RESILIENCE 2008
INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE AND POLICY CONFERENCE, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

POLICY DIALOGUE APRIL 17th

Executive summary

The concluding day of the Resilience2008 conference was devoted to discussing and understanding the policy implications of the resilience perspective and the new scientific insights that had emerged during the course of the conference. The aim of the day was twofold:

- *To communicate the conclusions from the scientific community to policy makers and to stimulate policy makers to discuss issues related to resilience*
- *To practice communicating complex ecological challenges to policy makers*

These aims were addressed using a number of different techniques during the course of the day. Researchers participated in thematic workshops or "simulated speed dating" sessions in order to identify key messages for policy makers. Politicians and other representatives from government, NGOs and business were exposed to the conclusions from the conference and were challenged to take necessary actions. A concluding panel discussion provided important insight in to how science and policy can work together in order to meet the challenges of eroding resilience in social-ecological systems around the world.

Outline of the day

The day consisted of several different activities during the morning session and a joint afternoon session. Representatives from the International Commission on Climate Change and Development, Nordic governments, the EU parliament, the Swedish Governments' Commission for Sustainable Development, environmental NGOs and business were introduced to the concept of resilience and the conclusions from the scientific part of the conference. This session resulted in a lively discussion about the challenges and their potential solutions (summarized below). At the same time, a number of parallel thematic sessions were held for researchers participating in the conference. The ambition was that these morning workshops were to produce a short "faked" press release to present during the afternoon session, including key policy recommendations. A "Simulated speed-dating" session also took place during the morning, where scientists communicated with colleagues, in an attempt to simulate an unexpected opportunity to speak directly to e.g. a minister of the environment. During the afternoon, a panel discussion was held in the main auditorium, where policy makers were confronted with the ideas that stemmed from the morning session and where scientists and policy makers engaged in a dialogue on how both science, policy and business can and need to change in order to face the contemporary and future global challenges.

Summary conclusions from the discussion with policy makers

There is a growing awareness among scientists that societal development cannot continue to be disconnected from ecosystems. There is thus a need for new

innovative policies that can take society's dependency on viable ecosystems into account. One such innovation would be an international panel on ecosystem services, which could guide policy analogous to the IPCC. There is also a need for a strong agreement in Copenhagen 2009. The Nordic countries can play a key role in both of these processes.

Science and policy need to become better at communicating with each other, but there is also a need for a dialogue between private and public actors. Society is currently not organized to deal with the complex issues at hand, but is stuck in the logic of industrial society. This goes for all levels of society, from EU institutions, to education and research. The economic models we are using fail to capture our dependency on functional ecosystems.

In order to move forward, we need to communicate positive examples in ways that break the existing barriers between e.g. research disciplines and policy areas. We need new leaderships and countries that are willing to take the lead and resources need to be allocated to developing countries. Environmental policy can learn from other policy areas, such as international health, about the importance of putting the issues in to the centre of national policies. The environment should be an issue not only for the minister of environment, but for the prime minister and all other ministers. One way to make this happen could be to identify critical limits to the capacity of the planet, guiding all policy areas. There is a large need for a more general understanding of the importance of ecosystems in education.

There has been a recent political agreement that the Nordic countries should take the lead on climate change issues. Hopefully, such agreements can facilitate more extended regional co-operation. Such collaboration could also highlight the importance of ecosystem services for human wellbeing, based on recent advancements in science. There is potential for international political tipping points regarding these issues.

The morning workshops

The thematic workshop dealt with: "People's management of ecosystems and resources: lessons for governance of resilience", "Achieving sustainability in urban systems", "Resilience in coastal and marine systems - the way forward" and "Achieving resilience in rural areas for securing food, freshwater, livelihoods and biodiversity". There was also a separate session on "Resilience Alliance Partners Program for Policy and Management". Most workshops included keynote presentations to guide the discussion with positive examples on how resilience issues can be integrated in ecosystems governance. The wide variety of ideas that came up during the course of these sessions are integrated in the summary from the panel discussion (below). It was generally felt that it was difficult to identify policy recommendations for the very wide topics covered – most scientists were not used to giving advice to policy-makers. In addition, it was not always easy to agree on priorities. Despite this, all workshops generated lively discussions and proved to be interesting platforms for an attempt to summarize the substantial scientific knowledge held in the respective rooms.

Many felt that this was an important first step in translating resilience science in to policy recommendations for their respective fields.

The simulated speed dating session

"What do you tell your prime minister if you meet him/her in an elevator?" That was the question posed at the simulated speed dating session. The goal was to get researchers to practice and formulate their most important results and insights in ways that makes sense for a policymaker. Participants first choose the topic they wanted to present. Under the guidance of skilled process leaders, they then took turns in being researcher presenting their idea, or acting as a policymaker listening and replying. After feedback, everyone got the chance to improve their presentation and try again with a "new" policymaker. After the rounds of practice, the group choose 2 ideas that later were presented to the auditorium in the afternoon session. Many were skeptic at first to the speed dating session, but by the end, all agreed that it was a good exercise that they thought would help them. Already, participants from the policy day have repeated the concept.

Summary from the panel discussion

The afternoon was spent in plenary where a panel of representatives from the EU parliament (Anders Wijkman), the Swedish parliament (Maria Wetterstrand), the Swedish Ministry for the Environment (Siv Näslund), business (Bo Ekman) and science (Johan Rockström) where asked to reflect on the resilience perspective and what it means for sustainable development in general and for their personal role in achieving sustainable development. The discussion was moderated by Lisen Schultz and Henrik Österblom from Stockholm Resilience Centre.

After initial reflections, rapporteurs from the morning's workshops were invited to present their key insights and recommendations to the panel. Several participants pointed to the gap of leadership on the global level, as well as the need to encourage and empower grassroots and local communities. There was a general call for systems thinking and systems doing, because cities depend on rural areas, people depend on ecosystems, the economy depends on ecosystem services, and changes at local, regional and global scales interact. There was also a call for facilitating information exchange across scales and between sectors, and strengthening the dialogue between policy-makers, scientists and practitioners. Such a dialogue would enable institutions and organizations to build on traditional and experiential knowledge as well as new technologies, innovations and scientific understanding. It would also enable society to respond faster to ecological change, so as to avoid undermining the ecosystems' capacity to generate ecological services.

The discussion climate was respectful and thoughtful, and offered several occasions of warm laughter in spite of the serious topic. Panel members were supportive of most recommendations and several panel members underscored that resilience thinking had strengthened their conviction that global change poses urgent challenges, but also that these challenges are possible to overcome. Political representatives encouraged all scientists and other citizens to e-mail,

make phone calls and write letters to them and their colleagues in parliament, with suggestions and reactions. But the panel also emphasized the need for clear communication from the scientific community, including pedagogic examples of negative tipping points as well as positive transformations.

A debated question was whether current global institutions, such as UNEP, can be reformed to face the challenges of global environmental change, or if they need to be replaced. Some participants argued that we need to work with what we have, taken the urgency of the situation, whereas others claimed that it would be more difficult to reform them than to replace them.

Towards the end, the panel was asked to present their vision for a future of sustainable development, and a first step towards achieving this vision. This question resulted in visions of 350 ppm of CO2 in the atmosphere, zero impact of consumption on the environment, and a world in which all nations work together and where policy and science build on each other. Some of the first steps included making the UNEP into a powerful actor for global governance, mobilizing Nordic countries to take the lead in sustainable development, and the launch of the 350-campaign. Finally, the resilience science community was invited to the European parliament and to the Swedish parliament to hold workshops on resilience.