

**The Thirteenth meeting of the Round Table on Sustainable Development was held at  
OECD Headquarters, Château de la Muette, Paris**

**Wednesday 10 March 2004 at 9.30am**

*The following is a short summary note (issued under the Chairman's responsibility) of the discussion on 10 March. Please note, in keeping with Round Table procedures, a detailed note of the meeting will not be circulated.*

The meeting focused on the twin issues of Sanitation and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM); two issues that will arise for discussion at the 2004 session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. The key points arising from the discussion were as follows:-

**Sanitation**

- Establishing priorities in the areas of sanitation provision and water treatment is essential. There was general agreement that policymakers and donors often focus on water supply and treatment and less on sanitation. Redressing this imbalance in order to leverage greater access to basic sanitation could yield dramatic results at relatively low cost. Focus on improving waste treatment, with much higher associated costs, should then be treated as a second step. International donor agencies could play a role in this process by linking water and sanitation projects in their aid grants thereby ensuring that projects to supply water are always be accompanied by adequate sanitation provision.
- There was broad agreement that extending access to basic sanitation involves both increased provision of sanitation facilities and behavioural change on the part of populations involved. It follows that increasing joined-up policy making between key government actors in the health, environment and education domains is essential in maximising the potential benefits of investment in sanitation policy. Fostering this approach would be a major challenge for CSD12. A strong argument was made for involving schools in teaching basic sanitation practices. Aid agencies could help to reinforce this coordinated approach by ensuring that funds for school construction include requirements for the provision of sanitation facilities. Similarly, education programmes in the field of sanitation should be accompanied by schemes to increase local sanitation provision if they are to have lasting value.
- Sanitation projects require explicit coverage in the budgets of developing countries to ensure that inevitable competition between ministries for available funds does not result in the financial neglect of this area.
- An important factor in ensuring the success of sanitation projects is the engagement of local government and key local stakeholders, including private business that are better able

to respond with innovation and flexibility to local specificities. Such engagement could prove potentially more fruitful than the sole involvement of international organisations.

- Monitoring and evaluation programmes of sanitation projects should be formulated on a needs basis. They should be both tailored to local needs and focussed on generating political will by providing incentives to decision-makers to achieve concrete progress on the ground.
- Closing the gap between policy statements and implementation of projects on the ground is a vital step to progress in the area of sanitation. A key factor in achieving this would be to ensure that policies involving investment in infrastructure provision such as latrines include sufficient funds for accompanying measures in the education field in order to ensure maximum use of the new resource.
- Innovative financial mechanisms could have a valuable role in extending sanitation coverage. Decentralising access to financing through the provision of loans and insurance for sanitation projects to local private enterprise could prove an efficient means of accelerating provision.
- Aid agencies can maximise the success of the projects they fund through the close involvement of local experts, who should not be reduced to the role of spectators and denied involvement in the decision-making process. This partnership approach can help to foster more innovative and lower-cost local solutions to sanitation problems.

### **Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM)**

- There was broad agreement that IWRM is an issue of concern to all countries. There is a need to demystify the term itself and to identify its key elements so that governments can take concrete actions. Such elements include:-
  - the need for a process within planning entities which brings water users together at the planning stage;
  - the compilation of data on available water resources;
  - a management structure capable of taking difficult decisions about water allocation;
  - a coordination mechanism in order to ensure policies overcome traditional regional boundaries and are construed along river basin lines.
- There is a need for agreement on a global understanding of the IWRM 2005 target. IWRM plans compiled to meet this target should not be considered as detailed strategy documents. Instead it is important for governments to take stock of their progress to date in implementing the integrated approach, secondly to set out their targets for 2005 and then to establish a road map of how to achieve this transition.

- To be successful, IWRM needs to be viewed at the local level rather than as a global strategy. The case for better involvement of local users in IWRM planning was made, particularly in terms of introducing water charges and making allocation decisions. Aid donations should not be so tied to conditions that they stifle local innovation.
  
- A need for more research in the area of water resource management was identified. Research topics included:-
  - mechanisms to provide incentives for more prudent use of water resources such as pricing mechanisms and their effect on consumption. This information should be disseminated amongst policy-makers in order to foster political will for the difficult process of introducing water charges;
  - innovative water processing techniques such as cleaning water at the point of use and low water consumption sanitary and laundry facilities;
  - Subsidy mechanisms to reward efficient water consumption, particularly in the agriculture sector.