



Nedlac's role in the World Summit on Sustainable Development

The National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) has identified the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) as crucial to South Africa, both in terms of hosting the summit, and the content of issues that will be up for discussion.

The coordination of constituencies' input into the process is being effected through a joint task team on WSSD comprised of delegates from both the Development as well as the Trade and Industry Chambers. From this technical and operational level through to the highest decision-making and policy level of Nedlac – the Executive Council – there is agreement that Nedlac needs to make a significant contribution to ensuring that the conference is a success. The summit takes place from 26 August to 4 September 2002.

Content discussions

The Nedlac WSSD task team has considered the government Non-Paper on the Global Deal for further implementation of Agenda 21 towards sustainable development. The paper was approved by all the stakeholders at a meeting on 27 February 2002.

Government also tabled the chairman's text to the task team. This text will form the basis of discussions at Prepcom III, (preparatory meetings in the run-up to the summit) and is still under consideration.

Emphasis has been laid on sectoral partnerships. This issue was also emphasised by Zehra Aydin-Sipos, the major groups coordinator of the UN, who was in South Africa recently. Partnerships are seen as important in the implementation of targets. Developing targets with clear timeframes will help to make the Johannesburg summit different from the Rio Earth Summit which took place ten years ago, where specific targets were not agreed upon.

Government has initiated the drafting of a paper on Civil Society and Industry in Sustainable Development. It was agreed that the drafting should include the task team members. The paper seeks to clarify the implementation roles of both civil society and industry in sustainable development. This is not apparent at present, as the sectors are currently more of a monitoring than an implementation structure. The paper is still in inception stage.

Logistical preparations

The Nedlac task team has also considered logistical preparations for the summit. It was addressed by Jowsco (the Johannesburg World Summit Company which has been established especially to run the summit) on the approved budget, procurement policy and the volunteer scheme. Jowsco has agreed to consider the Proudly South African campaign, initiated by Nedlac, in its procurement policy and

confirmed that empowerment was one of the considerations in choosing service providers. Nedlac is currently considering developing scenarios for interaction among the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the three summit venues and those scenarios will be tested against the transport plan. The interactions could add value to the formulation of sectoral partnerships among the three structures. Constituencies raised concern on the volunteer scheme and proposed that it be a national process and not only benefit people from the Gauteng province.

Zehra Aydin-Sipos also addressed the Nedlac delegation on the UN accreditation system and funding for Prepcoms, as well as discussing preparations for the summit with the major groups.

Civil society representation

At the start of the process, there were concerns expressed that civil society was not fully represented in the structures that had been set up to coordinate civil society participation. Through the South African Council of Churches and the Nedlac Community Constituency, the problem regarding the leadership and representation of the civil society process has been successfully resolved.

A Broad Political Forum, representative of major groups and taking into account national dynamics, was established. There are seven major stakeholders in the process, namely, women, youth, civics, communities of faith, labour, NGOs and the disabled. A management committee has been set up constituting one person from each major group with the primary responsibility of interfacing with the Civil Society Secretariat on a daily basis and designing a process to deal with broad content and substance issues regarding the summit.

Meanwhile, ongoing tensions within the

civil society secretariat came to a head recently with the announcement that the CEO Jacqui Brown was to be suspended. The South African NGO Coalition (Sangoco) head Zakes Hlatswayo is currently acting CEO for the secretariat.

Labour, in the form of Cosatu, has begun to play a leading role within the secretariat. Organised labour is of the view that the summit should emerge with a clear programme of action, based on agreement amongst the main stakeholders, for what some are calling a Global Deal.

Nedlac-specific input

Nedlac was also encouraged to do something for the summit as an organisation in addition to constituency organisational programmes. It is currently preparing a research paper that links targets and action plans set out in Nepad, the secretary general's report and the Non-Paper on the Global Deal for the further implementation of Agenda 21 in sustainable development. The paper is intended to assist the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in the development of implementation processes and programmes for sustainable development.

Preparation for PrepCom III

Government hosted a workshop at the beginning of March 2002 with the objective of exchanging information and preparing for PrepCom III, which was held in New York at the end of March.

On 15 March, the Nedlac constituencies met with Johannes Pronk, the UN secretary general's Special Envoy for the WSSD. He is touring the world discussing the preparations for the summit with heads of state and relevant ministries to get a sense of the position that the various countries will be taking on important issues.

