



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 8 No. 9

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

Friday, 10 September 1993

PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 1993

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

The PrepCom convened in informal session Thursday morning to continue discussing the "Basic Elements for an Action Programme for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States." On Wednesday night, delegates completed a second reading of the sectoral chapters (1-9). The Chair, Amb. Penelope Wensley, therefore proposed that the Committee begin discussion on Chapters 10-14 and then move on to Chapter 15 and the preamble.

X. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY: This chapter, dealing mainly with the integration of environmental considerations into national decision making processes and development planning, was widely acceptable in its draft form. However, there was discussion on the need to encourage public participation in such planning in the Basis for Action. Delegates repeated a number of proposals that they had made last week and that had not been incorporated into the revised version of the document. These included capacity building for SIDS to ratify and implement treaties.

XI. REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION: This chapter, which addresses the need for improved coordination among regional bodies, programmes and strategies as well as the need to build the capacity of SIDS with regard to environmental law, met with little debate. The only substantive change to the Basis for Action section was to specify that "both UN and non-UN regional organizations can play a key role to facilitate efficient and effective assistance" to SIDS. Within the section on regional action, a new item was proposed: "Encourage, where appropriate, the harmonization of environmental legislation and policies between small island developing States." This proposal was bracketed as it was pointed out that SIDS are trying to move away from harmonization.

XII. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION: The Basis for Action established the importance of transportation and communication as lifelines for SIDS between themselves and with the rest of the world. Most comments were reiterations of points made during the first reading last week and that had failed to be incorporated in the revised version. The comments on the Basis for Action were mainly to clarify the different issues covered there. Once again there was debate on the issue of insurance coverage, specifically the increased costs of premiums due to the distance and remoteness of many SIDS. Amendments to the Programme of Action were minor and cosmetic in nature.

XIII. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: This chapter focusses on the need for better access to new technologies and adequate training, while ensuring the integration of contemporary and traditional knowledge and technology. Most of the amendments made to the four paragraphs in the Basis for Action section were easily accepted by all parties. It was pointed out that paragraph 57, which addresses imported technologies, lacked clarity and the authors said that they would review this paragraph and provide a new formulation. The only paragraph in the Programme of Action that led to any discussion was under the section on international action and read "encourage development within the international community including the UN system, particularly through relevant activities of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Commission for Sustainable Development, of appropriate programmes..." Some delegates felt that the CSD is more important than the Commission on Science and Technology and should be listed first. Apparently the issue was more sensitive than first thought and it was agreed that this paragraph needed further discussion.

XIV. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: When informal discussions continued in the afternoon, Chapter 14 was at the top of the agenda. In the Basis for Action section, two delegations proposed a new paragraph that placed human beings at the center of sustainable development. The two proposed paragraphs were of a similar nature and the text that was agreed on reads as follows: "Human beings are at the center of development and thus significant attention must be given to projects which will enhance the quality of human life in small island developing States. Projects should be undertaken not only with a view to the contribution that individuals, groups, communities and nations can make towards sustainable development, but, more importantly, how these projects will ultimately affect the well-being of those living in small island developing States."

A proposal was made in paragraph 59 in the Basis for Action to change reference to "inadequate family planning services" to "insufficient responsible planning of family size." This text remained bracketed as it was not acceptable to all.

In the section on national action, policies and measures, a number of amendments were proposed. The only one that did not meet with immediate acceptance was a proposal to replace the phrase "the development of comprehensive population policies" with "the development of comprehensive demographic policies." It was argued that this change was consistent with language in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration. Not all delegates could agree to this change and the text was bracketed.

Earth Negotiations Bulletin is written and edited by Pamela Chasek (pchasek@cdp.apc.org), Charlotte de Fontaubert (61155@chopin.udel.edu), Langston James Goree VI "Kimo" (kimo@web.apc.org) and Rachel Kyte (rkyte@cdp.apc.org), with funding from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (iisd@web.apc.org). Additional funding for this volume of the *Bulletin* has been provided through the Caribbean Community and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme by the Environment and Natural Resources Group (ENR) of the United Nations Development Programme, which supports this effort for greater transparency and outreach to the NGO community worldwide. The authors can be contacted at their electronic mail addresses and, during the Conference, by phone at +1-212-355-7300, ext. 1603 and by fax at +1-212-753-9366. IISD can be contacted by phone at +1-204-958-7700, by fax at +1-204-958-7710 or at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD. The contents of *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be freely used in other publications with appropriate citation. This volume of *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* is uploaded into the APC computer conference env.islands.

After the delegates completed the first round of negotiations on Chapters 1-14, the Chair then allowed the Chair of AOSIS/G-77 to introduce compromise text on issues that had been bracketed on Wednesday night and Thursday morning. The EC then took the floor to introduce two new points on which he had received late instruction. These included a suggestion to make specific reference to the World Coast Conference, which will be held in the Netherlands in November 1993, and the role it may play in supporting SIDS to combat sea-level rise, as well as a proposal to delete mention of double-hulled tankers. The Chair then adjourned the session at 5:30 pm for one hour to allow groups to consult once more on Chapter 15 and the preamble.

PREAMBLE: When the informal session resumed, the Chair called for a first reading of the preamble. It was understood that this was only the first round of comments from non-G-77 delegations and the representative of AOSIS/G-77 was unable to respond to all the comments before consulting with his group. A number of disagreements emerged during the course of this discussion. Many of the contentious issues mirrored those that had arisen earlier in the negotiations.

On the structure, some delegates felt that the text was too long and that some of the issues belonged in the Programme of Action rather than in the preamble, as is customary in international negotiations. In particular, references made in the preamble to the subsequent chapters met with some opposition on the part of those who had previously advocated reorganizing the chapters to place emphasis on the cross-sectoral ones.

Some delegates called for a more balanced preamble, while the authors saw it as a means to present all the difficulties and constraints to the sustainable development of SIDS. These so-called "negative aspects" were highlighted in the document and it was argued that they should be counter-balanced by "positive" elements such as the opportunities and natural resources that SIDS can draw upon. In that respect, debate illustrated divergent views on the very purpose of this Conference. For SIDS, the "negative" language in the preamble is a clear reflection of their dire situation. Balancing the preamble is not as important as conveying the sense of urgency dictated by the situation. No agreement was reached on this point.

The paragraph on financial aspects was another source of disagreement. A number of delegates did not think that finance and reference to Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 belonged in the preamble, instead arguing that reference should be made to Agenda 21 as a whole and the responsibilities of all actors in its implementation. The authors insisted on retaining this paragraph and, therefore, it was bracketed, along with a large part of the remainder of the text.

In view of these differences, the Chair concluded that it was clear that a thorough second reading was called for and she invited all parties to examine the document and the comments that were made with great care so that a compromise could be reached.

XV. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW:

The discussion began with some general comments that reiterated points made in earlier reactions to this chapter, specifically that the balance between the three points of the triangular approach are out of balance. The chapter deals with national, regional and international implementation, the latter being divided into sections on finance, trade, technology transfer, environmental legislation and training, institutional arrangements and a vulnerability index.

Substantial amendments were suggested by two delegations to the national implementation section, reflecting the sub-sections of the international implementation section. Detailed comments were also made in the regional implementation section to clarify the roles of UN Regional Commissions and the many other UN and non-UN bodies working at the regional levels.

In the chapeau to the finance section, the discussion centered around whether to restate Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 in its entirety, a task that proved impossible in Rio and on subsequent occasions, or to merely refer to it. One key donor country then went on to state that it was unable to comment in detail on the finance section, and placed the bulk of the text in brackets. Alternative text was then suggested that was much more general and referred only to the supplementary role of international financial and technical assistance in supporting the sustainable development of SIDS.

On trade, the main issue was one of clarification as to the nature of the study requested by AOSIS/G-77 on the impact of international trade agreements on SIDS. On the transfer of environmentally sound technology the same key donor country called for reference to the need to protect international property rights. Other amendments added references to technical know-how, and the need for technology transfer on "friendly" terms.

The discussion on this chapter continued.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

There are a number of outstanding issues that must be resolved before the PrepCom adjourns today. The Committee will probably meet in informal session this morning to continue discussions on the Programme of Action for the sustainable development of small island developing States. Part of the text remains bracketed in Chapters 1-14 as well as in the preamble. Substantive work still needs to be done on Chapter 15 on implementation, monitoring and review. It is highly unlikely that the Committee will be able to remove all brackets today, as a number of contentious issues, especially on implementation, still need to be discussed. The structure of the Programme of Action must be addressed as well. There appears to have been little progress on resolving the clear differences here, despite informal consultations that continued in the margins on Thursday. The issue has yet to be brought back to the Committee for formal (or even informal) discussion.

The Chair will have to convene a formal meeting of the Plenary later in the day to adopt the provisional agenda of the Conference, address the matter of pre-Conference consultations, and adopt the report of the PrepCom. While Barbados itself will take the lead in drafting the "Barbados Declaration," there should be some discussion of its basic nature today.

One of the major issues yet to be resolved is how things should proceed from here. Much work has yet to be done on the Programme of Action despite the large areas of agreement already reached. Although some delegates believe that this work can be completed in Barbados during extended pre-Conference consultations and at the Conference itself, other delegates are still pushing for a second session of the PrepCom. If there is to be a second PrepCom session, the delegates will need to formally request it of the General Assembly and the decision to do so will have to be taken today.

The Chair has made provisions for an evening session so it could be another late night.