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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 1994

INFORMAL SESSION

The PrepCom resumed its discussion of Chapter XV, Implementation, Monitoring and Review, of the Draft Programme of Action. Delegates began with paragraph 63 bis, action at the national level, as drafted by AOSIS/G-77 in response to comments made by the European Union at the first session of the PrepCom.

Paragraph 63 bis.1 Finance: There was a clear difference of approach on this issue as some emphasized the re-prioritization or resource allocation at the national level, while others stressed the inadequacy of financial resources. Consequently, part of the text remained in brackets.

Paragraph 63 bis.2 Trade: Agreement could not be reached on the degree of emphasis attached to the expansion of export capacity as opposed to the need for import substitution. These provisions remained bracketed.

Paragraph 63 bis.3 Technology: This sub-paragraph proved to be one of the most controversial particularly relating to intellectual property rights as they apply to indigenous knowledge and natural resources. Some argued that property rights apply to the resources themselves while others argued that they only apply to knowledge used to exploit them. It was added that technologies should also be developed by SIDS themselves.

Paragraph 63 bis.4 Legislation: It was agreed that new legislation and enforcement measures would have to be adopted where appropriate but that the specificity of SIDS would not always allow for the direct transposition of traditional western concepts.

Paragraph 63 bis.5 Institutional Development: Amendments proposed by some developed countries were met with some hostility by developing countries as references to the strengthening of national institutional capacity was construed as an interference in internal affairs. The tripartite approach, -- national, regional and international -- was reiterated. This was left in brackets.

Paragraph 63 bis.6 Information and Participation: This presented no problem other than a suggestion by a delegate to add religious leaders to the list of groups that have to become involved in the sustainable development of SIDS.

Paragraph 63 bis.7 Human Resource Development: Still unresolved is the issue of how holistic a definition of human resource development should be used. Some delegates cautioned against language that would not place enough emphasis on training.

PLENARY

The Committee met in formal session Tuesday afternoon to hear statements from governments and NGOs.

GERMANY: Klaus Töpfer, the German Minister of the Environment, highlighted activities illustrating Germany's commitment to sustainable development, including hosting the first Conference of Parties for the Climate Change Convention in March 1995. Töpfer mentioned his candidacy for the chairmanship of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and stressed the important role it should play in monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21. To be successful, the CSD needs coordination, concentration and concrete results. This Conference is important as SIDS are, due to their size and location, vulnerable to all kinds of environmental changes.

PACIFIC NGOS: The representative from the Pacific Concerns Resource Center, on behalf of Pacific NGOs, stressed the need for this Conference to address colonialism and militarism. The eight non-self-governing territories in the Pacific are forced to sit on the sidelines while this Conference decides what is appropriate for them. Foreign military activities have a devastating impact on the biodiversity of Pacific islands. The Programme of Action should urge halting of all foreign military activities. Chapter 9 should also provide for the body of traditional knowledge of flora and fauna in SIDS.

CARIBBEAN AND ATLANTIC NGOS: The representative of the Caribbean Conservation Association, on behalf of Caribbean and Atlantic NGOs, mentioned that policies of the North result in fluctuations in foreign exchange, debt and replacement of food self-sufficiency with food aid. A model for sustainable development in SIDS should be grounded on principles of equity, participation, holism, sustainability and self-reliance. He urged delegates to include the role of NGOs, women and youth in the preamble.

OECD NGOS: Greenpeace, on behalf of OECD NGOs, said that this Conference has an obligation to create a framework for addressing both short and long term development issues for SIDS that can be a model for the rest of the world. Northern NGOs are disappointed that the industrialized countries are attempting to weaken various aspects of the Programme of Action. She called upon industrialized countries to pledge to take action to develop, strengthen and implement relevant international conventions and called on SIDS to pledge to enforce environmental laws and guarantee citizen participation in decision-making.

NGOS AT THE PREPCOM: The representative of the Caribbean Policy Development Centre, on behalf of all NGOs present, expressed the collective resolve of the international NGO community to work together on the vital issues facing SIDS -- debt relief, fair trade, social and economic development and militarism. He urged governments to examine the possibilities of assisting NGOs financially so that they are able to attend the Barbados Conference.

WOMEN'S CAUCUS: The representative from the Caribbean Conservation Association, on behalf of the

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Women's Caucus, expressed concern about the lack of reference to people, and women in particular, in the Programme of Action. She urged delegates to make provisions for a true involvement of women in the policy and decision-making institutions; access to financial resources and credit; access to quality, comprehensive health care; education; and increased training in science and technology.

ITALY: The Ambassador noted that Italy has identified the following priority areas for possible cooperation with SIDS: drafting of comprehensive development plans for coastal zones; planning and construction of projects to defend the coasts from erosion, storms and sea-level rise; protection and rehabilitation of at-risk coastal ecosystems; drafting of emergency plans for natural and man-made disasters; and the appreciation and conservation of natural and cultural heritages. Italy has contributed US\$90,000 to the voluntary fund, is preparing an exhibition for the Barbados Conference, and is prepared to place its technological know-how at the disposal of the SIDS.

FAO: The FAO representative informed the Committee that the Ministers of Agriculture of a number of SIDS met informally during the last FAO Conference and expressed concern that there has been inadequate emphasis on food, agriculture and forestry in the preparatory process.

INFORMAL SESSION

Following the conclusion of the plenary, informal consultations resumed.

Paragraph 64: The delegates tried to find a common approach under which regional cooperation could be understood. Opinions diverged when some delegates referred to the role that the private sector should play and a proposed amendment to this effect was left in brackets.

Paragraph 64 bis: This paragraph lists a number of important programmes and measures that are necessary at the regional level to support national priorities. The chapeau did not meet with any objection.

Paragraph 64 bis.1 Finance: The sub-paragraph was modified to read "Develop, to the extent possible, coordinated approaches to the mobilization of financial resources for national and regional efforts to implement sustainable development." The last phrase in the sub-paragraph, "including improved access to financial resources," remains in brackets. Some delegates wanted to replace this with the phrase "enhance transparency of their use and management." As the meaning is entirely different, both phrases were bracketed for further consideration.

Paragraph 64 bis.2 Technology: The amendments to this sub-paragraph were limited to a reference to the role regional organizations should play. It is in brackets.

Paragraph 64 bis.3 Legislation: AOSIS distributed a new formulation of this sub-paragraph formally called "Environmental Legislation." The sub-paragraph, as amended, now reads "Promote national efforts to develop comprehensive legislation in support of sustainable development, and to ratify and implement international conventions. Support legal training and training manuals in areas of environmental impact assessment, cultural heritage, pollution, civil enforcement, mediation and prosecution, and encourage, where appropriate, harmonization of environmental legislation and policies within and between small island developing States in order to ensure high levels of environmental protection."

Paragraph 64 bis.4 Institutional Development: This sub-paragraph was agreed to by all parties.

Paragraph 64 bis.5 Human Resource Development: This sub-paragraph was agreed to by all parties.

At this point a series of new paragraphs proposed by Australia and amended by AOSIS/G-77 were discussed. These deal with the mechanisms that should be used to coordinate and implement the Programme of Action at the regional level. The debate revealed different interpretations among delegations of what mechanisms should coordinate

with which bodies and for what purposes. There were concerns that the UN regional economic commissions are not meeting the needs of SIDS and that coordination should take place at the sub-regional level, which should be granted greater autonomy. It was agreed that new mechanisms should only be created where there is no existing mechanism. All proposals for regional coordination should be seen in the context of ongoing UN regionalization. These paragraphs were placed in square brackets until delegates clarified what roles are being suggested for which regional bodies. A separate paragraph was proposed and accepted on the need to encourage non-UN regional organizations to integrate the Programme of Action in their work.

Paragraphs relating to reporting to the CSD remained in brackets. A number of delegations took issue with language suggesting annual reporting, commenting that SIDS will be reported on in 1996 within the context of the review of the implementation of Chapter 17 of Agenda 21. Delegations also queried the concept of a time frame for implementation of the Programme of Action and the necessity of addressing SIDS under a separate CSD agenda item. Some delegations felt strongly that this is the only way the depth and breadth of the Programme of Action can be discussed. These segments of the paragraph were placed in brackets together with the list of items to be included in the consolidated reports, pending negotiation of which body within the UN system will prepare them.

Paragraph 65: This is the first paragraph under the heading "International Implementation" and reads, "This programme of action is part of the process of the implementation of Agenda 21, in particular, Chapter 17G."

Paragraph 66. Finance: As expected, this paragraph gave rise to a lengthy discussion. In the chapeau, a number of phrases remain bracketed. One country suggested mentioning the need to better use existing financial resources in the chapeau. Other important provisions still remain in brackets.

Paragraph 66(a): Two parts of this sub-paragraph gave rise to debate. The first related to the meaning and the placement of commas in the phrase "concessional financial and technical and grant assistance." This is a list of three different types of assistance, but it is not clear to which types the adjective "concessional" applies. The second problem was the use of the phrase "in real terms." Some countries advocated its deletion, but others argued for its retention, as it is General Assembly language.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Whereas in many conferences, delegates do not listen carefully to NGO statements, Tuesday proved to be the exception to the unfortunate rule. Not only did the delegates listen to the NGO statements, but some expressed discontent with the statement of Greenpeace, on behalf of the OECD NGOs, and the Caribbean Policy Development Center, on behalf of all NGOs at this session. They alleged that Canada, Germany and Australia had rejected reference in Chapter III (Waste Management) to a total ban on exports and shipments of hazardous waste. However, this was not the case during the September meeting of the PrepCom when this chapter was negotiated. As all statements go into the UN archives, the wrongly accused countries and the NGOs are considering options for correcting the record.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

INFORMAL SESSION: The PrepCom will meet informally again today at 10:00 am in Conference Room 2. Discussions are expected to begin with paragraph 66, "Finance." Informal sessions will continue throughout the afternoon and, after a short dinner break, will reconvene in Conference Room 5 from 7:00-10:00 pm. Although the Chair hopes to complete negotiation of Chapter XV this afternoon and work on the preamble this evening, at the current pace of negotiations this appears highly unlikely.