creates a great deal of pain and suffering, usually at the expense of the poor. He concluded however that we are living in unstable times and that the upcoming summit in Rio in 2012 is the perfect opportunity for us to collectively reshape and reframe a model that is fair as well as economically and environmentally sustainable.

The biggest draws from the audience discussion was the question as to whether we need to stick to making the term 'green economy' one in which we all agree by, or whether it is best to stick with 'sustainable development' because the majority now have a general understanding of the term. Although as a group we did not collectively come to consensus on this debate, what was agreed was that the time being wasted on arguing the terms should be used to be acting in the direction of sustainability.

Conclusions

Twenty years have passed since the Earth Summit in Rio and we are now just two years away from a reunion of stakeholders and world leaders for the Rio+20 conference in 2012. This discussion highlighted many times that the energy created at Rio in 1992 was not enough to achieve the aims and objectives of the Earth Summit, and in fact our planet and its people are in a far more critical scenario today than we were 20 years ago.

With the collapse of global economic markets and structures and the realization that the environment is reaching its carrying capacity, the term 'green economy' has quickly become at the forefront to being what many believe the 'magic bullet' to solve the current and emerging issues we face worldwide. Whether or not this term sticks or not what theme emerged significantly from the discussion was that it is imperative for the West to truly commit to the needs of the developing countries, and not continue to



invest in them primarily for personal monetary gains but as an endeavour to secure the stability, security and sustainability of our collective future.

Historically human societies have collapsed when the use of resources and the carrying capacity exceeds what the earth is able to support. We have not learned from these examples and some warn that we have already passed the point of no return. It is well agreed upon that the future will see great insecurities but as humans it is in our nature to rise to the challenge when our survival depends on it. That moment for action is now and the issues we face cannot wait to be discussed in Rio+20, the planning needs to begin in this moment and encompass the needs of all human groups in a way that will create a sustainable and enjoyable future for everyone.

RESOURCES

Corresponding Websites

Stakeholder Forum - <http://www.stakeholderforum.org>
Global Sustainability Solutions - <http://www.glossolutions.com>
Centre for Env. & Development. - <http://centreforenvironmentdevelopment.blogspot.com>
Climate Sustainability Platform - <http://climatesustainabilityplatform.blogspot.com>
Integrative Strategies Forum - <http://www.isforum.org>
Citizen Network for Sustainable Development - <http://www.citnet.org>
ICSPAC - <http://www.icspac.net>
Third World Network - <http://www.twinside.org>
Asian Indigenous Women's Network - <http://www.asianindigenouswomen.org>
North Alliance for Sustainability - <http://www.anped.org>
Vitae Civilis - <http://www.vitaecivilis.org.br>

Further Reading

"It has to be Climate Sustainability" by Uchita de Zoysa (<http://climatesustainability.blogspot.com/>)
"Still Waiting for Delivery" by Jeffrey Barber

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