

A Sweet 16 for Water and Sanitation at the CSD?

When the 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) meets May 5-16, 2008, at the United Nations in New York, a potential result of the meeting could be an outcome document which helps guide the international community and lasts until CSD-20 in 2012, when post-MDG (2015) water and sanitation regimes should be high on the agenda.

Such an outcome would be a fine result of the upcoming CSD, the UN's post-Rio and post-Johannesburg follow-up mechanism, which will conduct a review session of its third implementation cycle. Agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa are mainly in focus. For the water community, however, of interest will be a separate two-day segment to follow-up on the implementation of decisions on water and sanitation from the 13th CSD in 2005.

While the 2005 meeting called for greater water and sanitation funding, as SIWI Executive Director Anders Berntell said, today it is difficult to find someone "who can recite, from memory, any of the decisions reached at the meeting." The contrast with the outcomes from the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, for example, couldn't be more startling, he said.

"In spite of many good efforts during the last CSD sessions dealing with water, in 2004 and 2005, the result has been less than inspirational," Mr. Berntell said. "By comparison the concrete and time-bound targets on sanitation, International Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Efficiency Plans, amongst other actions coming out of Johannesburg, have had a real effect on priorities of governments in many countries around the world. We have a chance to accomplish this with CSD-16."

Two Days to Do a Lot

At CSD-16, the water management commitments and decisions at CSD-13 on access to basic water and sanitation services, integrated water resources management, wastewater collection, treatment and reuse, as well as sanitation and hygiene education will be reviewed on May 12-13.

"This review, if bold and forward looking enough, could be a powerful tool and spur implementation by various actors," said Mr. Berntell.

SIWI will be involved in the CSD in several capacities. Together with the Stakeholder Forum and the jointly-initiated Global Public Policy Network, SIWI is facilitating water management stakeholder input and knowledge exchange for governments, civil society and international agencies. Such



Photo: Mats Lannerstad

Agriculture, the largest water user, will be in focus at the CSD. The efficiency of agricultural water use is still very low, and SIWI will stress that more attention be given to the already agreed target on Water Efficiency Plans from the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

wider stakeholder reporting has so far been lacking from the CSD process, said Ms. Karin Lexén, Swedish Water House Project Director at SIWI.

“The GPPN will have a more long-term perspective, co-ordinating a process of continuous stakeholder feedback and evolving into a strategic stakeholder reporting mechanism where CSD-16 represents the first step,” said Ms. Lexén.

SIWI will also release a follow-up to its popular report, “Let It Reign: The New Paradigm for Water Security,” and together with the Swedish Water House, arrange a number of side events.

Key Issues

SIWI’s review, seminar and advocacy activities at the CSD will focus on the key issues of sanitation, monitoring, climate variability, agriculture, governance and coordination.

- The International Year of Sanitation has put the critical sanitation, health and hygiene issues in focus now, but to move beyond lip service and to meet the water supply and sanitation targets of the MDGs, increased efforts are needed. SIWI will say that countries must develop national implementation and financial plans to reach the MDGs for water supply and sanitation, that water and sanitation needs to be better embedded in, for example, poverty reduction strategy papers, and that a political environment that allows for the sustainable operation of water supply and sanitation services must be created.
- Good statistical reporting and monitoring is necessary if implementation is going to work. Output on monitoring and evaluation from the 2007 World Water Week will serve as input to CSD-16. Based on its World Water Week experience, for example, SIWI will say that monitoring and reporting mechanisms (Joint Monitoring Programme, etc.) for water supply and sanitation and IWRM must be harmonised and improved. Different demands for various types of indicators, poor data quality and an overabundance of actors have held back monitoring. IWRM monitoring is a good case and point: impact indicators that actually measure the effect of good IWRM practices are needed.
- To meet the new challenges that an increasing climate variability and change bring, SIWI will say that countries need to develop national strategies and action programmes on climate adaptation and climate variability. Strategies should focus on vulnerability issues. Increased work to lessen vulnerability today will make a country more ready to meet possible larger climatic changes.



Photo: Joel Terrel, SXC

SIWI will recommend that more research be carried out on reducing water losses of food that is produced but never consumed (“from field to fork”). Relevant actors – farmers, agribusinesses, distributors, etc. – should be given quantitative targets for water reductions in the food production and distribution chain.

Mission of the CSD

The Division for Sustainable Development provides leadership and is an authoritative source of expertise within the United Nations system on sustainable development. It promotes sustainable development as the substantive secretariat to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and through technical cooperation and capacity building at international, regional and national levels. The context for the Division’s work is the implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Please find all information on the upcoming meeting at www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm

- Agriculture, the largest water user, will be in focus at the CSD. The efficiency of agricultural water use is still very low, and SIWI will stress that more attention be given to the already agreed target on Water Efficiency Plans from the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. This is especially relevant for land use, production of agricultural products and bioenergy. SIWI will also recommend that more research be carried out on reducing water losses on food that is produced but never consumed (“from field to fork”). Relevant actors – farmers, agribusinesses, distributors, etc. – should be given quantitative targets for water reductions in the food production and distribution chain.
- Water and sanitation governance is struggling to shift from a largely supply driven approach to demand driven practices, a challenge increasingly paralleled by increased demands for water resources by both the society and environment as a whole. The CSD provides a good opportunity to call for adaptive approaches to water and sanitation governance.
- The role of UN-Water was already stressed at CSD-13 and has since then evolved impressively. Inter-agency collaboration and coordination within the UN is extremely important in order to use existing resources efficiently and to implement effectively. Some time should be devoted to highlight and discuss this further and it might include suggestions for a stronger water and sanitation governance architecture that goes beyond the existing structure.

For more information on SIWI’s CSD activities, visit www.siwi.org.

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