

**CEC 12th Assembly
Trondheim (Norway), 25 June – 2 July 2003
Partners' Programme
Hearings in the Core Programme
Information about the Hearings**

Hearing 12:

- Title:** 'Sustainable Development after Johannesburg – a challenge to the churches'
- Responsible Organization/s:** European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) in cooperation with the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations.
- Date and Time of the Hearing:** Friday 27 June 2003, 1030hrs-1230hrs
- Languages Used:** English
- Main Speakers / Presenters:** Keynote speaker: Ambassador Oddmund Graham (Special Adviser in the Ministry of the Environment in Norway)
Panel members:
- Ms Marijke van Duin, ECEN representative to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg 26 August-4 September 2002, The Netherlands;
- Mr Dan Apostu, ACT (Action by Churches Together), involved in aid work during the floods in Central Europe, summer 2002, Czech Republic;
- Dr Hans-Hermann Böhm, ECEN, leader of working group on ecological management, Germany
- Rev Tom S. Tomren, Church of Norway, representing the Norwegian Christian Network for Environment and Justice (Kristent nettverk for miljø og rettferd), Norway;
- Representative of KerkinActie (Dutch interchurch aid organisation), presenting Climate Fund Project 'The Earth is taking a Breath', The Netherlands.

The hearing is organised in cooperation with the Norwegian Council of Churches. Bishop Finn Wagle of the Church of Norway is invited to moderate the hearing

Description:

Brief historic overview:

In 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This was the first major UN conference in which global environmental issues and the development of the 'Third World' were addressed in an interrelated manner. The concept 'sustainable development' was born. The UNCED was regarded worldwide as hopegiving and brought forward the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), chaired by the Norwegian Brundtland. The Brundtland definition of sustainable development stressed the necessity of respecting the boundaries of earth's nature and natural resources, while keeping in mind the needs of future generations, in any undertaking on economic and social development.

The UNCED brought forward several (Framework) Conventions, such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and others. Since then international negotiations have been taking place on these issues in the framework of the UN. In the case of climate change this has led to the Kyoto Protocol (1997).

The CSD has been steering the process of sustainable development since the UNCED, organising yearly UN conferences. In 2002, ten years after the UNCED, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in Johannesburg, South-Africa (26 August – 4 September). The aim of this biggest UN conference ever was to assess the progress made since 1992, and to set out new sustainable development goals.

The WSSD in Johannesburg

Comparing the UNCED and the WSSD, several differences become apparent. Since 1992 the process of neo-liberal economic globalisation has become the dominant force in the world, leading to the growing power of the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and IMF. The meaning of 'sustainable development' has gradually shifted towards 'ongoing worldwide economic development'. Social development and environmental protection are less emphasised in this concept. A clear illustration of the latter is the apparent difficulty to realise the ratification and entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. The WSSD, with its main goal of worldwide poverty reduction, was held in this context. The Plan of Implementation, the main outcome of the WSSD, although mentioning several goals with regard to poverty reduction, offers only very few concrete targets and timeframes. The role of business and industry is emphasised, and governments are encouraged to undertake 'partnerships' in order to enhance economic growth and realise

poverty reduction, but only in a voluntary manner. Responsibility and accountability of the corporate world, social development and environmental protection, e.g. through the precautionary principle, are less put in the forefront. In a nutshell this characterises the criticism and disappointment of civil society, which includes organisations of women, youth, farmers, indigenous peoples, trade unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and also the churches.

The churches and ECEN

For many years the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) have been monitoring the UN conferences on sustainable development and related issues, such as climate change and financing for development. Also at the WSSD a broad ecumenical team has been present, including representatives of CEC and ECEN. Many studies and programmes on sustainable development have been undertaken, a.o. in the framework of the Conciliar Process on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. In the European context especially the CEC Church and Society Commission and its various working groups have worked on these issues. Since 1998 the environmental work of the European churches has been taken up in a more coordinated manner, with the setting up of ECEN upon recommendation of the 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly (1997, Graz, Austria). ECEN, being a network of European church environmental workers, seeks to promote and channel the attention of the churches in Europe for environmental issues, giving this work a voice. This seems particularly important in the present time, given the decreasing attention for environmental issues in the context of sustainable development.

The hearing

The thematic hearing at the CEC Assembly aims to focus the attention of church members and policy makers at the (disappointing) outcome of the WSSD, and seeks to contribute to a redefinition of the position of the churches with regard to sustainable development by making recommendations for future church policy. The gradual loss of underlying values and principles in the international negotiations will be set out against the calling and witness of the churches in solidarity with the victims of unsustainable development. How can the churches give voice to this witness? How can the churches reach their own constituencies, educate and develop projects and programmes on sustainability? Who are the allies of the churches and who are not?

The emphasis of the hearing will be on the environmental pillar of sustainable development, in particular climate change. Several ecumenical documents and reports will be used, including the WSSD-reports of the WCC-ecumenical team and of ECEN, and the WCC-report 'Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change

(November 2001). Also the outcome of the 4th Assembly of ECEN, taking place in Volos, Greece, 7-11 May 2003 will be presented, since this Assembly will make an in-depth assessment of the WSSD, guided a.o. by UN Special Envoy for the WSSD Jan Pronk.

At the hearing there will be brief direct reports from the CEC and ECEN representatives to the WSSD. The Norwegian Minister of Environment Mr Borge Brende*) will give a keynote speech, and comment these reports as well as other ecumenical documentation, outlining his ideas about the role of the churches. A representative of Action by Churches Together (ACT)*) will share his experiences during the emergency aid following the floods in Central Europe in the summer of 2002. Lastly, since ECEN aims to not only address sustainable development in a theoretical way, but wants to develop and offer concrete alternatives, there will be short presentations of practical church projects related to climate change and sustainability. The hearing ends with a plenary discussion, moderated by the Norwegian Ecumenical Council of Churches.

Programme of the hearing *)

- keynote speech
- short presentations by members of a panel:
 - CEC representative to the WSSD
 - ECEN representative to the WSSD
 - ACT representative
 - Representative of Norwegian church project on sustainable production and consumption
 - Representative of Dutch church project on climate change
 - Representative of ECEN project on environmental church management
- short panel discussion
- plenary discussion

The hearing will be moderated in cooperation with the Norwegian Ecumenical Council of Churches (Mellomkirkelig Rad).

*) to be confirmed or provisional