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CSD INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 1997

Delegates to the CSD's Intersessional Working Group continued their discussion of sectoral issues and major groups during the morning and began considering cross-sectoral issues during the afternoon. An informal group also met in the morning to discuss national reporting.

SECTORAL ISSUES AND MAJOR GROUPS

INDONESIA noted that commitment on cross-sectoral issues is not equal to that on sectoral issues. He called for further agreement on climate change control and forests. He also noted the need to strengthen capacity-building to fulfill CBD commitments and the important contribution of major groups. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION called for further development and use of the Rio principles and for international agreements on transboundary pollutants and chemicals. The CSD should continue to coordinate integrated assessment and implementation of UNCED obligations. He called for a more limited and catalytic role for UNEP. SOUTH AFRICA said equitable access to freshwater resources and services in Africa and other arid regions should feature prominently in the CSD report. He called for regional approaches to capacity-building and risk management to address problems posed by the modification of living organisms and invasive species.

CANADA strongly supported the view that the Special Session should launch negotiations on an international forest convention and called attention to freshwater as a key emerging issue. CHINA noted the importance of sustainable agriculture and the outcome of the World Food Summit. She called attention to the importance of clean energy technology and supported a continued active role for major groups. BRAZIL said the framework should include the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and commitments regarding financial resources and technology transfer. He did not support uniform numerical targets. He said it is premature to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee on forests.

VENEZUELA emphasized intersectoral connections and the importance of regional efforts. She called for technology transfer, decentralization and observance of the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities. IRAN called on UNGASS to: focus

on cross-sectoral issues; avoid overlap and duplication of efforts between the CSD and the COPs of various international environmental conventions; emphasize modalities for provision of new and additional financial resources and realization of ODA targets; and address problems of internal displacement and refugees. UNED-UK urged developed countries to increase contributions to the GEF and to meet the target of 0.7% of GNP for ODA. He noted that while private investment has grown, it goes to only a few developing countries. He called for: improvement in the quality of aid; regulation of private investment; an increase in public funds; progress on new ways to generate funds, such as taxation of aviation fuel; elimination of environmentally damaging subsidies; transparency and accountability in the use of funds; and establishment of an intergovernmental panel on finance.

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) noted that over 2000 local authorities worldwide are implementing Local Agenda 21s (LA21). He called for more work on fiscal frameworks and core indicators of sustainable development, and announced plans to monitor LA21 activity under the aegis of "Cities 21." An NGO representative called on the CSD to recognize older people as a major group. People over 60 will number 600 million by 2001. The UNGA has designated 1999 as the International Year of the Older Person. INDIA called for agreement on appropriate principles for sharing resources across countries and generations and the basis for technology transfer and finance. He endorsed the findings of the Fourth Expert Panel on Financial Issues, including the need to collect data on the impact of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows.

BARBADOS expressed hope that the review process would renew the impetus for implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). GHANA noted the importance of access to and transfer of technology and emphasized clearinghouse mechanisms. He supported CSD attention to freshwater resources and called for access to emerging solar technologies. MEXICO supported the call for redoubled efforts to implement Agenda 21, especially at the national level. He said market forces will not solve all problems.

UNEP noted its active involvement in the areas of freshwater, oceans, river basins and tourism and in developing legally-binding instruments on prior informed consent and on persistent organic pollutants. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS noted that indigenous people also live in substandard conditions in developed

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countries. He called for: improved information dissemination to indigenous people; examination of their trade-related intellectual property and relevant WTO rules; and a permanent forum for indigenous people at the UN.

CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES

Introducing deliberation on cross-sectoral issues, Co-Chair Amorim noted the grim fact that, while much has been said about the increased flow of private financial resources to developing countries, private capital has so far avoided projects with environmental and social benefits. Fiscal and other incentives might be required in countries of origin. He also noted the 30-year low in ODA levels and an NGO proposal for a global forum on finance.

The EU called for increased aid to developing countries and sectors not adequately addressed by private investment and reaffirmed commitment to the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP. He also highlighted GEF replenishment and innovative mechanisms, increased FDI and debt relief and advocated market access for environmentally friendly products from developing countries. COLOMBIA underlined the need to implement all UN programmes, notably those on poverty eradication. He recalled that the Social Summit stressed the human perspective of sustainable development and he called for prioritization of health and food security. Wealth, not poverty, as evidenced in unreasonable patterns of consumption and production, is the ultimate cause of environmental degradation.

UNCTAD notified delegates that its Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities' February 1997 meeting decided to convene two expert meetings, one to examine positive measures in the context of promoting sustainable development and the other the operation of environmental management standards. JAPAN said recipient countries' efforts to protect the environment deserve ODA support. He also said self-help efforts are the foundation for effective partnerships and called for more attention to the role of information and telecommunications. BOLIVIA noted the outcome of the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development and recommended using the priority areas adopted there: health, agriculture, education, forests, cities, water resources, coastal areas, energy and minerals.

NORWAY said UNGASS must set priorities and focus the CSD's future work on cross-sectoral issues, particularly poverty and unsustainable consumption and production. Economic growth must be supplemented by the redistribution of wealth and fair access to resources. He highlighted the need for new and innovative sources of funding beyond 0.7% of GNP for ODA. He emphasized investment in education for young girls as crucial for a sustainable future. The G-77/CHINA called for: study of FDI and evolution of a globally agreed regime; reduction of unsustainable production and consumption in the North; negotiations for a convention to regulate the environmental impact of multinational corporations; and transfer of environmentally sound technology on non-commercial terms. SWITZERLAND: underscored the crucial role of women in conserving natural resources; called on developing country governments to make available green credit lines and to provide services to create joint ventures; emphasized certification, auditing and ecological accounting to encourage ecologically sustainable production; and suggested that the CSD examine the relationship between WTO rules and trade-related measures of multilateral environmental agreements.

The US said the CSD should focus on cross-sectoral issues not addressed by other intergovernmental processes and proposed three key areas. On financial issues, he highlighted national and local level mobilization. On technology cooperation, he called for involvement of the private sector. On sustainable production and consumption, he proposed consumer education. UNEP will distribute at CSD-5 an update of its survey of information sources on environmentally sustainable technologies. URUGUAY supported education and consciousness raising, and called for information on technologies and their financing.

AUSTRALIA said the quality and effectiveness of financial assistance must be improved and commitments to contribute to the GEF and the Montreal Protocol fund must be met. He called on the CSD to facilitate cooperation between organizations examining the relationship between trade and environment. He supported a core set of indicators and development of a database of innovative instruments to make consumption and production more sustainable.

MEXICO said that the association between demographic growth and consumption levels is not clear given current trends and called for more emphasis on qualitative factors of consumption. He rejected the use of environmental protection arguments as a pretext for protectionist trade measures. He called for efforts to develop and strengthen clean technology centers in developing countries and for concessional and preferential credit for clean technology.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

CSD Vice-Chair Paul de Jongh (Netherlands) was reported to have received a positive response from delegations during informal consultations on inter-agency proposals to help streamline national reporting procedures. Many at the UN and in government circles are concerned about the workload imposed by reporting requirements due to the proliferation of international processes. UN agencies have produced a matrix that will allow them to share more of the reported information and avoid duplication. There are also proposals to produce a four-year calendar, a manual on sustainable development reporting, and measures to enhance reporting capacity in developing countries, including assistance to shift to greater use of new technologies such as the Internet.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Co-Chair Amorim's attempts to nudge delegations beyond declaratory commitments on financing Agenda 21 have been warmly received by some NGOs. Observers note that globalization, trade liberalization and the "grim" and unsustainable direction of the much touted increase in FDI in a limited number of developing countries underline the need for serious efforts to innovate financial measures. They are concerned that, to date, funding has been a failed issue at the CSD. Co-Chair Amorim has expressed interest in the NGO proposal for a global forum on finance, while others place their hopes in a positive outcome from the GEF replenishment negotiations this year and more concrete commitments on the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Intersessional Working Group will meet in Conference Room 4 in the morning and afternoon to continue consideration of cross-sectoral issues.