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CSD HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 18 APRIL 1996

On the first day of the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-4), delegates heard introductory statements at the opening Plenary and a progress report on the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. They also considered several cross-sectoral issues (technology, education, capacity building, trade, poverty, population, decision-making, institutions, major groups and national reporting) and participated in a panel discussion on education.

OPENING PLENARY

Outgoing Chair HENRIQUE CAVALCANTI (Brazil) commented on CSD activities over the past year and on the contribution of the CSD to the construction of peace and sustainability. He suggested that: the CSD Chair be elected at the end of the annual session; the CSD Bureau's mandate be extended to two years; and the Chair serve as Vice-Chair during the year prior to serving as Chair.

Delegates then elected RUMEN GECHEV (Bulgaria) as CSD-4 Chair. He noted the important role of this session in finalizing the Multi-Year Programme of Work and serving as a bridge to the preparations for the 1997 Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). He noted the high expectations attached to CSD-4 as demonstrated by: continuing interest at a high political level in the work of the CSD; active involvement of civil society, major groups and NGOs; and strong commitment on behalf of UN institutions. He said that delegates will share their views on implementation of Agenda 21 during the high-level segment, but noted a consensus that the CSD and UNGA should not attempt to rewrite Agenda 21.

NITIN DESAI, Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), stressed that this session must mark the beginning of preparations for the special session of UNGA, and must raise expectations about what will come out of this review. The CSD should address its roles and responsibilities in the context of a coordinated follow-up process. The CSD can fill the gaps in the UN system where no single institution has responsibility, such as with fresh water and oceans, and can also inject an economic sectoral perspective into issues often viewed only as management or environmental problems.

Delegates elected Paul de Jongh (Netherlands), Deputy Director

General, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, as a Vice-Chair. The additional bureau members will be elected following completion of regional group consultations. Delegates also adopted the provisional agenda contained in document E/CN.17/1996/1.

Three working groups will consider draft recommendations and conclusions for CSD-4. The first will consider atmosphere, oceans and seas, and small island developing States (SIDS). The second, finance, consumption and production patterns, transfer of technology, trade, poverty and demographics. The third, decision making (Agenda 21 chapters 8, 38, 39 and 40) and national reporting.

JOKE WALLER-HUNTER, Director of the Division for Sustainable Development (DPCSD), presented a brief progress report on the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF). NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION, on behalf of several US NGOs, encouraged recommendations for action at IPF-3 and cautioned against focusing only on the timber trade.

CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES

The task managers then introduced the Secretary-General's Reports and documentation relevant to CSD-4 consideration of several cross-sectoral issues.

UNCTAD introduced the Secretary-General's report on trade, environment and sustainable development (E/CN.17/1996/8 and Add.1). UNFPA introduced the report on demographic dynamics (E/CN.17/1996/10 and Add.1). UNESCO introduced the report on education (E/CN.17/1996/14 and Add.1). UNDP introduced the report on capacity building (E/CN.17/1996/15 and Add.1). JOKE WALLER-HUNTER introduced DPCSD-prepared reports on the following issue areas: combating poverty (E/CN.17/1996/9); integrating environment and development in decision making (E/CN.17/1996/11 and Add.1); national reporting (E/CN.17/1996/19); roles of major groups (E/CN.17/1996/12 and background paper #2); transfer of environmentally sound technology (E/CN.13/1996/13, Add.1 and background paper #5); international legal mechanisms (E/CN.17/1996/17, Add. 1 and background paper #3); information for decision-making (E/CN.17/1996/18 and Add.1); and institutional arrangements (E/CN.17/1996/16).

SWITZERLAND called delegates' attention to a Swiss publication, "Passport to the Future," regarding education. The EU suggested that the CSD could recommend that States take into

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account: establishing programmes to reinforce all groups' awareness of sustainable development; promoting increased participation by major groups; developing the role of national CSDs; encouraging the synergy between different components of major groups; and assisting cooperation between major groups. The NETHERLANDS highlighted a recent expert meeting on National Technological Needs Assessments (NTNAs), which will contribute to the ongoing discussions on technology transfer and capacity building. The meeting identified the value-added of NTNAs, provided that they are properly followed-up by capacity-building actions and technology transfer projects.

SWEDEN underlined its commitment to education and described recent national initiatives, such as new national curricula that directly refer to the global approach. He also looked forward to renewed efforts by UNESCO and others to produce proposals that will allow the special session to develop further ideas for sustainable development. CANADA said the CSD should further explore issues germane to poverty and environmental degradation, such as the health of the urban poor, environmental protection and resource management, afforestation and reforestation, and the development of sanitary sewage disposal. He urged the CSD to recommend confirmation of the roster status of the CSD NGOs and explicitly invite major groups to participate in the special session preparations. He said the positive impact of trade liberalization initiatives on sustainable development will be maximized if accompanied by appropriate environmental policies.

The US called for attention to women and children in studies and measurements of poverty. He encouraged NGO and major group involvement, but stated that funding should not impose additional demands on the UN budget. CHINA stated that, in the field of international trade, countries should consult on an equal footing and should not create barriers to trade with developing countries. VENEZUELA noted national efforts in support of Agenda 21, including efforts to increase private enterprise participation and recycling. The REPUBLIC of KOREA suggested that programmes to combat poverty be geographically and ecologically specific. He noted a recently announced national "environmental vision," which will include the pursuit of preventive environmental policies.

DENMARK stated that one of the most difficult challenges in national implementation has been the need to change consumption and production patterns. CUBA noted the importance of international trade and transfer of science and technology, and stated that protectionist policies create impediments for exports from developing countries.

The EU noted priorities for efforts to combat poverty, including basic health services, capacity building and support to women. He stated that the World Summit for Social Development follow-up should be coordinated by the Commission on Social Development, and that ECOSOC should consider the division of work between the two commissions.

EDUCATION PANEL

Gustavo Lopez Ospina, Director of UNESCO, introduced a panel discussion on the role of education in sustainable development. The panel was chaired by Aleksandra Kornhauser (Slovenia), International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, and Director of the International Center for Chemical Studies, Ljubljana.

Madeleine Kunin, Deputy Secretary of Education, United States, said the issues of education and the environment were fundamental to survival. She welcomed the Delors report from the

International Commission on Education for the 21st Century and underlined the need to invest in education in all countries. She reviewed US initiatives including the GLOBE project, which involves students, teachers, and scientists in 33 countries with 3000 children collecting data related to sustainable development, and communicating with each other across the world. Lubomir Nondek, Director of Environmental Strategies, Ministry of Environment, Czech Republic, outlined recommendations from an international workshop on public awareness on sustainable development, including: development of national guidelines for sustainable development education; government cooperation with major groups on compiling information; and a role for UN agencies and NGOs in disseminating ideas.

Margarita Botero, Former Director General for the Environment, Colombia, and member of the Brundtland Commission, said the most critical issues facing humanity today were born of a crisis in values and posed questions about the kind of society we have constructed. She noted that education would be a key response and that not all current facts and concepts will remain valid in the new century. A new recognition of the importance of values in education will be required. She cited the Commission's concern with the persistent inequalities in access to education and called for a democratization of knowledge. Aleksandra Kornhauser introduced the findings of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century. The Commission adopted a concept of development based on quality requiring a combination of knowledge and values in the pursuit of wisdom. The 21st century will be one of quality: wealth and productivity will have to be redefined. This will be made possible if life-long education is understood as a major force for socio-economic development, a human need and human right.

A youth representative highlighted the role of young people in disseminating the knowledge passed on to them by their teachers. An example of peer education in India was outlined. The UN Environment and Development-UK Committee supported a proposal for a major program of work by governments, major groups, educators and the UN system, with the title "Education 21," linked to Agenda 21.

IN THE CORRIDORS

A progress report on the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) was presented during day one of CSD-4. Privately, delegates and observers noted that much was left unsaid about the IPF process, with many expressing disappointment at progress made during the recent IPF-2 meeting in Geneva. While some preferred that IPF-3 address its terms of reference in the broadest manner to include such issues as forest management and underlying causes of deforestation, others noted that doing so would ensure that the Panel's work would not be completed by its fourth session. Additionally, some delegates admitted frustration with a perceived unwillingness to subject temperate and boreal forests to the same level of scrutiny as tropical forests. While CSD-4 will not be considering forests, these delegates felt that the IPF is the beginning of a long process of negotiation in which CSD-5, during its review of the Forest Principles under Agenda 21, will play a key role in assigning responsibility for further discussion of this issue.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will continue its discussion of Agenda Items 3 and 5 (cross-sectoral issues) during morning and afternoon sessions in Conference Room 1.