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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 1993

The general debate on Agenda Items 2(a) and 3 entered its third day today with a full slate of speakers from governments, intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies and NGOs. In addition, the PrepCom elected a new Vice-Chair from the Eastern European regional group: Ion Barac from Romania. The former Vice-Chair, Marian Dinu, also from Romania, has been posted to Washington.

GENERAL DEBATE:

TONGA: Sione L. Tongilava, Secretary for Lands, Survey and Natural Resources, said that the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS) will fail without a new direction and commitments between donors and recipients. He also noted the importance of assistance from developed countries and the vulnerability and fragility of the environmental conditions of SIDS.

MALDIVES: Mr. Hussain Shihab reminded the participants of the importance of the principle of inter-generational equity. Choices made today are likely to determine the range of options in the future. The technology that is developed by industrialized countries is not always appropriate for SIDS and needs to be adapted. A clearing house mechanism could be created within the UN system to provide ready access to information and experiences.

MALTA: Dr. Ivan Fsadni made the case for a vulnerability index and offered Malta's technical expertise in developing it. The index should be simple, easy to construct, and provide plausible results. It should also be suitable for international comparison and cover as many vulnerabilities as possible.

SOLOMON ISLANDS: Amb. Rex S. Horoi stressed the importance of cooperation among SIDS, both bilaterally and through regional organizations. SIDS should not rely solely on outside help. He highlighted the need for a specific, flexible and immediate action programme that will effectively link environment and development within SIDS. He focused on three other areas of importance: coastal and marine resources, land resources (including forests), and disaster preparedness.

BENIN: Amb. René Valéry Mongbe insisted that SIDS, more than others, feel the threat to marine biodiversity due to climate change, soil erosion and other factors. He called on NGOs to stand side-by-side with SIDS to encourage all governments that can afford it to provide contributions for the sustainable development of these States.

CAPE VERDE: Jorge Custodio Santos underlined the importance of the contribution of the international community in supporting national sustainable development efforts of SIDS. The elements identified in the reports of the regional technical meetings can form the basis of a programme of action that will add critical impetus to the work already in progress at the national level.

UNDP: Luis Maria Gomez of the UN Development Programme said that the challenge is to span the wide scope of UNDP's involvement and harness resources for the attainment of sustainable human development for SIDS. He highlighted UNDP's support for activities related to the Conference, including the two regional technical meetings. UNDP also supported NGO participation at this PrepCom and is facilitating the holding of a sustainable development technology exhibition in Barbados at the time of the Conference. He hoped that other governments and organizations will also provide support for the Conference.

UNESCO: Mehri Ashraf highlighted UNESCO's many programmes that concern SIDS. The programmes, tailored to local realities, are people-centered and multidisciplinary. They focus on education and training. The work of UNESCO has been reoriented in response to Agenda 21 and is being carried out in cooperation with other UN agencies. UNESCO projects also cover the interaction between ecology, population and tourism in SIDS.

IGC: Elizabeth Dickson, speaking on behalf of the Intergovernmental Committee on Biological Diversity, gave a comprehensive overview of the upcoming preparatory meeting (11-15 October, Geneva) for the first Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. She reported that four more ratifications are needed for the Convention to enter into force and this may happen as early as January 1994. SIDS have driven the Convention forward and should continue to do so as it enters the implementation stage.

FAO: David Insull of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization stressed the importance of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in the sustainable development of SIDS. He highlighted FAO activities relevant to SIDS, including agriculture policy and planning assistance; assistance in the development of legislation; economic diversification; integrated coastal zone management; forestry; fisheries; land and water use; and assistance in research, technology, networking and capacity building.

ITU: Philip Cross said that although telecommunication may not be ranked among the most important resources, its relationship with socio-economic considerations should not be overlooked. As a factor that can contribute to the sustainable development of SIDS, telecommunication needs to be taken into account during this process.

INTERNATIONAL OCEAN INSTITUTE: Dr. Elisabeth Mann Borgese highlighted the programmes the Institute has set up to help SIDS in their ocean management. She also insisted on the paramount importance of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as a constitution for the oceans and a vital tool for SIDS' management of their marine resources.

PACIFIC ISLAND NGOS: Maria Kerslake highlighted issues of particular concern in the Pacific: colonization, nuclearization, nuclear and hazardous waste dumping, and militarization, all of which take place without island peoples' consent.

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consent. Offers of redress are slow in coming. The international community should accept that wrongs should be righted, compensation made and future liability accepted. *Self-determination* is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

ICELAND: Thórir Ibsen, on behalf of the Nordic countries, argued that islands with small communities in the Arctic and surrounding regions merit consideration, as they also have limited resources, depend on mono-economies and imports, and are vulnerable to climate change and transboundary pollution. The key to the action plan should be the identification of measures and means to enhance the capacity of SIDS to move forward on the path of sustainable development. He expressed disappointment with A/CONF.167/PC/6 (system-wide activities) and urged better inter-agency coordination.

BAHAMAS: Amb. James B. Moultrie said that due to the large number of islands in the Bahamas there are staggering constraints on development. The Bahamas' location on the hurricane belt and its fight against drug trafficking further constrain sustainable development. GNP per capita income is not a good indicator of the actual situation and environmental assistance should not be denied the way development assistance has been.

SIERRA LEONE: Amb. Abdul G. Koroma said that his country, a small coastal State, identifies with many of the problems facing SIDS. He called for appropriate financial resources and technology transfer to assist SIDS. Existing technical assistance programmes should be enhanced and, where none exist, created. In this regard, it is the responsibility of the international community to lay the foundations for success in Barbados.

SEYCHELLES: Maryse Roberts said that if SIDS wish to achieve sustainable development, they must be politically committed and change their attitude toward development. Seychelles is preparing a development plan that will integrate the development of human resources (both men and women) in a sustainable development framework. She stressed the urgent need for SIDS to pay particular attention to the role of women as well as to share experiences between islands and regions.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Amb. Renagi R. Lohia said that the obstacle to the implementation of any programme of action is the availability of scarce and limited resources. He highlighted a number of initiatives that Papua New Guinea has undertaken at the national level as part of UNCED follow-up and some important issues that should be discussed here, including forest conservation, protection of species diversity, and disposal of hazardous and toxic wastes. The success of the Conference depends on support and political will at both the national and international levels.

VENEZUELA: Milena Santana-Ramirez expressed her country's support for SIDS since Venezuela is confronted with many of the same problems. Special attention should be given to the effects of sea-level rise. Information needs to be disseminated and shared since the whole international community is concerned.

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS: Raymond C. Taylor said that GNP per capita income does not reflect the true situation of SIDS, since up to 30 percent of national budgets are sometimes absorbed by the need to respond to natural disasters. He called for the creation of a focal point for SIDS within the UN system. He also drew attention to the vulnerability of Caribbean States to oil and chemical spills.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE: Carlos Gustavo dos Anjos noted that his country has one of the lowest per capita incomes of the SIDS. This Conference provides a unique opportunity to deal with the problems of SIDS holistically, and can help SIDS to improve ongoing programmes. He recognized the need for regional coordination for Atlantic SIDS, and said that SIDS can play a decisive role in their own sustainable development.

GRENADA: Amb. Eugene Pursoo enumerated constraints on the sustainable development of SIDS including: the brain drain resulting in a lack of human resources; inadequate training and educational opportunities; and high unemployment, especially among the young. Migration of

young people distorts the demographic structure of many SIDS. All of the above are exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and further jeopardized by natural and environmental disasters. He noted that while UNCLOS has expanded their exclusive economic zones, few SIDS have the capacity to manage and exploit their marine resources.

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT: Chandrashekhar Krishnan mentioned a number of SIDS-related activities within the Commonwealth Secretariat. Seventy percent of the expenditure of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation has been directed to SIDS in areas such as environmental management, environmental legislation, biological resources, fisheries, coastal zone management, macroeconomic and trade policies, education, and human resources development. It will continue to provide support and advice to enable SIDS to participate more effectively in international conferences on sustainable development.

SOLOMON ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT TRUST: John Roughan described the work of his organization at the village level. If the Conference's results are to be successfully implemented it will be due to people at the local level who are "resource owners" and who must cope with major changes in their lives. NGOs have new roles in democratizing the development process, networking and coalition building.

FAVDO: Alfredo Handem of Guinea-Bissau, speaking on behalf of the Forum of African Voluntary Development Organisations, discussed the complex situation in his country with regard to preserving biodiversity, managing fish resources, preserving cultural traditions and improving living conditions. Competing needs had to be balanced to reach agreement on appropriate activity zones in the country.

NGOS FROM INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES: Jutta Bertram-Nothnagel urged industrialized countries to help SIDS by decreasing emissions of greenhouse gases, ratifying and strengthening the Climate Change Convention, banning the export of toxic and hazardous wastes to SIDS, and respecting their rights to marine resources.

IN THE CORRIDORS

AOSIS finally completed drafting its "Basic Elements for an Action Programme for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States." This paper was swiftly adopted by G-77, despite fears to the contrary from some AOSIS members. It is now in the hands of the Chair, who will decide how it should be used after it is introduced on Thursday. The paper includes chapters on climate change and sea level rise, natural environmental disasters, management of wastes, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, land resources, energy resources, tourism resources, biodiversity resources, national institutions and administrative capacity, regional institutions and technical cooperation, transport and communication, science and technology, human resource development and implementation, monitoring and review.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The general debate on Agenda Items 2(a) and 3 will conclude this morning. The final eight speakers are: the United Kingdom, Austria, Samoa, Mexico, Bangladesh, UNIDO, World Association of Former UN Interns and Fellows, and the American Anthropological Association. The Plenary will then discuss A/CONF.167/PC/6 (overview of system-wide activities). In the afternoon, SPREP and Caricom will introduce documents A/CONF.167/PC/7 and PC/8, the reports of the regional technical meetings, and a discussion will follow. The G-77 will introduce the much anticipated paper on basic elements for the programme of action prepared by AOSIS. It is possible that the Chair will adjourn the Plenary and convene an informal session to facilitate discussion on this matter.

Inter-agency cooperation is the buzzword in all areas of UNCED follow-up, and for the SIDS the focus is on regional cooperation. It will be interesting to see if the UN regional commissions, conspicuous by their absence from the PrepCom so far, will enter the fray today.