

The United Nations: Development and Civil Society  
Meeting held at the UN on October 25, 2007

- The meeting was held in a conference room in UN plaza. It was an open meeting and in attendance were members of the ISES and UNNGOCSD, as well as NGO leaders, Columbia Graduate Students, and several ambassadors. Roma Stibravy, was the head coordinator of the event and led the discussion along with noted speaker Francis Dubois.
- Roma's introduction included a welcome as well as words of praise for Francis Dubois. He is both a friend and colleague of Roma's, and his experience includes several field assignments in places such as Iraq and Tunisia.
- Dubois welcomed everyone and noted that October 24<sup>th</sup> was UN day as the organization celebrates 62 years of existence and today we continue that celebration.
- DUBOIS: Also being held during this week are several UN Clubs meetings, in which leaders of civil society within the UN come together from 135 field offices to discuss UN's ideas and goals. This is in theme of today's topic, *Development and Civil Society*.
- Development and the link to civil society, this organization started 62 years ago, now 192 countries.
- Scope of UN, technical agencies which preceded UN (ITU etc), many international multilateral agencies created for technical, specific purposes.
- 1945- member states said 'if we want peace we have to have minimal standards of living. This will allow peace to prevail.'
- Programs started in cooperation with the UN-coincided with independence of many states in the early 1960s. This was successful, there were many requests for technical support, experience, etc. UN became very present in assisting those countries.
- UNESCO in Paris for example
- There was a need to coordinate, in the mid-60s member states said we need a central body. The UNDP started in 1966 to coordinate technical projects.
- The UNDP was started on three premises: 1, Tri-party basis 2. every country was a donor. Sister countries contribute funding/time 3. presence (135 countries)
- Late 1970s, some countries asked 'why send foreign experts' hence, the concept of national execution
- From the tri-party arrangement, bilateral (ask govt for advice) implemented by local authorities. UNDP representative in country appointed as coordinator of agency's efforts, leading role in projects with host government.
- 1990s, Millennium Declaration- agreement for Millennium Development goals, of which there are 8 categories. Let's commit ourselves to eradicate major problems such as education, HIV/AIDS, environment etc. The eighth is Global Partnership for Government. To reach the goals requires not only the UN or government, but everybody. Huge Role of the NGOs
- he congratulated NGOs for contribution (major change since 1980s, government bilateral/multilateral collaboration, civil society was secondary.
- Role of civil society/NGOs everywhere played a tremendous role
- Environment- especially solar energy- advocacy is extremely important

- Now, Dubois opened up the floor to everyone for comments/questions.
- We all are members of the UN, there is no we, no us, we are all involved (8<sup>th</sup> rule)
- We are all here together
- ROMA- he works with a true sense of devotion, not just a job, but a calling
- WYATT (Columbia) “what is a major challenge to MDG particularly related to funding’
- Dubois- funding has never been an issue. Every good project finds funding. There are right now billions spent on weapons. It is a political decision
- The planet is extremely rich, wealthy, and the funding and possibilities are there. We have the possibilities to reach these goals. We have to work together with NGOs and government to push in the right direction
- ROMA- suggestions from developing countries- we don’t want more funding because it makes us dependent. We can do it. The problem is cooperation. This is a major question: if you give aid, do people become independent?
- LUCY WEBSTER- Economy for peace and security. Summarize UN program on solar energy and fit to development sustainability goals
- DUBOIS- In UN system, every technical assistance program is decentralized. 135 programs (one in each country)
- ROMA- talk on 11/2 on UN’s actions on climate change
- Not a separate program.
- Aggressive role in the 1970s during the oil crisis, we need a renaissance. She is hopeful because security general is committed to solar energy. Starting with this building
- Great need for emphasis
- Any program is government’s request (how the UN functions)
- Private sector has taken enormous role. The Money is there, governments have to emphasize. The challenges we face in bilateral/multilateral programs. Developed countries- private. Germany (solar) Denmark and US (wind)
- Hopefully, developing countries will too. Example, Bolivia has to use oil for export.
- French Columbia student- Now in the UN there is mostly a top-down approach vs. bottom-up. We are now seeing both approaches in collaboration in many organizations. UN is primarily top-down, what do you see in the future?
- Dubois- I see great future for our organization (UN). He cites advances in technology and communication was example. There is no other like the UN. Major challenges- all has to be settled by 1 organization. there is necessity for this world body. Conflicts over solar energy and oil- we need to move out of oil to renewable sustainable energy to prevent conflicts. The UN is a young 62
- CIVEN (CIPA) Roma, how can solar energy improve lives of people in developing countries. She talks about the nonprofit she started in rural villages in Africa.
- Roma- it is all about networking. Here are people with similar goals and ideas.
- Ambassador Soultrey- Thanks Dubois for his presentation, he really highlighted the soul of the UN. Context for greater involvement of civil society- we lose track of broader objective of the UN
- The Soul of the UN is its charger, thank you Lucy Webster
- It is important to engage what the UN is doing to promote solar energy. Efficient use of solar energy (pertinent in developing world) is of primary agenda

- Solar energy is most plentiful energy in the world. China is emerging as biggest producer of \_\_\_ cells, it will take over the U.S. this is the future of developing countries.
- In rural Africa- effective use of solar energy (for irrigation, cooking, hospitals, schools) we need the UN to be much more vocal, get the message out that there is opportunity for low-cost environment-friendly energy. For developing countries
- We should ask UN to advise government that 'we believe in solar energy' and developed countries must cut back
- \* Let government be energized to pick up solar energy. It is people-friendly, environment-friendly, low cost solar energy.
- ROMA- continues to promote interest. Newest thing is flexible sheeting which is much easier and cheaper to use. It may be initially more expensive, but the returns over 5-10 years will be enormous. Ultimately much cheaper cost in operation.
- We have to convince ourselves and the world around us
- Dubois- while we recommend to UN colleagues, we cant expect only government to do so. We must start at home. We must demonstrate
- Use solar energy at home, if you do, your neighbor will
- The changes in the world start with oneself.
- PAULINE- (peacecaucus.net) One recommendation is to create cloud cover to increase reflectivity of planet (we're half way there)
- Effects of solar. 'renewable' (corn) is not always renewable
- Holistic view is necessary, how everything fits together
- ROMA- using corn for ethanol production is problematic
- Island in Denmark- corn for fossil-fuel free. Husks of corn fuel the whole island. It is being done- we're not emphasixing positive. Very real problems (geo-corn)
- Let representatives know 'please don't use food crops. Severe problems'
- Political- must get to reps. Farmers have strong lobby
- Cloud cover is creating more warming (it was meant to mitigate) it traps the heat.
- Roma- there are meetings coming up with speakrs on solar energy. Expertise is invited on reverse effects of clouds.
- Sept. 6-7 there was a conference from ngos spoke on land use. California skywatch.com on DPI website
- Someone from economies for peace and security: We've progressed very little, what are reasons for OPEC and all lges countries as roadblocks to renewable energy for the world.
- DUBOIS- we have to keep hope. Be positive. Progress has been made in solar/wind energy. In Israel, every house has solar energy. Iceland- excellent example of thermal energy.
- A lot is positive, a lot more can happen. We are at 11<sup>th</sup> hour. For sake of children and global economy, if we want this planet to survive, we have to make serious commitments. Always see the positive side, that village in Africa. Look at NPOs and NGOs doing great work.
- Amb. S.- OPEC countries- an interesting conference focusing on solar energy is being convened by Dubai. Those people looking ahead in coming decades-there is an interest in OPEC. He believes there is an interest and realization that solar energy is going to be embraced by developing countries.

- On MDGs, he believes developing countries as a whole, resource is a constraint, the issue of good governance and aid effectiveness emerge together. Aid is often abused by both donors and recipients. MDG, I believe, may not hit targets, but the energy interest has brought its own success
- Engagement of government, ngos, us is big achievement. MDGs are important but he's satisfied with the percentage. How many things in something meeting. MDGs must be brought up. What has been done?
- 7/8, MDGs address developing countries ...imbalance we need to be aware that responsibility is on their shoulders. How best can we bring out the 8<sup>th</sup> rule?
- Amb. From Benin- Solar energy can be used in Africa (sun 300/365 days) why are we not using it?
- Response- main reason is because of capital cost required for installation. NGOs are trying to finance through cooperation with organization that can finance. Solar is low maintenance, no operating cost. Best energy source for small African villages.
- Ambassador S. We need to involve the private sector. On basis that is sustainable and cost effective.
- Guy from Peru (with translator)- natives don't have access. We are really worried about MDGs for these people. UN countries don't take us serious. Goal is to take lands to develop combustibles. They want to make crops that is not best for natives. Problems of indigenous people of the world. The 'Sun God' - they hope people of the world will understand.
- Involving private sector is crucial in developing countries- we need to microfinance projects. Question is of collaboration for providing package- role of the state to help this collaboration take place.
- Dubois- partnership with private sector is essential. Global Partnership. State and commercial can't do it alone.
- It is not easy in villages to pay and maintain. Micro-financed projects are very important in local NGOs. Must be training. Micro-financing can ask for maintenance from energy companies.
- UN Staff- 1% funding of income goes every month to sponsor micro-finance project to set example and reach \$500,000,000.
- Managed localling- to show we can make a difference in life of underprivileged people. [FrancoisDubois@undp.org](mailto:FrancoisDubois@undp.org)- to sponsor projects.
- Roma- April concert to help raise \$ for this 1%
- This was an enjoyable, informative meeting. Join us in the future. We all can learn from each other.