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The RIO+20 Earth Summit

A new milestone in reconciling society, economy and environment at the global, national and local level?

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The conference and guest speakers were introduced by **Vlastimil Tesař**, Director of the Multilateral Economic Relations Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. Briefly explaining the question mark in the conference's title, he noted the relatively subdued and modest progress in the field of sustainable development since the 1992 conference in Rio de Janeiro. He looked forward to the presentations and said that this particular conference would be open to hearing a range of views of those present in order to contribute to the development process.

Opening Speeches

Ivan Jucl, Director General of the Economic Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic began by discussing how RIO+20 will look back over the 20 years since which have passed since the original conference took place as well as looking forward to the future. How can we measure whether or not we are on the right track? What are the indicators? He went on to talk optimistically about what the Czech Republic could offer this conference, and alluded to the fact that fellow guest-speaker H.E. Mr Ole Moesby would be part of the drafting team for the conference, and could thus perhaps transmit some of the views which would emerge today. Mr Jucl then mentioned innovation, something often not talked about in the context of sustainable development (due to its business connotations) but something that he believes is essential to the process; the smart economy has significant potential in this field, he concluded.

H.E. Mr George Monteiro Prata, Ambassador of Brazil to the Czech Republic described the conference as an opportunity to strengthen international political commitment to sustainable development. In a time of economic crisis it is an opportunity to mobilise resources for this area. He went on to describe how RIO+20 will be different to the summit in 1992 in that whereas that original conference was the culmination of a long process of negotiation, next month's conference will be a point of departure – how we want to approach the future of sustainable development.

There will be two main themes at the conference: the green economy in the context of sustainable development and eradication of poverty; and ideas for an institutional framework for sustainable development, both multilateral and democratic. As regards the specific efforts of Brazil towards sustainable development, the Ambassador noted that more than three-quarters of the country's electricity comes from hydrological sources while 8 per cent of cars are now capable of running on

methane. He also mentioned the widespread policies to promote inclusive growth which have been introduced in Brazil, and highlighted that deforestation has decreased fivefold in the last 10 years. Brazil is at the leading edge of sustainable development and indeed it can act as a breach between the developed and developing world.

H.E. Mr Ole Moesby, Ambassador of Denmark to the Czech Republic continued to look forward to the future – what can we do over the *next 20 years*? The agenda of RIO+20 is optimistic and has many sides to it; media, development, diplomatic etc. The task is not easy however, particularly in this period of economic difficulty, when there is a tendency is to look inward; we must not fall into this trap, he said. The EU, of which Denmark currently holds the presidency, also has an optimistic sustainable and green agenda, for example in terms of carbon emissions. As the representative of this EU presidency he said he would listen very carefully to any ideas from the Czech Republic which could contribute to Denmark's preparation for the conference. Finally, regarding Denmark, the Ambassador stated that its progress towards the cutting edge of sustainable development has been built on the engagement of civil society and business as drivers of change.

Keynote Speech – Where do we stand on the road to Rio+20?

Prof. Bedřich Moldan, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for RIO+20 and Director of the Charles University Environment Centre began by outlining the timeframe of the build-up to the conference; during the 40 days between now and RIO+20 several processes would take place. These include informal negotiations in Rio (May 29 – June 2), a preparatory committee in Rio de Janeiro and a summit of scientists, stakeholders and civil society organized by the Brazilian government. Professor Moldan spoke at length about the preparatory document being drafted for the summit, entitled “The Future We Want”. He mentioned how this document focusses mainly on the economic pillar of sustainable development (due to the long shadow of the current financial crisis), and that he also feels that the document is too long. During the last preparatory discussions in New York Ban Ki-Moon stressed the importance of the summit and urged the major players to do something with this document, as another shortcoming of it is that the really important questions were not tackled, such as how to strengthen global governance and institutions for sustainable development. Thus the next 40 days would be very important in revising this document.

Professor Moldan also mentioned the very important contribution of the EU in this area, especially in creating its priorities and sustainable development goals, which it breaks into 5 categories: energy (sustainable), water (sanitation), land use (biodiversity, conservation), oceans (fisheries, overfishing) and efficient management of natural resources/dealing with waste. He praised the Danish presidency, which he said was thus far very effective, and noted that the EU is one of the key players – if not *the* key player – in the Rio negotiations.

Global Level: What framework for reconciling the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development should RIO+20 deliver?

Moderated by **Vlastimil Tesař**, this first part of the conference examined various aspects of the multilateral efforts to promote sustainable development and looked forward to what measures could or should emerge from the talks in Rio de Janeiro.

H.E. Mr Venkatesan Ashok, Ambassador of India to the Czech Republic opened his contribution by expressing his hope that RIO+20 can reflect upon and improve the decisions that were made 20 years ago. He then explained that his statement would not only reflect the position of India regarding the conference, but also that of the G77 plus China. The first desire that he expressed was that the framework for future development must build on the principles of Rio 1992 and there should be no renegotiation of these principles. Eradicating poverty should remain central. Secondly, there will not be a “one-size-fits-all” solution, he said; the outcome of Rio should remain flexible, based on national circumstances, economic development and particular priorities. He also said that the green economy should supplement and not supplant policies for sustainable development. Furthermore, a green economy will only work if it helps developing countries to eradicate poverty. The move towards a green economy should not lead to protectionism or marginalization of vulnerable sections of society, SMEs etc. The ambassador also warned of a risk of the delegitimization of certain societal models if the green economy is overly prioritized.

He went on to talk about the institutional framework for sustainable development, advising that each of the 3 pillars (social, environmental and economic) must be strengthened. He finished by stressing that India would like to see tangible measures emerge from Rio such as the harmonization of ODA or the creation of a sustainable development fund, but it is not in favour of setting concrete targets for sustainable development; each country needs to follow a programme which is tailored for its specific needs and capabilities.

Alison Tate, Director of External Relations with the International Trade Union Confederation in Brussels opened by stating that RIO+20 is urgent business; not business as usual. She does not think that the current preparatory negotiations in New York realize the gravity of the challenges. There is a crisis of political will and a crisis of multilateralism regarding sustainable development, something which we have just 40 days to turn around. She noted that the role of business, civil society and the planet in general has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, and none of this is sustainable. An awareness of income gaps and inequalities caused by the individual amassing of wealth is growing in both developed and developing countries, and anger is also growing among workers in ever more precarious employment. This will continue to cause social unrest in many countries, she warned.

The demands of the ITUC in view of the RIO+20 conference are: investment in green jobs; support for universal social protection; food and energy security; and a global financial tax. The Confederation also believes that access to sustainable sources of energy should not be left in the hands of the private sector. Other fundamental principles for a just and green society include equality between and in all nations, opportunities for woman and the young and social protection for all. She finished by stating that the ITUC knows that there are no jobs on a dead planet and thus no possibility of equality without sustainable development. Solutions are available to us, she said, but the challenge is to secure the commitment of global leaders.

Čestmír Hrdinka, Executive Director, Greenpeace Czech Republic delivered a speech entitled “A Just and Fair Green Economy”. He began by mentioning some of the positive decisions that were taken in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, before outlining some of the paradoxes that we face twenty years later; climate change is still spiralling out of control, water is getting scarce, deforestation continues to

destroy livelihoods, and toxic pollution is increasing. He said that the RIO+20 conference must not only promote sustainable practices, but above all put a decisive end to unsustainable practices. The concrete developments that Greenpeace would like to see emerge from the summit are: fundamentally improved governance, accountability and liability of environmental matters; the provision of clean and safe energy for all; the protection of the world's remaining forests (zero deforestation by 2020); the feeding of the earth to feed the world (support to small scale food producers and farmers); filling the gaps in oceans' governance and stopping overfishing; and the elimination of hazardous chemical use. Mr Hrdinka finished by calling on governments to agree to measures that he said are essential for global transformation.

Petr J. Kalaš, Initiator of the Czech Association, World Business Council for Sustainable Development mentioned the continuity of the Czech participation in the process; several of the members of the 1992 delegation are still involved today. He also mentioned the Sustainable Development Network which continues to promote sustainable growth throughout the world. Business is rapidly becoming a part of this dialogue, he noted, and other changes have also taken place. At national level for example, Sweden even has a ministry of sustainable development, while Denmark has also made significant efforts. Governments are very actively promoting the development of the green economy. He also mentioned Brazil, and its Ambassador's intervention, as a sign that the contribution of emerging economies is very important. As regards the so-called sustainability index, which is measured using a range of factors, emissions, energy consumption etc, the Czech Republic is in the 33rd position; a position which Mr Kalaš believes suggests that the country still has more work to do.

He highlighted the United Kingdom as a good example of a state where good work has been accomplished; the 'climate law' which was introduced several years ago set a target to reduce emissions by 85 per cent by 2050. The UK also created special ministries for development and green policies. Germany is another nation which has taken concrete measures; it wants to reduce electricity and energy consumption by 50 per cent in 40 years, and is also planning to phase out the usage of nuclear power, a decision which Mr Kalaš stems from rational as well as ideological reasons; these changes can help the development of the economy and create new opportunities for exports for example. In conclusion he said that the Czech Rep should thus follow events in neighbouring countries very closely.

National and local levels: A long way to green economy and social and environmental equity?

Moderated by **Michal Broža**, Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Information Centre Prague, this second part of the conference discussed how measures taken at the local and national level could contribute to the promotion of sustainable development in the Czech Republic and indeed beyond.

Veronika Hunt Šafránková, Advisor to the First Deputy Minister of the Environment on International Environmental Affairs, mentioned the event organized in New York recently by the Royal society of the United Kingdom which called for a plan to combat unsustainable consumption. She said the concept of a green economy should be mentioned in the national project for RIO+20, as it is one of the most important national policy areas along with energy policies, climate policies and resource program policies. The Czech environmental policy is being updated and is almost ready to take the

country through to 2020, she said. An effort should also be made to involve other ministries; consensus is needed in the whole government. Resource efficiency, waste management and recycling are just some of the areas that the Czech environment policy will look to focus upon.

She mentioned some of the concrete steps which have been taken, such as the state fund which contributes to smaller projects, the EU funds which go towards environmental development and the green-savings programme initiated in 2008, which focusses on thermal insulation of accommodation and low-energy housing. 800 million euro has been invested in this programme, which is due to come to a close this year. The programme demonstrates all 3 pillars of the sustainable development programme; environmental, social and economic. This shows how the 3 pillars can and must support each other rather than stand separately. Ms Hunt Šafránková finished by saying that the environment should not be viewed as a burden; it can contribute to growth and competitiveness.

Petr J. Kalaš, who had also spoken during the first part of the conference, expanded on his role as the initiator of the Czech Association at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. As the voice of business in environmental matters, the Council concentrates 200 major international companies. It also has several principles, such as its vision 2050 (promotes the sustainable development of business leading towards 2050) and promoting civil participation in the environmental debate. As regards Czech efforts in this area, he said that the principle of sustainability is anchored in people's minds here, unlike in many other Western European countries. This, along with the proposal to combine different departments to create a sectorial approach, is a positive, he concluded.

Tomáš Tožička of Czechia Against Poverty next made a presentation entitled "Between New Dignified World and Old Hell". He began by outlining the principle facets of a green economy; that it should be environmentally sustainable, socially just and locally rooted. However, some of the problems with which the development of a green and sustainable economy is faced are corruption in state procurements, a market which is rarely driven by social and environmental concerns, and the fact that big companies often profit at the expense of smaller local groups. As regards the work of Czechia Against Poverty, Mr Tožička said that the organisation principally provides explanatory and training services, as well as promoting broader involvement of dwellers in order to help meet what he called the new needs of the traditional economy. These needs include economical democracy, the management of local cycles, the use of ecological and social directives of the EU in public procurements and new transparent rules for co-operative actions.

The final presentation was by **Jaroslav Klusák**, Energy Manager in the City of Litoměřice and was entitled "Sustainable Development on the Municipal Level". Mr Klusák outlined the work that has been done in the city of Litoměřice regarding green and sustainable energy; various measures have been taken such as the support and promotion of Fair Trade products in the city, the introduction of energy consumption monitoring and energy management training for municipal administration and corporations. Municipal subsidies are also widely available for the development of thermal solar heating, he concluded, which have proven to be an unmitigated success.