

Maurice Strong / IUCN Environmental Dialogue

IUCN Headquarters, Gland, Switzerland

1st and 2nd July, 2009

Brief report and Message from Meeting

Introduction

2009 is a pivotal year in the history of mankind, and it is also the year when Maurice Strong has turned 80. In order to combine our desire to honour Maurice and to influence the current debates on climate change and biodiversity in a profound and lasting way, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN: www.iucn.org) organized a two-day event in its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland on 1-2 July 2009.

Invited participants included Maurice Strong and others who played key roles in setting the scene for the international environmental movement leading up to, and beyond, the 1972 Stockholm Conference, and environmental, political and business leaders who joined the movement subsequently. At the end of the meeting a group of mid-career leaders brought a message with their vision of the future of the environmental movement. The full list of participants is attached.

The objective of the meeting was to have participants reflect on how the lessons of the past may contribute to the key elements which need to be addressed in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009 and beyond.

1 July 2009, plenary sessions

The meeting was opened by Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of IUCN who welcomed participants and explained that the meeting was organized not only to celebrate the great accomplishments of Maurice F. Strong on the occasion of his birthday, but, as he had wished, to reflect upon the serious challenges of this particular pivotal period in the environmental movement leading to the Copenhagen climate conference in December, and to the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity by which time we have to ensure that the importance of nature, our life support system, is properly valued and understood. The Director General compared this meeting with the seminal meeting Maurice Strong organized in Founex, not far from Gland, in 1971, just before the Stockholm Conference.

Dr Ashok Khosla, the founder of the Delhi-based Development Alternatives, and current President of IUCN gave the day's first keynote address. He outlined the links between poverty and environment and climate change and development, reminding all that the largest cause of the unsustainable pressure on the Earth system is uncontrolled population growth. He stated that solving this issue would lead to smaller families who would require less energy and therefore be in a position to increase their living standards and get out of the poverty cycle.

Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute, USA followed with a speech entitled: "The USA says it is back, but is it really?", sharing his views on progress made by the Obama administration under the leadership of a President who is truly committed to making a difference. J. Lash referred to the political will that has recently been shown by the passing of the Waxman-Markey Bill in the House of Representatives.

He was realistic however that there is still a need to obtain support for the Bill from the Senate and to gain true interest in climate change among the US public.

The morning ended with a panel discussion on "Copenhagen negotiations: what can make it derail, what can make it work, what cannot be left out?" moderated by Simon Hobbs from CNBC Europe. The invited panelists were:

- Nitin Desai - Distinguished Fellow of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and member of Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, India
- Paula DiPerna - President, Chicago Climate Exchange International and Executive Vice President, Chicago Climate Exchange;
- Mohamed El Ashry - Senior Fellow with the UN Foundation and former CEO and Chairman of the Global Environment Facility;
- Johan Schaar – Director, Commission on Climate Change and Development, Sweden and IUCN Councillor
- Maurice F. Strong – Honorary Professor and Honorary Chair, Environmental Foundation, Peking University

The debate in the panel and the active participation by the audience focused on the linkages between poverty and environment, climate change and development, as the fundamental issues that shape the discussions leading to the Copenhagen negotiations. It was said that as we are facing such severe crises in poverty and in the environment, we should be talking about a paradigm shift as a solution

The panelists discussed what was hoped to be achieved in Copenhagen, stressing that developing countries are also undertaking serious climate change mitigation actions with several examples provided from India and China.

However, it was also noted that climate change adaptation and mitigation in developing countries are primarily about development at national level, and that they should be seen as a means to increase resilience and reduce poverty.

The afternoon commenced with a presentation by IUCN Deputy Director-General, Dr. William Jackson, who reflected on the role of biodiversity and ecosystems in climate change. He then argued how nature-based solutions to mitigation and adaptation, namely Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and Ecosystem-based Adaptation, can be rapidly deployable approaches that are cost-effective and provide benefits to local livelihoods, as well as conserving biodiversity. These approaches should be considered alongside a broader set of adaptation and mitigation options in the Copenhagen agreement.

1 July 2009, four working group discussions

Later in the afternoon, participants broke into four groups, to discuss specific aspects of the Climate Change debate. They re-convened in the morning of 2 July.

Group 1 debated: “Linking development, climate change and the environment - business unusual”, under guidance of Andrew Steer from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Poul Engberg Pedersen from the Norwegian Agency for Development (Norad).

Key points in this discussion were:

Development finance and climate finance must be integrated, as climate change adaptation is all about poverty reductions and sustainable development, but the Climate change negotiators have not yet shown strong support for this notion.

ODA promises (0.7% GNI) must be kept, and climate finance should be additional. However, funding arrangements and management must be re-thought, and more focused on people that are hit by multiple crises of poverty, climate and conflict.

New governance structures are needed for aid disbursement, rejecting both ‘entitlement’ and old-fashioned aid approaches. Compact approach and/or budget support offers a way forward, and capacity building is essential.

Money should be used for transformation at several levels: promote a more integrated approach; follow the subsidiarity principle; create public-private-civil society partnerships and promote cross-country sharing of lessons learned.

Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation can be helpful in breaking down silos but the approach must have people at the centre. The focus should be on increasing livelihood resilience, and the role that ecosystems can play in this.

Imagination and innovation should be applied to create and develop new instruments, such as sustainable drawing rights, certificates for non-emission, and sharing agreements for public environmental goods

The second group discussed “Political will, scientific uncertainty”, under guidance of Dr. Bruce Alberts from Science Magazine and José Maria Figueres Olsen from Costa Rica

Key points in this discussion were:

There is great need to communicate the science and information on how we relate to nature more effectively. We missed the opportunity when the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment came out and the reports from the International Panel on Climate Change could also fall under this category. However, communicating scientific knowledge and information should take into account cultural diversity and specificities in regions and countries. We also need to be clear what the message is that we want to convey.

We have to move forward on different fronts in parallel. Targeting the public at large, and youth in particular, should run in parallel with negotiations at the global United Nations level. To effectively reach out to young people, it is critical to use web-based instruments like Facebook, You-tube, Twitter, mobile phones, video games, virtual marches, etc. Engaging celebrities as champions or role-models helps to bring attention to the urgency of the matter, as long as the celebrity is credible and well briefed.

Action should also be geared towards up-coming major meetings like the Conferences of Parties of key conventions, Rio+20 and the World Conservation Congress in 2012, the MDG review in 2015.

Group 3 grappled with the question: “The Financial Crisis meets the Climate Crisis – can valuing nature build a green economy?”. The Co-chairs of this group were Camilla Toulmin from the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) and Pavan Sukhdev, the leader of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study.

Key points in this discussion were:

The road towards a green economy is largely determined by fiscal policies. There is an urgent need for a more even playing field – fiscal policies often result in very inequitable, unsustainable and inefficient distributions of income. As such, there is an urgent need to rethink taxation and incentives. The burden of taxation should be increasingly shifted towards resource use – what societies ‘take’ from the environment. Such measures are particularly important when considering the need to reduce the budget deficits in national accounts that have resulted from the recent financial crisis. It is also important to allocate an equal focus on incentives and to strive towards greater convergence between regulators and entrepreneurs.

It is essential to base greening efforts on meaningful indicators, as societies can only manage what they can measure. The expertise is available, and governments should follow existing and emerging standards to apply more appropriate metrics to their national accounts. We need to integrate elements such as carbon footprints and strive for a fuller life-cycle analysis of supply chains, highlighting ‘embedded carbon’ in products. The establishment of performance-based labeling of goods and services would be another step forward. It is also important to focus greater attention on consumption, and recognize that a green economy offers a strong potential in terms of employment generation.

Greater investments in natural capital are essential, and REDD represents a unique opportunity to stimulate green growth through greater investments in the preservation and restoration of natural ecosystems and the services they provide. Governments and business leaders should embrace this significant investment opportunity, but the simple ‘local is better’ maxim is a flawed argument which needs to be carefully nuanced. An urgent need to help get REDD off the ground is to invest in developing and disseminating appropriate technical expertise, and promoting a stronger link between information technology and environmental technology.

Whilst it is important to work on global policies and national taxes and incentives, there is equally need for the creation of a bottom-up social movement that deals with equity, with job creation, with empowerment. The environmental community needs to align its agenda with the interest of those who depend on natural resources for their survival, and not operate in isolation.

The trade implications of 'green' policies are both very significant and highly complex. There is a question of equity between developed economies and developing countries and between different groups within nations. We are missing a sense of urgency, as for many people environmental issues are a matter of survival, or even life and death.

Governments are not doing enough, and many private companies are ahead of the game in planning and thinking ahead. However, the private sector is waiting for governments to give them the rules of the game. Regulations should not be overused, and governments should be wary of excess protectionism as a result of the financial crisis. The current crisis offers an unprecedented opportunity for governments to fast-track regulatory measures to encourage greater investments in natural capital.

The fourth group looked at ways to secure our energy futures, under guidance of Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl from Austria and Marco Dunand from Mercuria Energy Trading

Key points in this discussion were:

Many aspects of energy need to be addressed but - while focusing on individual actions - an integrated approach across the following issues is needed for optimal results.

Energy efficiency is the number one priority for low-hanging fruit to reduce carbon emissions. A range of complementary drivers from regulation and financing, matching incentives and innovation in materials are required.

Information access on sources and technologies is required. Education and awareness should be focused on key groups including children, architects and engineers.

Renewable energy sources that are currently available should be promoted widely, accompanied by continuous investment in innovation for new energy technologies.

Political will is required to help push through necessary energy reforms and investments. The creation of jobs through renewable technology is synonymous with this approach.

Carbon pricing is an effective way of stimulating investment in the right areas. Pricing on other natural assets such as oceans, water and forests will also encourage investment in the energy services they can provide.

Subsidies should be eliminated for polluting energy technologies, to create a level-playing field with renewable energy technologies.

1 July 2009, celebration of Maurice Strong

In the evening of 1 July, participants were invited to a celebratory dinner honouring Maurice Strong's 80th birthday and hosted by Margot Bennett-Mathieson, a friend and supporter of IUCN. The occasion, which happened to be on Canada Day, was a festive one recognizing the immense contributions made by Maurice Strong to establishing the international environmental movement. Julia Marton-Lefèvre, in her pre-dinner remarks said that Maurice, the 'true father of the modern environmental movement' was behind the seminal events on the environment of the last 40 years. She added that 'when we look at how much has changed since then, it is frightening as far as the state of our planet is concerned, but it is truly encouraging when one looks at the prominence of the issue in the public consciousness, in polit

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