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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 10 MARCH 1994

MORNING INFORMAL SESSION

The Chair opened the session and informed the delegates that the Secretariat had worked overnight to produce a "clean" version of Chapter XV that would be distributed during the course of the day. She indicated that the session would begin with a second reading of the preamble, to be followed by a re-examination of Chapters I-XIV.

PREAMBLE

Chapeau: The chapeau was reorganized. It was agreed that the proposal on the commitment of the international community would be examined within the context of paragraph 10. The proposed amendments that remained in the chapeau are still in brackets, as some delegates asked for a chance to discuss them as a group before taking any decision.

Paragraph 1: An amendment to this paragraph on the characteristics of SIDS was accepted and incorporated in the text. A permanent observer attempted to add provisions on the importance of the human individual, which remained in brackets. An observer also submitted a proposal to emphasize the marine dimension of SIDS, but it was agreed that this proposal should be included elsewhere.

Paragraph 2: A technical amendment was submitted that more precisely defines the threat to freshwater resources of SIDS. This amendment remains in brackets.

Paragraph 3: This paragraph addresses the relationship between environment and development in SIDS. It was requested that reference to environmental destruction caused by external interventions be bracketed.

Paragraph 4: This paragraph was accepted.

Paragraph 5: Several amendments were proposed to this paragraph on population growth. A permanent observer proposed an amendment to add language stating that despite population density, the small population size of SIDS inhibits them from generating economies of scale. This amendment did not receive much support. He proposed another formulation, which remains in brackets. Another amendment was proposed to the first sentence so that it would read "...the rate of population growth is high relative to both ecological sustainability and economic growth..." This is bracketed pending further consultations. Another amendment was made with regard to the reference to women as heads of households. The agreed phrase now reads "women in particular as heads of households."

Paragraph 6: An amendment was introduced and accepted to indicate that the total production of SIDS is limited both in manufacturing goods and in providing services. Another modification that restricted these difficulties to "some" SIDS remains in brackets. The

paragraph needs to be further amended to indicate that the problem is with the lack of economies of scale rather than the search for such economies.

Paragraph 7: Several delegates were uncomfortable with the current draft. An amendment was suggested that would restrict the application of these provisions to "some" SIDS and qualified insurance and re-insurance problems as posing "difficulties". The whole paragraph is still in brackets.

Paragraph 8: A series of amendments were suggested to water down the language of this paragraph, but they remained in brackets while the authors consult. Man-made disasters were added to reflect the vulnerability of SIDS to marine pollution.

Paragraph 9: A reference to a specific provision of Agenda 21 that had been deleted in the draft was reintegrated in this paragraph on human resources. It was felt by some that part of the provision contained in the amendment had not been integrated in the new draft. The amendment has been submitted to the delegates and is being negotiated. An additional reference to youth was also suggested, but no agreement was reached.

Paragraph 10: This paragraph was accepted with two amendments. The first was to delete the last sentence mentioning that this is the first global conference on the implementation of Agenda 21. The second aimed to ensure that social, religious and cultural values are protected.

Paragraph 11: This paragraph mentions that priority must be given to the economically vulnerable. Developed countries wanted to incorporate Principle 6 of the Rio Declaration into this paragraph. Others wanted to highlight the problems of SIDS, not of the least developed countries. No agreement was reached.

Paragraph 12: There was debate about mentioning the regional technical meetings held in preparation for this Conference. Delegates agreed to further discuss this issue.

Paragraph 13: Three major amendments were proposed to this paragraph, including adding the following sentence at the beginning: "As recognized in Agenda 21, governments will be primarily responsible for the implementation of the action programme." The other amendments addressed financing and better use of existing resources. These amendments are bracketed until the question of financing as a whole is resolved.

Paragraphs 14 and 15: These paragraphs have been deleted as they have been dealt with in Chapter XV.

A new paragraph was proposed noting that the international community should pay special attention to the needs of the least developed SIDS. It remains in brackets.

AFTERNOON INFORMAL SESSION

The Chair opened the afternoon session with a reading of of the bracketed text in Chapters I-XIV of the Programme of Action.

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I. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

Paragraphs 17 and 17 bis: One delegate noted that these paragraphs were alternatives and paragraph 17 was deleted. Paragraph 17 bis was modified to reflect discussion in the ongoing climate change negotiations. The brackets were removed.

III. MANAGEMENT OF WASTES

Paragraph 21: The discussion centered on the reference to the passage of ships carrying toxic and hazardous wastes and chemicals and radioactive materials through the seas of small islands. This sentence remains in brackets.

Paragraph C(iv) and (v): Discussion focused on appropriate reference to conventions and other arrangements dealing with marine pollution, in particular land based sources. The two paragraphs were amended to embrace all processes dealing with these issues.

IV. COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES

Paragraph C(v): A proposed new text merges the original draft with amendments that specify the outcomes of the 1993 World Coast Conference and make reference to other intergovernmental activities in order to help SIDS develop integrated coastal management plans. Some developing country delegates, however, expressed their unease at taking into account meetings that are yet to take place. The paragraph remains in brackets.

V. FRESHWATER RESOURCES

Paragraph 26: This addresses safeguarding watersheds. One delegate proposed an amendment dealing with over-abstraction from groundwater resources. Although developing country delegates agreed to mention safeguarding groundwater resources, the delegate proposing the amendment insisted on maintaining the concept of over-abstraction. Consultations will continue on this matter. An amendment was proposed that would ensure waterways have a water flow sufficient to maintain ecological processes. As the proposer could not explain what was meant by "waterways," this amendment was dropped.

VII. ENERGY RESOURCES

Chapeau: The term "renewable energy resources" was replaced with "sources of renewable energy".

Paragraph A(ii): The proposed deletion of "appropriate economic instruments" gave rise to a long debate. Many developing countries felt that this language is too specific and that economic instruments are not necessarily the best approach for all SIDS. The provision is still in brackets.

Paragraph C(ii): The reference to the use of double-hulled tankers was accepted and the brackets were removed.

Paragraph C(iii): This paragraph on transfer of energy technology was unacceptable to developed countries. One delegate suggested adding "appropriate" before "the transfer of energy technology." The paragraph remains in brackets.

Paragraph C(iv): Amendments were suggested to indicate that international institutions can only be "encouraged" to take action and that, in this respect, "ensure" is not realistic. Some thought this weakened the provision too much. The paragraph remains in brackets.

XI. REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Paragraph 47: The brackets in this paragraph on regional organizations were retained at the request of one donor.

Paragraph B(vii): This paragraph had been incorporated by AOSIS/G-77 in Paragraph B(v). With one amendment that adds "with a view to ensuring a high degree of environmental protection," paragraph B(v) was agreed upon and paragraph B(vii) deleted.

XII. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Paragraph 50: The brackets were removed.

Paragraph C(v): The brackets were retained.

XIII. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Paragraph C(iii): The brackets were removed and the order of reference to the CSD and the CSTD was reversed.

XIV. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Paragraph 57: As expected, the formulation of this paragraph was controversial and it was suggested that the reference to responsible planning of family size be replaced with language drawn from paragraph 3.8(j) of Agenda 21. No agreement was reached and the text is still in brackets.

Paragraph A(ii): Agreement was reached when it was decided that the term "demographic" could be deleted if the brackets were removed from "the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person and of the family."

Paragraph C(ix): This now reads, "Continue to support, and increase where possible, scientific and technical training in order to promote sustainable development."

EVENING INFORMAL SESSION

At the beginning of the evening session, delegates discussed the suggested modifications by AOSIS/G-77 to the agreed text of Chapters I-XIV of the Programme of Action.

I. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

Paragraph B(vii): This paragraph was incorporated with one amendment suggesting the provision of "improved" rather than "necessary" access to financial resources.

II. NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS

The Chair noted that the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator no longer existed and that its functions now fall under the auspices of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and, consequently, the appropriate references should be changed.

IX. BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES

Paragraph A(vii): This paragraph remained in brackets while a group of delegates seek language that reflects the concerns of SIDS to protect the rights of those whose indigenous knowledge and know-how of biodiversity is overtaken by commercial exploitation of the resources.

All other suggested modifications were accepted.

BARBADOS DECLARATION: Amb. Besley Maycock from Barbados introduced A/CONF.167/PC/L.10, elements for discussion for the Barbados Declaration. A number of delegations made preliminary remarks on this document. The reaction was generally positive. Some elements, such as the right to develop and people-centered sustainable development, were highlighted as insufficiently covered. It was agreed that the Declaration should remain accessible to all, as short as possible and reflect wide consensus. As one delegate indicated, this should not be just another UN document. It was agreed that delegates would forward this document to their capitals and that informal consultations would resume at the end of the month.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

INFORMAL SESSION: A "clean" text of the Preamble should be available this morning so that the Committee can discuss it and, hopefully, remove the remaining brackets when the informal session resumes at 10:00 am. After that, delegates will re-read the bracketed text in Chapters I-XIV, may have the opportunity to comment on the elements of the Barbados Declaration, and may re-read the "clean" copy of Chapter XV. The informal session is expected to last all morning and possibly into the afternoon.

PLENARY: When the final Plenary begins this afternoon, the Committee will have to discuss a number of issues related to the Conference including: participation of associate members of regional commissions; the rules of procedure; management of the high-level segment; the programme of work; the Barbados Declaration; and the Programme of Action. NGOs will have an opportunity to make a final statement.

IN THE CORRIDORS: Sweden has been charged by the Chair with the task of finding agreement on language relating to intellectual property rights. Look for a possible informal-informal session if bilateral consultations fail.