I have a few other hats, in addition to my role as the blogger for Green Depot. One of those hats I wear is the Director of Outreach and Advocacy for the Human Impacts Institute, a fledgling NGO I started with a former colleague of mine.

For the next two weeks, on behalf of the Human Impacts Institute, I’m attending the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development’s 19th conference (CSD-19), as a delegate to the Youth and Children Major Group.

This seems like a lot of diplomatic jargon, I’m sure! And to a large extent, it is. So, I’ll break it down just a little bit:

At most UN conferences, and at the CSD-19 in particular, every government has a delegation. (Sometimes, groups of governments are represented by a single nation – like the G77, a group of 77 developing nations represented at the CSD-19 by Indonesia).

But not only governments have delegations. There are nine “major groups” that also have a seat on the negotiation floor: Youth and Children, Indigenous Peoples, Women, Farmers, Business and Industry, Local Authorities, NGOs, Scientific and Technological Community, and Workers and Trade Unions. I’m a part of the Youth and Children Major Group.

In addition, the conference has several focal areas, and for 2011 they are: Transportation, Mining, Chemicals, Waste Management, and Sustainable Consumption and Production. Each delegation, from national governments and from the major groups, sends representatives to each negotiation session for each topic listed above (all of which are held in different rooms).

When these groups get together in the room, they hash out the text for policy documents, which are originally submitted by the chair of that focal group. This is where politics come into play, and things can get heated, especially as lingering tensions between the developed and developing nations comes to the fore. Major groups are given limited opportunities to offer revisions to the document (known as interventions) and are largely there to observe (known as tracking). However, in the last two days of negotiation, all major groups are permitted to offer their own amendments and revisions.

And that, in a nutshell, is how the process works at the CSD-19!

By Tristan Jones

Link to article: http://blog.greendepot.com/sustainability/getting-work-done-at-the-united-nations/