

eco



JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT PREPCOMM 4 * BALI, INDONESIA * NGO NEWSLETTER

“JUSCAN”T Stop Killin’ Those Targets

It doesn’t matter which working group is being followed, the results are the same: the U.S., Canada, Australia and Japan are doing their best to get rid of any language remotely resembling action. But that takes us to the question of what, exactly, is action? Endeavouring to promote the development of the promotion of the development of _____(please fill in blank). You get the picture.



In order to pursue this line of target-killing, a breakaway group from the infamous JUSCANZ alliance appears to have emerged at this meeting. Rumours abound of the emergence of a new, separatist group consisting of the US, Canada, Australia and Japan. Apparently frustrated by the more progressive approach of their JUSCANZ partner New Zealand, these mavericks have decided to go it alone. Rumours also suggest that this will come as news to some members of JUSCANZ.

So what to call this new group? So far they seem to be known as the “Four A’s” – and there have been plenty of (mostly unprintable) suggestions of what the ‘A’ stands for! But ECO would like to run a competition for suggestions. Be creative. The prize is the glory of having the winning entry published in ECO (anonymously if required!). Please send all entries by this Friday to <ecoedinbali@yahoo.com>. But to help get those creative juices flowing, some examples could be:

- *The three stooges +1*
- *The “McGroup”*
- *JACUS (come on Brazilians – you know what we mean!)*

The ECO organisations look forward to interesting, innovative name choices.

Together or Not Together, That Is the Question....

Clearly the future of the inhabitants of this fragile planet relies on sharing the diminishing resources, water, food and space Clearly sharing implies communication and understanding and clearly understanding requires time together.

It is abundantly clear that the opportunities for time together here in Bali are limited to when the government delegations feel like it, unless a particularly opportunistic NGO member manages to grab them in the hallway.

NGOs walked in on Monday to discover the burly UN guards and officious local officers preventing access to key thoroughfares of the conference centre, not an auspicious start to the final PrepCom for the WSSD, which has frequently and proudly been labelled as the “first multi-stakeholder summit.” “NGO, NGO, NGO documents upstairs, upstairs,” was the refrain that greeted one NGO delegate. Whilst others have had to put up with sitting on the stairs in the cramped ‘NGO Balcony’ and if they were so unfortunate as to arrive a little after the event began, to be made to stand outside and ‘queue’ quietly like obedient school children. NGOs have also had to repeatedly request the UN Daily Journal, a critical element for contributing to meaningful daily outcomes.

There is a separate entrance around the back, although some might assume greater prestige with its proximity to the classy Sheraton (!). There is obvious official inattention being paid to the multi-stakeholder dialogue, the official process for ‘civil society’s voice’, and the documents table, a long way from the centre of things, remains unlabelled as a source of information, and doesn’t include key official documents. It has become only too apparent that the real ‘indepth’ work is being conducted in the contact groups, most of which exclude NGOs. Whether some of this can be attributed to the overly officious scrutiny of identity cards or whether government delegations have

Are Poverty Strategies Really the Answer to Sustainable Development?

Since Rio there has been an international commitment to develop national strategies for sustainable development (NSDSs). But it has been a difficult challenge. What does an NSDS look like? Characteristics endorsed at a UN forum in Ghana in November 2001 include:

- Integration of economic, social and environmental objectives and balance across sectors, territories and generations
- Broad participation, effective partnerships, transparency and accountability
- Country ownership, shared vision, commitment and continuous improvement
- Developing capacity and an enabling environment, building on existing knowledge and processes
- Focus on priorities, outcomes and coherent means of implementation

So far, no countries have a strategy which comes close to these ideals. But it is important that they exist as a goal such processes should strive for.

In the earlier PrepComs there were renewed calls for every country to develop and implement an NSDS. Yet of late this resolve appears to have weakened. A range of agencies and governments are now pressing strongly for Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs) to be seen as the overarching framework for sustainable development in developing countries. Does this make any sense?

The underlying fact is that PRSPs are an external imposition – now strongly supported by donors – and often serve as an instrument of conditionality for securing debt relief. Most cannot be seen as genuine country-led processes. Although developing countries are reluctant to say so in public, in private many say that they only prepare them because it is a requirement to secure IDA loans. This flies in the face of sustainability principles.

Sure, poverty is extremely important. But if a country were to set out its own development priorities, tackling poverty might be only one of a number of key challenges. Sustainable development is about more than poverty reduction.

How have these Poverty Strategies been shaping up so far? Recent evaluations of a number of PRSPs have revealed that they have been found wanting in several areas. They have not really addressed environmental concerns let alone tackled the broad issues of sustainable development. They have even been very weak on effective stakeholder participation as well as on prioritisation of public actions.

A PRSP alone does not provide the framework that is needed to follow up the WSSD and put sustainable development into practice. But it should offer elements that can be built upon to develop an NSDS.

These are important issues that should be debated publicly during the WSSD process. But at the moment seem to be slipping through this PrepCom without any debate. Unless there is commitment to genuine strategies for sustainable development in both developed and developing countries, we will have no shared approach by which to deliver true sustainability and to measure our progress.

Thank God, a Minister said it!

Indonesian Environment Minister Nabil Makarim told the press Tuesday morning that the Chairman's text needs a lot of improvement, because otherwise, it will not deliver anything significant. He agreed that the US is not contributing "positively" to the Bali process and should instead allow other countries to achieve progress. Will these wise words signal the beginning of a real initiative to rescue the Johannesburg Summit? Minister Makarim offered these comments after meeting a Greenpeace delegation. "We do not agree with all the methods of Greenpeace, but we have strong points of convergence", he said.

Islanders...

These ministers really like pretty islands: the Environment Ministers of the European Union spent last weekend together on the Spanish island of Mallorca in the Mediterranean. There, they discussed their strategy for Bali. Rumour has it that they are not showing signs of being even slightly interested in working on the Chairman's text. They referred to it as "the **action plan**" (*sic*). **Perhaps they were not talking of the same thing?**

On Friday Six European Ministers will travel to another island, Manhattan, to ceremoniously present the EU instrument of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol at United Nations Headquarters. May we suggest that they remember to stop by the 38th floor (Kofi Annan's office) to pick up the Secretary General's speech from last week, where he said that WSSD should adopt concrete time-bound objectives focused on Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture and Biodiversity? We know they are slow, but it will be a long flight to Bali...

Commitment to What? *Dare to Speak*

Last night at Chairman Salim's poolside soirée, the notion of a 'Bali Commitment' was unveiled. The idea is that the Chairman's text, otherwise known as the Johannesburg Plan of (In)Action would be agreed at this PrepComm, along with the elements of a 'political declaration' to be taken forward to Johannesburg. The question has to be asked, "Commitment to What?"

Following the general aura of despair that settled over the NGO community after witnessing the negotiations over the weekend and on Monday, many were asking whether or not we should just pack it in and head for the beach.

But we can't do that. We spent our supporters and funders money to get here, and we can't give up without a little more effort on everyone's part. We owe them that. So as we beat the corridors today, little glimmers of hope began to emerge from bi-laterals with different national delegations, many of whom want to see something positive come out of this process. We heard many delegations pledge to raise targets and timetables and concrete measures in the sessions today, and we've got some agreements for the 'cross-bloc' consultations that we believe are needed to break the impasse on a targets and timetables...

But after the regional meetings and reports back from delegation meetings, gloom begins to engulf us once again. Who will dare to speak up and risk the wrath of the G-77 coordination? Who will break the lethargy and inertia that prevents the EU from reflecting policies already adopted at home? Hungary, Switzerland, Tuvalu, St. Lucia and a handful of others can't be the ONLY countries to speak out for concrete actions that fulfill the UN mandate for this process!

Come on people! Stop hiding behind your regional blocs! Stand up and speak out! We believe that a majority of countries at this meeting want to see a real Johannesburg Plan of Action, something that can do Indonesia and South Africa proud, along with the rest of the developing world. You, and especially your people, deserve better than this.

Let the few rich and powerful nations who are blocking progress here (to protect luxurious, high-consumption lifestyles) insert a footnote reserving their positions on the action plan, and let their selfish and outdated policies become a soon to be forgotten footnote to history.



*-Together or not Together...
from page 1*

genuinely objected to having NGOs in the room is irrelevant, it is clear the accountability mechanisms for advancing particular positions are absent.

Many of these 'structural deficiencies' could well be unintended. The NGOs are 'sure' there is no greater plot of exclusion implicit in all this. A simple relegation as second class citizens and (*some delegations might even say annoying*) contributors to the process will suffice!

However the NGOs, large and small, have had countless advances from government officials, Heads of Delegation and senior Prep Com IV organisers requesting the NGOs to create 'political space' for them to improve the situation. Clearly many of the governments want to achieve what they were tasked to do by the General Assembly: to draft an Action Plan for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to adopt. Many of them want to be pushed by the NGOs, want the NGOs to raise public awareness and increase the pressure.

If NGOs can't have the access and information they need to work with government delegates to understand one another's positions and secure common ground, it will become increasingly difficult to make Johannesburg the turning point for the future of the planet that we all so clearly need it to be.

What to expect when you are expecting....

Three weeks ago cigars were handed out in São Paulo, Brazil, when the Intersectorial Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, promoted by UNEP, announced the conception of the The Latin American and Caribbean Initiative!

As the proud parent of The Initiative, Brazil is trying to be proactive in debates that are jeopardising not only the one target that remained in the document – 10% of renewable energy by 2010 – but the Initiative itself.

The inclusion of this Initiative on the Chairman's document is being considered by some countries. Others, surprisingly including Indonesia, are making the negotiations really difficult. They argue that the adoption of this initiative will open the floodgates to a whole bunch of others requiring lengthy negotiations. On the contrary, regional initiatives that include measurable and timebound targets, could help to see the light in the middle of the tunnel, though its end is still a long way to go!

As a hostage of the G77, Brazil has not yet exercised its leadership as in other international fora (Climate Change for example). Brazil will need more than one midwife to help to deliver the Latin America and Caribbean Initiative. Or perhaps Brazil is experiencing a phantom pregnancy.

Bali Hai

Bali Hai is interested in how different people have answered the question posed in yesterday's ECO: Why are YOU here???

Bali Hai's Top Ten List:

- 1] European space agency guy here to ensure that the word "satellite" makes it into the final chair's text.
- 2] Attending Bali PrepComm to pick up a really cheap around-the-world business class air ticket.
- 3] To enjoy the hospitality of the UN security guards, who were seen yesterday kindly kicking a NGO out of the delegates' bathroom.
- 4] Dentists for sustainable development (DFSD) looking for funding for innovative technology-transfer project.
- 5] JUSCANZ here to compete for the much-coveted world title on Most Weasel Words (MWW) in one sentence. So far, the US leads with an astounding 27, which could be hard to beat – but Australia follows closely behind with 25. Watch out US – Australia is hot on your heels!
- 6] Japan here to object to the "excessively strict" provisions of a fisheries agreement they have already signed.
- 7] To fulfil a long and much revered tradition of working in the tropics and then "calling in sick" a.k.a. sipping a pina colada poolside.
- 8] US delegate thrilled to discover that he could be immortalised on an Indonesian postage stamp, currently winging its way home on a snazzy postcard.
- 9] UK delegates planning to get "wind in their hair" – by hiring local scooters and becoming the Bali Wild Bunch (go guys!!)
- 10] To negotiate the accelerated implementation of Agenda 21 (AS IF!!!!!!!!!!)

Reproductive Wrongs

ECO was a fly on the wall when EU officials met with the US to discuss their line on reproductive rights. The US has rejected agreed language from the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development and insisted that only the Holy See's text will do.

What's at stake? One – the precedent of rolling back agreed text. Is that all this Summit is about? Two – reversal of a crucial international commitment to women's rights which should not be allowed. Three – the US has clearly looked for an opportunity to ambush the EU and others here (and sent a hot shot team to push their line). Isn't this cynical unilateralism taken much too far?

The US is prepared to take it to the wire – apparently their jobs are on the line. But ECO calls on the EU and other countries not to give in on this one.

International NGO Press Conference

Today

11:30 AM at Media Center

B I C C

Speakers from

Oxfam International

World Wide Fund for Nature

Friends of the Earth International

Greenpeace

are outlining a vision for the Summit...

Eco-Equity is a publication of Consumers International, the Danish 92 Group, Friends of the Earth International, Fundacion Natura, Greenpeace International, Indonesian People's Forum, International Institute for Environment and Development, Northern Alliance for Sustainability, Oxfam International, Pelangi, and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Editor: Beth Roxas

Lay-Out: Omar Sari

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