

CSD-16 highlights sustainability issues in Africa

The Food Agriculture Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) participated at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) meeting in New York, whose themes for the current 2008/9 cycle include agriculture, water, rural development, land, drought and desertification in Africa.



FANRPAN CEO, Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda addressing a panel session during the CSD-16 in New York.

FANRPAN CEO, Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, represented the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) as one of four panelists at a Business & Industry and Farmers side event on *“Enhancing Agricultural Productivity: Meeting the Sustainability Challenge”*. Dr Sibanda made a presentation on *“Supporting Small Farmer Competitiveness through Institutional Reform of Research and Extension: Re-aligning Research and Extension for COMESA Small Farmers”*.

In her presentation, Dr Sibanda cited the complexity of policy objectives, weak institutional arrangements, poor targeting and absence of monitoring of development impact as some of the factors affecting the linkage between farming and research communities in Southern Africa. There is need to capacitate both farmers and researchers by setting a common agenda, agreeing on the design and geographical focus of the research process to enhance agricultural productivity.

Furthermore, Dr Sibanda said researchers need retooling to view research as learning, embracing innovative systems approach to development and generate evidence relevant to development needs. At the same time researchers should package the research evidence well enough to attract policy makers and open effective communication lines with farmers by combining conventional and innovative media/ICT to facilitate participation and engagement. *“Africa has a strong oral culture and we are not dialoguing enough at local level”* She highlighted the potential of radio and community theatre as tools for policy development.

“Strong farmer organisations and good leadership are essential in facilitating engagement between farmers and researchers in addition to the need for investment in tools and processes of technology transfer,” said Dr Sibanda, adding that, *“The documentation and scaling up of good practices at national and regional levels are also important as is the increased and consistent funding for Research and Development.”*

Theatre for community action, Village Knowledge Centres and farmer-commissioned research are some of the available tools for improving links between farming and research communities in Southern Africa.

The CSD-16 brought together Government delegates and representatives of major civil society groups, including women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations, business, academia, local authorities, scientists, workers and trade unions.

Delegates focused on issues at the heart of the food crisis and identified barriers to sustainable solutions to these problems. Agriculture, land use, rural development, drought and desertification, were identified as having a direct impact on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially on the eradication of poverty and hunger, as well as furthering the agreements contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was formed in 1992 after the Earth Summit convened convened to address urgent problems of environmental protection and socio-economic development. More than 100 heads of state met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). They signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity; endorsed the Rio Declaration and the Forest Principles; and adopted Agenda 21, a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century.

Following the Earth Summit, the CSD has been charged with providing policy guidance to follow up the Johannesburg Plan of implementation (JPOI) which among other issues calls for renewed emphasis on integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced way. In addition, it draws focus on reviewing and monitoring progress in the implementation through a



Dr. L.M. Sibanda with Gisbert Glaser (right, Head of Delegation for the Scientific and Technological Community) and Arne Cartridge at one of the side meetings of the CSD-16 in New York.

broad exchange of views and experiences, best practice and lessons learned as well as enhancing linkages between global, regional and national endeavors.

The CSD meets annually. A five-year review of Earth Summit progress took place in 1997 by the United Nations General Assembly meeting in special session, followed in 2002 by a ten-year review by the World Summit on Sustainable Development

(WSSD). Following discussion of the role of CSD at WSSD, the CSD agreed at its eleventh session in May 2003 that it will now function on the basis of

two-year implementation cycles, including review and policy years. The review year will evaluate progress made in implementing sustainable development goals and identifying obstacles and constraints, while the policy year will decide on measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome these obstacles and constraints.

CSD11 agreed on a Program of Work based on the two-year cycles up until 2016/17. The CSD cycle in 2006/07 had themes of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, climate change, and atmosphere/air pollution.

The first Organizational Session of the CSD – 1 was convened in June 1993 and focused on a broad range of organizational and administrative issues and the CDS-16, chaired by

Zimbabwe's Minister of Environment and Tourism, Francis Nhema, met in New York in May 2008.

The thematic cluster for the CDS-17 2008/09 implementation cycle includes Policies for agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. FANRPAN through its network in 12 southern African countries will deliberate on food security and sustainability issues which are pertinent to Southern Africa and make input to the CDS-17. FANRPAN believes the policy processes should start at country level and be up-scaled to the international forums. **(See attached details on international meetings relevant to food security and sustainability for 2008)**

Dr Sibanda made various interventions on behalf of the Science and Technology Community during plenary thematic discussions on Africa at UNCSD-16, calling for increased investments in agriculture , a new regimen of research-extension interface and technology transfer. The Scientific and Technology Community emphasized the need for increased investments in Research and Development so as to increase technology uptake which in turn will improve the livelihoods of citizens in rural areas.

“Africa’s rural community needs better access to information if they are to move beyond farming to creating a dynamic rural economy,” Dr Sibanda said. “As researchers we are aware that the new agriculture-for-development agenda must be supported by far-reaching reforms in the traditional research and extension models in order to impart new skills and provide timely information across the value chain.”

Traditional models of research and extension delivery have done little to unleash the potential of the smallholder farmers. With the depletion of the extension worker force as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and low staff retention capacity, most African governments cannot meet the optimum extension worker to farmer ratio– therefore a new platform for “research-extension worker-farmer” interface will be critical in driving the new agriculture-for-development agenda.

The Science and Technology Community cited how the Swami Nathan Foundation in India had pioneered a rural knowledge network of Village knowledge centers (VKCs) which provide information across the agricultural value chain. These village knowledge centers are particularly suitable in the Sub-Saharan Africa context where self-employment in agriculture is, by far, the most dominant activity with those with skills and information having greater opportunities. The Swami Nathan model extends timely and relevant research and extension information and skills through a Virtual Academy that connects via uplink and downlink satellites.

In addition, the Scientific and Technological Community at CSD-16 emphasized that any technology introduced to small scale farmers in Africa must be appropriate and low-cost for their particular site specific applications. But basic disaggregated statistics on livelihoods and the coping mechanisms were needed to enhance technology uptake by the poor and women in particular. However, data collected on a longitudinal basis with databases that are updated regularly was not readily available because of insufficient investments in research and development.

Date	Event
27 May	High-level Policy Dialogue on the Operationalization of the UNCCD Ten Year Strategy Organized by: UNCCD Venue: Bonn, Germany
28-30 May	4th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) Organized by: Government of Japan, UN, UNDP, World Bank Venue: Yokohama, Japan
3-5 June	High-level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bio-Energy Organized by: FAO Venue: Rome, Italy
16-20 June	FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC) (25th Session) Organized by: FAO Venue: Nairobi, Kenya
24-28 June	International Conference on Groundwater and Climate in Africa Organized by: University College London (UK)/Government of Uganda/UNESCO Venue: Kampala, Uganda
18 July	<u>Expert Group Meeting on Monitoring and Assessing Sustainable Development: Review of the State of African Cities Report</u> Organized by: UNECA Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
TBD	Seminar on the development, implementation and appraisal of concrete projects and programmes in support to the implementation of the NEPAD Organized by: UNECA Venue: TBD
TBD	Ad-Hoc Expert group meeting on assessing and monitoring progress of human and social development in African countries Organized by: UNECA Venue: TBD
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3-5 September	World Agricultural Forum: 2008 African Congress Organized by: World Agricultural Forum Venue: Kampala, Uganda
9-10 September	Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening the UN Regional Consultation Mechanism for an Effective UN Support to the Vision and Priorities of the African Union and its NEPAD Programme Organized by: UNECA Venue: Kigali, Rwanda
15-19 September	<u>3rd Regional Conference on Agricultural Water Management in Eastern</u>

	<u>and Southern Africa</u> Organized by: UNECA, Venue: TBD
22 September	<u>General Assembly High-level Meeting on Implementation of the New Partnership for Africa</u> Organized by: United Nations Venue: New York, USA
TBD	Ad-hoc expert group meeting on promoting agro-industry and agri-business development in African countries Organized by: UNECA Venue: TBD
TBD	Ad-hoc expert group meeting: annual consultative meeting of experts of regional economic communities, African Union Commission, NEPAD Secretariat and UN agencies on the implementation of AU/NEPAD programmes Organized by: UNECA Venue: Yaounde, Cameroon
TBD	Ad-hoc expert group meeting: consultative meeting of experts of regional economic communities, African Union Commission, NEPAD Secretariat and UN agencies on the implementation of AU/NEPAD Programmes in the subregion Organized by: UNECA Venue: Kigali, Rwanda
5-14 October	<u>IUCN World Conservation Congress</u> Organized by: IUCN Venue: Barcelona, Spain
6-8 October	<u>Second International Symposium on "Food and Water Sustainability in Asia 2008"</u> Organized by: University of Tokyo, University of Macao Venue: Macao SAR, China
13-18 October	<u>20th International Congress on Irrigation and Drainage</u> Organized by: International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) Venue: Lahore, Pakistan
3-4 November	Ad-hoc expert group meeting: consultative meeting of experts of regional economic communities, African Union Commission, NEPAD Secretariat and UN agencies on the implementation of AU/NEPAD programmes in the subregion Organized by: UNECA Venue: Blantyre, Malawi
3-7 November	UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards Organized by: UNECE Venue: Geneva, Switzerland
3-14 November	Seventh Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of UNCCD

	Organized by: UNCCD Venue: Istanbul, Turkey
17-21 November	<u>Seventh Global Conference on Human Development: Unlocking the Potential to Create a New World Together</u> Organized by: Institute of Cultural Affairs International (ICAI) Venue: Takayama, Japan
TBD	<u>Fifth Asia-Africa Forum on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification</u> Organized by: UNCCD, Government of China Venue: Beijing, China
TBD	<u>Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation Systems for Africa's Development</u> Organized by: UNECA Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
TBD	<u>Special Event: High-level Meeting on Public-Private Partnerships in Agro-Industry and Agribusiness</u> Organized by: UNECA Venue: TBD

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