

**International Forum on Partnerships for Sustainable Development**  
**Co-sponsored by Government of Italy and UN-DESA**  
**Hosted by FAO in Rome, Italy, 4-6 March 2004**

**Reports from the six thematic breakout groups**  
**Plenary, Friday 5 March 2004, 17.00-18.30**

**Breakout Group A – Water and sanitation and human settlements**

Partnerships/programmes presented:

- Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council
- European Commission Water Initiative
- EURO – Mediterranean Water and Poverty Facility
- Environmental and Health Risk Assessment in Secondary Rivers of the Mean and Lower Danube Basin
- The Access Initiative and PP10 Institutions and Governance Programme

The partnerships that were presented in this breakout group were mainly international ones with a policy focus and with structures ranging from very informal ones to clearly defined governance structures.

The processes of creating partnerships need patience and shortcuts are not possible as the processes must be local- and country specific. The partnerships do not operate in a vacuum and therefore timing is important as well as an understanding of the fact that neither the environment nor the partnerships are static.

The issues of neutrality and independency of partnerships were discussed especially with regards to the challenge of operating as independent organizations at the local level and assist the local authorities in facilitating participation.

It was discussed how to level the playing field between the different stakeholders. The fact that NGOs often lack the capacity to engage and match for example government stakeholders is an issue which needs to be addressed. Presently, donors often act as convenors and facilitators in addition to their role as donors, and this also needs clarification. As to private sector stakeholders, the debate steered clear of their involvement.

As a general rule, stakeholders should always be engaged around their core interests to ensure their genuine commitment.

**Breakout Group B – Agriculture, rural development and desertification**

Partnerships/programmes presented:

- **Land Alliances for National Development (LAND) Partnerships**
- The Education for Rural People flagship initiative
- The Seed Initiative
- Partnerships Central

- Landcare
- Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Initiative

The partnerships engaged around these themes represent 35 % of all the WSSD partnerships and address the issues of international commitments related to i.e. sustainable development, poverty reduction and food security. Some of the main challenges of the partnerships are to ensure the respect of these commitments, the mainstreaming of the issues into policy planning and the identification of a model for inserting local priorities into policy.

These partnerships are often centred on people in developing countries in particular in rural areas, the capacities and skills of CSO often play a key role, the buy-in of governments, including at the local levels, is essential, and the partnerships currently face a lack of new financial resources.

One of the lessons which have been learned so far is that although the overall goals of the partnerships are long term, there is a need for well-defined short term targets. A shared common goal – that is bigger than the individual partners’ goals – and short term targets are essential, but especially on sensitive areas, such as access to land, they can be difficult to agree upon.

The partnerships are inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary, characterized by a common purpose. Anyone can establish a partnership and this right of initiative and the lack of clarity which sometimes exists can lead to competing partnerships, fragmentation of efforts and/or duplication. Furthermore, having to engage with a number of new partnerships can be a challenge for governments.

Some partnerships have experienced that after an initial groundswell support the need for a clearer structure emerged, including i.e. a code of conduct, a legal framework, and specific short and long term plans, as well as call for a clearer definition of the focus and audience of the partnership. Moreover, the inequality of the participating partners regarding the resources and power often leads to imbalanced benefits.

There are only few universal solutions and therefore good practices on how to move successfully to a different scale, i.e. from the local level to the international level, are needed.

Some of the general issues which were stressed were access to markets, better coordination of donor activities, and the need for further investments in communication, which should not be limited to the web-based communication, to allow the local communities to be reached.

New ways for raising funding should be found and the ways to measure results should be developed and improved.

### **Breakout Group C – Air quality, climate change and transport**

Partnerships/programmes presented:

- ASIA CDM, Capacity building initiative

- Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles
- Partnership for Clean Indoor Air
- Transport, Health and Environment
- MeditAiraneo
- Italian-Russian JI Infrastructure partnership
- World Bank Community Development Carbon Fund

Coal and wood are the two main factors making hindering clean indoor air and causing the death of a large number of people in some regions. The majority of the needed technologies already exist, so the current challenge is to implement those technologies.

Making personal transport sustainable implies enormous difficulties. In order to make a concrete difference it is crucial to establish a real win-win situation. The main challenge is to promote a persuasive a model of behaviour combining transport and sustainability.

The growth of private transport in China will be the great challenge of the coming years.

### **Breakout Group D – Energy efficiency and renewable energy**

Partnerships/programmes presented:

- The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP)
- The Global Renewable Energy Education and Training (GREET) Programme
- Mediterranean Renewable Energy Programme (MEDREP)
- Pacific Islands Energy for Sustainable Development
- Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD)
- World Institute for a Sustainable Humanity (A W.I.S.H.)
- Clean Energy Initiative (CEI)
- European Commission Energy Initiative

The debate in this breakout group was concentrated on very concrete issues and one of the main issues was the financial aspects of energy efficiency and renewable energy, in particular the role of public funds.

The institutional and regulatory framework of the partnerships was also found to be essential and the need to ensure that overlap of partnerships was avoided.

### **Breakout Group E – Forests, biodiversity and mountains**

Partnerships/programmes presented:

- Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)
- International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions
- Asia Forest Partnership
- Global Crop Diversity Trust
- The Equator Initiative

- Soil Biodiversity and Globally important ingenious agricultural heritages systems
- European Commission Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade

Many partnerships are UN-led and their mandates mostly derive from UN programmes, decisions, conferences and/or conventions. The debate addressed the question of whether these partnerships merely were an invention of the UN to stay in business.

The partnerships were engaged in formulation of recommendations, identification by the target groups of their needs and of pragmatic ways implementation at the community level. Other key issues were to promote dialogue, networking and exchange of experience and identify sources of funding.

The structures varied from complete legal structures, i.e. funds and projects, to soft informal structures which were difficult to identify/describe. Many partnerships reported formally to i.e. ECOSOC, UN Forum on Forests, whereas others used the informal procedure of the CSD.

The financing of the partnerships are often provided by the participants themselves, sometimes with additional funds from donors and/or foundations.

It is difficult to capture the preconditions for successful partnerships, but generally it was found to be useful to organize around a theme and adapt the partnership structure to the specific theme.

### **Breakout Group F – Oceans and seas, marine resources, small island developing states and disaster management**

Partnerships/programmes presented:

- Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands/Center for the Study of Marine Policy, USA
- UNEP/Global Plan of Action
- ADRICOSM
- White Water to Blue Water
- Regional Sustainable Development Strategy for the Mediterranean

The key issues were identified as funding, collaboration, linkages and coordination, participation (including business), exchange of information and good practices, specific and clearly identified common themes and complementarity. The partnerships should be a combination of a bottom-up and an up-bottom approach.

Partnerships were seen as one but not the only way to achieve the WSSD goals. Bringing together different groups is often easiest when the groups are kept small and they are brought together around a common theme or geographical area. Often strong UN or government support, including financial support, has proven to lead to partnerships that work well. When possible, business should be engaged in the partnerships although it can be a very challenging task especially in small island

developing states as the profit potential is very low. Typically business involvement will not be feasible in the initial phase but only when the project is consolidated.

The Small Island Developing States share similar concerns but also face individual problems. One of the major concerns is how to tap into funding and in this context the opportunities made by remittances should be further studied, possibly in the framework of CSD.

### **Concluding remark**

The International Forum on Partnership for Sustainable Development will form an integral part of the preparation for CSD-12 and the process of follow-up from Johannesburg 2002.