

Summary of Discussions in Session 6: Water and Environmental Issues – The imperative to co-ordinate with land

Rapporteur: Hans Sevattal

The discussion highlighted the following:

1. Planning responsibilities for the coastal waters i.e. from below low water marks to the territorial boundary.
2. Ecological impacts from river development projects, irrigation practises, etc. The special devastating consequences seen in Eastern Europe and Central Asia from irrigation practises were highlighted by the speakers in their response.
3. The nature of rights in coastal waters: “The present concepts may not be suitable. There is a need to develop new concepts. These concepts may be some sort of statutory guarantee for users rights; security for investments are particularly important as investment costs in such areas tend to be very high.
4. There is a general and urgent need for research to develop proper concepts, management principles and practises for coastal areas. In the fishing industry, ownership of quotas is seen (by the speakers) as the way to go in the future. The scientific base for this, however, is very weak.
5. Responsibilities versus rights: There has probably been too much talk about rights and too little about responsibilities. Serious doubts were raised from the audience as to the wisdom of introducing titles, quotas, etc, in respect of sustainable development. The speakers responded by pointing to the fact that attracting property rights to resources usually and hopefully, lead to more responsible management practises. There are a lot of challenges, but still the speakers saw the “property right paradigm” as the most probable path to be followed. Negotiations will be an important aspect.