

**BROWN BAG LUNCH**  
**“Putting Values To Work: Breathing Life Into Sustainable Development**  
**7 May 2009, UN Foundation, 801 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor**

Thanks to all participants who contributed to a lively, substantive conversation last Thursday. Special gratitude goes out to our speakers Thom Forster, Co-Director of the International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture (IPSA) and food policy expert at the New School University, and Karen Karp, President of Karp Resources and sustainable agriculture expert, for sparking the discussions. International Vision Collective President Alisa Clarke opened the event, noting that the CSD was addressing a complex array of concerns – rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa – and stressing that the lunch was meant to bring people together for dialogue that is open, independent, visionary and practical.

Mr. Forster related trends in the ongoing Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) negotiations, where he serves "Major Groups" to develop consensus themes to advance to governmental decision and is currently working on "urban rural linkages for food security and vibrant markets". He noted that while historically divisive issues were still on the table, there was increasing openness to new ideas given the depth of the crises involved, so that new language was being accepted into texts. Innovation was happening rapidly around food access, access to markets and urban-rural partnerships for food security, which had implications for WTO procurement rules and private sector linkages.

Ms. Karp traced her connection to work on sustainable agriculture, pointing to increases in income disparities since 1990 and her concern with the role of business in addressing social issues through e.g. job training for former homeless persons, as well as the need to create structures to accommodate socially responsible business. She sought to mainstream sustainable agriculture into big food businesses and does this through her company's work with the Sustainable Food Lab, an international membership organization that works with companies such as Unilever, Sysco, and Starbucks to accelerate the shift of sustainable food from niche to mainstream.

IVC Vice-President Dr. Joni Carley led the group through the follow-up discussion. With respect to a reality check on sustainable development, concern was raised about the need to contextualize the response and move away from the usual unproductive responses observed in idealism, complacency and negativity, while others stressed the importance of collective responsibility in addressing the issue. More MBAs were integrating sustainability into the curriculum, and new ideas are slowly migrating into the old paradigm. It was underlined that even when corporate actors are supportive of sustainability they may not be given the resources to effect change because shareholders are not convinced of the value.

In terms of elements of a vision for sustainability, participants included improved use of the media, and the need to bridge the gap between small/organic and large/commodity-based approaches to sustainability through building trust and more agile, flexible infrastructure that would accommodate the full spectrum of approaches. It was stressed that new tools and greater change were possible and more groups e.g. fisher folk , were organizing to lobby governments, with the result for example that the US delegation used the term 'organic' the day before for the first time ever in negotiations.

Regarding concrete action that participants could take, among those shared were identifying and pre-empting areas of conflict, "one person at a time" approaches to change e.g. convincing others to use natural household cleansers, and involvement in macro-level activity promoting collective decision-making such as international negotiations.