

**N E W S**

**LETTER**

# OUTREACH

The Voice of the NGO Community at the CSD

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## OUTREACH 2000

Voice of the NGO Community at the UN CSD

**"Working Towards Earth Summit 2002"**

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Editor in Chief:

**Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**

Lay-Out and journalist:

**Øystein L. Pedersen**

Cartoons:

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**The Working Group on Finance, Investment and Trade:**

# Losing the point

## Trading Sustainable Development for Sustained Growth

Commentary by

Pieter Van Der Gaag, ANPED and Jeffrey Barber, U.S. Citizens Network

**The Inter-Sessional Working Group's report on Finance, Investment and Trade seem to have lost the point, when the goal of achieving sustainable development is entirely missing from the papers.**

Whereas the Secretary-General's reports and the report from the Expert Group Meeting in Nairobi attempted to integrate sustainability in finance, trade and investment, the Ad Hoc Inter-Sessional Working Group's reports on their discussions seem to have lost the point.

In fact, the goal of achieving a higher quality of life for everyone, the goal to which sustainable development is supposed to strive, is entirely missing from the papers on financial resources as well as those on economic growth, trade and investment.

One gets the impression that the Working Group seems more concerned with sustainable development getting in the way of "sustained economic growth" rather than the other way around.

Rio and subsequent UN summits have given us a framework and goal requiring integration at all policy levels to achieve a sustainable world. This meant creating policies and instruments that would guide trade, investment and finance in the context of sustainable development – not the other way around. The Working Group papers give the impression that delegates see themselves more as fundraisers than reformers.

### Charity campaign

The current Working Group appears to be packaging "sustainable development" as a kind of market segment rather than a framework for shaping investment and trade policies and standards.

The term "financing sustainable development"—especially the way it is being treated in the Working Group discussions -- implies that sustainable development is simply one among many other targets and priorities for financing. Thus, the discussion of ODA and FDI sounds more like a charity campaign than an effort to reform the investment and trading system. Sustainable development is just one more cause that needs a slice cut of the pie.

Continuing the statement on the inadequate ODA by the industrialized countries, the discussion focuses on how to increase FDI to developing countries – with minimal attention given to the kinds of mechanisms needed to ensure that all investment contributes to and does not undermine sustainable development.

Instead of innovative ideas, the papers insert innumerable caveats and concerns that labelling and other measures serve as "disguised barriers to trade" and that environmental measures might be used "for protectionist measures." These worries seem to outweigh concerns for protecting communities and the environment.

### Old assumptions

Digging through the text looking for sincere efforts to promote sustainable development, we find instead language promoting investment and trade. Instead of the seeds for new solutions, we find the infertile, eroded soil of old assumptions -- that increased investment and trade will in some way stimulate sustainable development and eradicate poverty, simply by growing. But the "sustained growth" discussed here does not reflect Agenda 21's acknowledgment in Chapter 3 that the very concept of economic growth needs to be redefined to reflect a broader understanding of social and environmental costs and benefits.

Unfortunately, after over 50 years of poverty and pollution, the old assumptions and thinking driving "mainstream" international development are driving the failure of CSD to move forward.

The Working Group does not seem to believe that *all* investment and trade should contribute to sustainable development. Instead, the papers imply that the investment and trading system should be persuaded to devote a portion of its activities to the cause of sustainable development, and that for some investors and producers – such as those marketing environmental technologies – it will be profitable.

A move backwards

The idea of "mainstreaming the financing of the various components of sustainable development" and the belief that sustained economic growth is the goal of sustainable development does not move us forwards but backwards. Instead, we need to make sustainable development the new mainstream setting the course for investment, trade and finance.

We need our governments to place investment and trade in the context of sustainable development – not the other way around!

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**New Book:**

## **A fantastic resource against Genetic Engineering**

• **The very essence of the case against genetic engineering - clearly, simply, and authoritatively explained.**

**Bob Phelps, Director,  
Australian GeneEthics Network**

If current trends continue, within ten years most of the foods we eat could be genetically engineered. While multinational corporations want us to believe that this food is safe, nutritious, and thoroughly tested, we are entitled to be sceptical.

As some dissenting scientists have pointed out, our current understanding of genetics is extremely limited, and the technology of genetic modification of food carries inherent risks both for human health and the environment.

Despite official assurances, the introduction of genetically engineered organisms into complex ecosystems is a global experiment with unpredictable and irreversible consequences.

This compact, comprehensive book aims to clarify the key issues that concern people about genetic engineering. It answers questions such as:

- \* What is genetic engineering?
- \* Why are genetically engineered foods being introduced?
- \* What are the implications for health, farming, and the environment?
- \* Is genetic engineering needed to feed the growing world population?
- \* Why are living organisms being patented?

- \* Who is making the crucial decisions about the future of our food supply?
- \* What can you do if you are concerned about these issues?

The book is by Luke Anderson, an English journalist, speaker, and campaigner who specialises in issues related to genetic engineering. He is a consultant to the UK Soil Association's genetic engineering campaign, and has written on the subject for other environmental organisations such as Greenpeace International.

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## **NGO Caucus on Sustainable Production and Consumption: Calls for major changes in trade and finance practices**

**The NGO Caucus on Sustainable Production and Consumption points out that major changes in global trade, finance and investment practices is necessary to achieve sustainable production and consumption.**

Poverty/Consumption and Production Patterns were identified by the General Assembly in 1997 as "overriding issues" to be addressed by the programme of work. Rather than treating consumption and production as a separate issue, it is useful to instead use the goal of achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns as an integrative perspective from which to address some of the difficult problems within the discussion on finance and trade.

As our Caucus asserted last year, achieving sustainable production and consumption is interdependent with major changes needed in global trade, finance and investment practices. In turn, government delegates at last year's meetings acknowledged the links between investment, finance, mass media, advertising and marketing, wealth and consumption. However, a new policy framework based on these linkages – one that focuses on the ultimate goal of a higher quality of life for everyone -- is essential.

As you also know, Chapter 4 in Agenda 21 identifies unsustainable production and consumption patterns as the "major cause of the continued deterioration of the environment." This chapter also points out that "in order to formulate coherent international and national policies" more "needs to be known about the role of consumption in relation to economic growth and population dynamics."

The section highlights the fact that "some economists are questioning traditional concepts of economic growth and underlining the importance of pursuing economic objectives that take account of the full value of natural resource capital," recognizing "the need for new concepts of wealth and prosperity."

Last year, the NGOs of the Sustainable Production and Consumption Caucus expressed their concerns about the trade liberalisation negotiations by the WTO -- concerns greatly amplified last November during the WTO meeting in Seattle. NGOs continue to call for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of existing trade agreements on poverty, environmental degradation, health, consumer protection, labour rights and other social issues.

The need for such an assessment was also highlighted at the CSD's preparatory meeting in the Netherlands last September, where efforts to develop an action plan agenda were bogged down in controversies over the impacts of trade policy on sustainable agriculture and food security.

Also last year we lamented the breakdown of negotiations on the biosafety protocol, which we saw as primarily due to the trading interests of a few large corporations and their home governments, over-riding environmental and human health concerns. A few days ago governments reached a compromise on this agreement, which would allow a country to ban the import of a genetically modified food without having to establish full scientific "proof" that it was unsafe -- that is, to respect the precautionary principle.

NGOs continue to stress that important principles such as the precautionary principle, prior informed consent, and the public right to know and choose are essential elements of fair trade policy – especially with biotechnology.

In discussing trade and investment in biotechnology, we should remember one EU member's recent statement that "this is about the right to choose for consumers." Unfortunately, many of the unsustainable products now circulating have been heavily marketed by producers with little effort given to educating consumers about the consequences of their consumption. With this in mind, we would like to recall the UN Consumer Guidelines' recommendation for governments to provide consumer education and information "on the environmental impacts of consumption patterns" so that consumer choices are fully informed.

In turn, we would like to recall and support the concerns raised last year by the G77 and other countries on the impacts of media and advertising on consumption and production patterns and the need to study these impacts.

Since so much of unsustainable consumption and production is heavily promoted by the advertising industry, the destructive influence of advertising and marketing on trade and economic growth needs to be acknowledged and addressed. We request that the CSD especially focus on these impacts of advertising, especially on developing countries, as part of this year's discussion of trade, and in its preparations for next year's discussions on information for decision-making.

Globalization and trade liberalisation have increased pressures on many economies to attract foreign direct investment. The increased competition for such investment has often meant a relaxing of environmental and labor standards, with direct negative impacts especially on women and indigenous peoples.

In developing policy about trade it is important to keep in mind that trade, advertising, packaging and selling are all elements of marketing and distribution of a company or society's products.

We should be discussing trade more as an interdependent part of the larger system of consumption, investment, and production, rather than as a separate policy priority that automatically overrides all other concerns.

In moving towards integrated national policy frameworks which promote fair trade, responsible investment, and sustainable production and consumption patterns, it is important to focus on the ultimate goal for all these processes and policies. This is the goal which "development" and "economic growth" are presumably meant to serve -- pointed out in Principle 8 of the Rio Declaration -- "a higher quality of life for all people."

The goal of sustainable development needs to be reasserted, especially in response to the tendency to replace this priority with overriding process objectives -- such as eliminating trade and growth barriers. Development in itself is not a goal but a process, a means.

Furthermore, the goal of a higher quality of life for all people needs to be clarified. Rather than submit to the advertisers and marketers' definition of quality of life -- translated as an increased capacity to buy and consume unlimited quantities of commodities -- it is important to take the time to consider the non-material and non-commercial dimensions of the quality of life. Most of these goods and services are produced by the quality of relationships in a community, not by ownership of things.

he pursuit of status through the competitive struggle for the most property and power, especially where ethnic and gender inequalities are institutionalized, is more often a source of conflict than peace and prosperity.

When trade and growth only benefit the already privileged few, widening the gap between rich and poor, the result is not an increasing quality of life for all.

*Prepared by Jeffrey Barber, Northern co-chair Caucus on Sustainable Production and Consumption*

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# **Environmental nightmares**

## **Twenty issues to keep you awake at night**

# as your prepare for 2002

**In the Global Environmental Outreach 2000 report UNEP identified twenty key issues that need to be addressed. This guide is provided in Outreach to enable delegates to take a reality check when negotiating.**

- 1) The global population has reached 6 billion. Under a medium-fertility scenario, the global population is likely to peak at 8.9 billion in 50 years time. This is based on 2.1 children, however if this medium is exceeded by 0.5 of a child per couple then the population figure will shot up to 27 billion.
- 2) Nearly half of all people live in cities. 6600 million will in shanty towns and a further 2100 million are believed to be homeless. 1 billion urban residents are exposed to health-threatening levels of air pollution.
- 3) More than 1.3 billion people live on less than US \$1 a day. A tenfold reduction in resource consumption in the industrialized countries is a necessary long term target if adequate resources are to be released for the needs of developing countries.
- 4) Since World war 2 the number of vehicles on the road has risen from 40 million to 680 million. At current rates of expansion there will be 1 billion vehicles by 2025. Transport is one of the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and urban pollution.
- 5) A survey of 200 scientists singled out water scarcity and climate change as the most serious environmental issues facing humanity in the 21st century. Next came deforestation and desertification.
- 6) Greenhouse gas emissions will raise the global temperature by between 1 and 3.5 degrees Celsius in the next 100 years. Average sea level is expected to rise by 50cm with devastating consequences.
- 7) Climate Change has been linked to the increasing ferocity off natural disasters. Three million people have perished as a result of natural disasters in the last 30 years.
- 8) In 1996, 25% of the world's 4630 mammals and 11% of the 9675 bird species were at significant risk of extinction. More than half of the world's coral reefs are threatened by human activities, 80% of the forests that originally covered the earth have been cleared.
- 9) By 2025, two out of three people will live in water stressed conditions. Polluted water contributes to the death of 15 million children under 5 every year.
- 10) Malaria affects more than 500 million people in 90 countries causing 1.5-2.7 million deaths per year. Poor sanitation in the developing world allows malaria to spread through urban areas. Climate Change may enable malaria to re-emerge in Europe.
- 11) Global pesticide use has resulted in 3.5 million to 5 million acute poisonings a year. Nitrogen run-off from fertilisers can lead to brain damage in children.
- 12) Armed conflicts create refugee crisis which can in turn put pressure on the environment. In 1995 the number of refugees worldwide hit an all time high of 27.4 million. In 1997 it was 22.7 million
- 13) Africa is the only continent on which poverty is expected to rise during the next century. 500 hectares of land have been affected by soil degradation since 1950.
- 14) 75% of the world's poor live in Asia. The estimated health cost of South East Asian forest fires during 1997-1998 was \$US 1400 million.
- 15) The strongest demonstration of what unified environmental action can achieve is the global communities success in controlling damage to the ozone layer. Without the Montreal Protocol levels of ozone-depleting substances would have

been five times higher than they are today.

16) Urban noise is a problem in Europe. Around 10 million people are exposed to environmental noise levels that may cause hearing loss.

17) Most forests in eastern and southern Amazonia are subjected to severe dry seasons, particularly during the El Nino events., These forests are on the edge of the rainfall regime that is necessary for them to resist fire.

18) North Americans use more per capita energy and resources than any other region. Average fuel use in 1995 was five times as high as in Europe.

19) 1.2 billion barrels of oil are spilled into the Persian Gulf annually. The regions oil producing countries produce 2.8 times more hazardous waste per capita than the USA.

20) Private foreign investment was about \$250,000 million in 1998 compared with overseas development assistance of less than US \$50,000 million. These figures underline the importance of the private sector in tackling environmental issues.

<h1>Friday's Program</h1>		
8.30 - 9.15 am	Women's Caucus	
9.15- 10 am	NGO Strategy Session	
10 am	Official Session:  Introduction by the Co-Chairs of their second drafts of "summary of the discussion" and the "elements" on finance	
1 pm	Distribution of the second drafts of the Co-Chairs of the "Summary of the discussion" and other "Elements" on trade, investment and Economic growth	
3 - 6 pm	Official Session:  Introduction by the Co-Chairs of their second drafts of "summary of the discussion" and the "elements" on trade, investment and economic growth	
6.15 - 7.45 pm	US Mission Briefing to NGOs	

## *Rio Grinds*

### ***What Rio did for the environment, Rio Grinds does for gossip***

Which of the following sees itself as a Management Consultancy?

a) UNDP b) Towers Perrin c) Andersons Consultancy

Which of the following sees itself as an Agency trying to eradicate poverty

a) UNDP b) World Bank c) Burger King

Answers could be sent to Secretary General Kofi Anan. And all the people with right answers could be entertained by certain select CSD delegates for a whole evening.

By the way: Has anyone seen the Social Summit PrepCom?

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### **SUBMISSIONS TO OUTREACH**

NGO representatives are invited to submit articles and announcements to OUTREACH via the following:

1) E-MAIL: [northclear@csdngo.org](mailto:northclear@csdngo.org)

2) Labeled 3.5 diskette. Drop off (preferably with print out) at DC2-1782 (Two UN Plaza, 17th Floor).

*Feature articles should be NO LONGER than 450 words. Information articles should not exceed 250 words. Deadline for announcements is 4:00 p.m. and deadline for articles is 6:30 p.m.. The editorial staff reserves the right to shorten/omit submissions.*

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