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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 7 MARCH 1994

PLENARY

The Chair of the Preparatory Committee of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States Amb. Penelope Wensley (Australia) opened the resumed session of the PrepCom on Monday morning. She commented that seven weeks from now the Secretary-General will open the Conference in Barbados and if this Conference is to be a success, the PrepCom must finalize its work on the Programme of Action. She expressed confidence that this week will be productive mainly because of the efforts of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) during the intersessional period. She noted that AOSIS is now under the chairmanship of Trinidad and Tobago and paid tribute to Amb. Robert Van Lierop of Vanuatu, the previous Chair, and said the success of the Conference will be due to his inspiration, dedication and energy.

Wensley then moved to the first item, adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters. The provisional agenda (A/CONF/167/PC/12) was quickly adopted and Wensley then outlined the programme of work. After Monday morning's Plenary, the PrepCom will meet in informal session through Thursday evening. Night sessions will be scheduled as required. The Committee will first examine Chapter XV (Implementation, Monitoring and Review), followed by the preamble and a second reading of the complete text. The Barbados Declaration and Conference arrangements may be discussed on Thursday. The Plenary will reconvene in formal session on Friday to adopt the report and discuss other procedural matters. The Committee then adopted the programme of work (A/CONF/167/PC/12/Add.1) and agreed to accredit an additional 21 NGOs to the process (A/CONF/167/L.4/Add.1).

OPERATIONS OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND: Miles Stoby of the Secretariat indicated that seven additional contributions or pledges have been made and that the amount of the voluntary fund is now in excess of US\$500,000. Other significant contributions have also been made outside the voluntary fund. He added that it was not clear at present whether the fund would cover both transportation and per diems for developing country delegates. In any event, he said that the fund would be exhausted and that all monies would be spent. Another "trust fund" has been set up to enable participation of journalists and NGOs. So far, calls for contributions to this fund have met with positive responses on the part of Japan, the UK and Canada. Substantial sums were also provided by Australia and Canada for an officer for the Secretariat.

PREPARATIONS BY THE HOST GOVERNMENT: The Honorable Harcourt Lewis, Minister of the Environment,

Housing and Lands of Barbados, informed the delegates of the status of the preparations for the Conference. A national Conference Secretariat has been set up and arrangements have already been made for accommodations, ground transportation, Conference facilities, entertainment and hospitality. Several events are planned including a National Welcoming Ceremony, receptions, cultural events and special tours. A Group of Eminent Persons has been invited to meet in Barbados from 21-22 April, 1994, to examine the concept of sustainable development with special reference to small island developing States (SIDS) and to make recommendations to the Conference. The Governor-General of Barbados, Her Excellency Dame Nita Barrow, has agreed to be Patron and Convener of the Group and the names of the persons invited to be members will be announced when the arrangements have been finalized. The Minister also highlighted the importance of the High-Level Segment, which is scheduled to take place on 5-6 May, as part of the Global Conference. He said that this segment should be viewed as critical to the overall success of the Conference. NGOs are also expected to play a major role in the Conference.

Next, Dr. E.A. Moore, a representative of the NGO Secretariat in Barbados, updated delegates on NGO preparations. The NGO Islands Forum '94 will begin its activities on 20 April and thereafter will run concurrently with the Conference. There will be three main elements: a series of workshops that will address the main issues of the Conference and serve as a conduit to feed NGO ideas into the Conference; the Village of Hope, which includes a theme park with 28 ideas on sustainable development in SIDS; and SUSTECH '94, a showplace and marketplace for sustainable development technologies.

Miles Stoby of the Secretariat read a message from UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali extending his welcome and best wishes to all participants. He highlighted the vulnerability of SIDS and called the Conference an early test of the commitment of the international community in implementing Agenda 21, and an indicator of the true partnership that will be needed to achieve a more equitable future for all.

INFORMATION ON DONOR ACTIVITIES: Miles Stoby delivered some preliminary remarks on the Report of the Secretary-General on current donor activities in support of sustainable development in SIDS (A/CONF.167/PC/13). This was not an easy report to prepare, a first of its kind, and unusual within the UN system. Using new methodology and cooperating closely with multilateral institutions, donors and NGOs, the Secretariat created a database of current donor activities. Though the report did not go into qualitative analysis, its authors attempted to put it within a broader context. This is illustrated by tables 13, 14, 15 and 16, which include socio-economic indicators and touch upon the concessionality and disbursement of ODA. Though the report

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is still a blunt instrument, it should provide a useful working tool for the Conference.

After Stoby's introduction, a member of the Secretariat elaborated on the preparation of this extensive report. The Secretariat distributed a questionnaire to UN agencies, relevant IGOs and NGOs regarding their activities in SIDS. In the case of bilateral donors, the Secretariat requested the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to submit relevant information, thus the data was not received from individual donors. He noted that 80% of the assistance comes from bilateral sources and that human resource development accounts for the highest level of support -- 24%. Donor activity is concentrated in relatively few of the sectors contained in the Draft Programme of Action and, thus, this analysis suggests there is a need for greater emphasis on other sectors.

The US noted that data on some territories is contained in this report and said that the title of PC/13 should be amended to read "Current donor activities in support of sustainable development in small island developing States and territories." Australia expressed its gratitude to the Secretariat and all those who participated in the preparation of the report. The report highlights difficulties confronting SIDS and provides lessons for the future. A facility could be set up so that additional information can be received and integrated within the report. Papua New Guinea supported the US recommendation to identify the activities that provide assistance to territories.

ALGERIA, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, identified this Conference as an opportunity for the international community to give shape to a concept of partnership for the sustainable development of SIDS. SIDS face considerable additional costs in view of their isolation and ecological vulnerability and are sometimes threatened with disappearance due to sea-level rise. At this stage of the negotiations, the emphasis needs to be placed on Chapter XV and the preamble. The G-77 will be represented by the Chair of AOSIS at this PrepCom to ensure a rapid process.

TRINIDAD and TOBAGO: Amb. Annette des Iles opened her statement on behalf of AOSIS by paying tribute to the first Chair of AOSIS, Amb. Robert Van Lierop of Vanuatu, for the outstanding job he has done on behalf of AOSIS. She stressed the great importance of the contribution of NGOs to the success of this Conference. The Draft Programme of Action should be negotiated as an integral whole and the first priority this week should be the discussion of Chapter XV. She highlighted the need for an appropriate mechanism at UN Headquarters to facilitate coordination, monitoring and review of the Programme of Action at the global level.

GREECE, on behalf of the European Union, said that the information contained in the Secretary-General's report on donor activities did not fully reflect the activities the Union has carried out, particularly with regard to the Lomé Convention. The ratio between assistance to SIDS and other ODA activities should also be measured.

INFORMAL SESSION

The PrepCom convened in informal session Monday afternoon to begin discussing Chapter XV of the Draft Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as contained in the Report of the Preparatory Committee (A/48/36). This entire chapter had been left in square brackets at the end of the first session of the PrepCom. The Chair suggested that delegates use this document as the base text but refer to the Suggested Amendments to the Draft Action Programme for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States prepared by AOSIS/G-77.

The Chair invited delegates to make general comments before examining the text line-by-line. Those delegations that gave general comments expressed their gratitude to AOSIS/G-77 for the text they had prepared and for incorporating so many of the comments of other delegations. There was some concern expressed that Chapter XV and the

SIDS process in general should not add to the heavy reporting burdens of States in the field of environment.

XV. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW:

This chapter deals with implementation at the national, regional and international levels. At each of these levels the chapter discusses issues of finance, trade, technology transfer, legislation, and institutions as well as the concept of a vulnerability index. It is the most contentious of the chapters of the Draft Programme of Action and was flagged for heavy amendment at the first session of the PrepCom.

Paragraph 61 remained in square brackets after considerable amendment and counter amendment as delegates searched for wording which would reflect the degree to which SIDS are to be considered a priority or a special case and what emphasis should be placed on the need for the international community to demonstrate its commitment to SIDS.

A number of delegates suggested amendments to the list of parallel international processes in new paragraph 61 bis, grafted from the preamble. These include the Basel and Bamako conventions as well as other regional instruments on hazardous wastes, the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, CITES, the World Summit on Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Conference on Natural Disasters. As the list grew longer, some delegates asked if it could be collapsed into a general reference to other processes. The Chair asked an informal group of concerned delegates to meet and resolve this issue. The paragraph remained in square brackets.

New paragraph 61 bis/bis was agreed to with one comment that its substance should also be taken up in discussions on the preamble. Paragraph 62 on the development of action plans was acceptable as written. On paragraph 63, a number of delegates noted that decision making was the responsibility of governments alone, after consultation with major groups. They proposed that levels of government be distinguished from NGOs and their roles clarified and the appropriate reference for roles of major groups in Agenda 21 be used.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The PrepCom will reconvene in informal session in Conference Room 2. Discussion will begin with paragraph 64 of Chapter XV, "Implementation, Monitoring and Review."

At 3:00 pm the Chair will convene a brief formal session to allow Klaus Töpfer, the Federal Minister of the Environment of Germany, to address the PrepCom. Töpfer, in the absence of other candidates, is unofficially regarded as Chair-elect of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), even though the election will not be held until the CSD session in May. The Chair has also extended an informal invitation to Amb. Razali Ismail (Malaysia) to speak as the present and outgoing CSD Chair. The Chair will then give the floor to NGOs to make a maximum of five five-minute interventions. Look for speeches from the three SIDS regions (Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and Pacific), a speech from the OECD countries and, as today is International Women's Day, a speech from the Women's Caucus. Following these statements, the formal meeting will adjourn and informal consultations will resume.

There is the possibility of an evening session tonight. If facilities are available, the Committee will take a short break and continue its work from 7:00-9:00 pm.

NGO ACTIVITIES: NGOs will be scheduling daily briefings in Conference Room D. Amb. Wensley announced that she is trying to schedule regular meetings with the NGOs during the course of the week. NGOs are able to observe informal sessions when they are held in the larger Conference Room 2. However, if informals move to Conference Room 5, which has 120 seats, only a limited number of NGOs will be allowed to observe.