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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 1993

PLENARY

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE: Harcourt Lewis, Minister of the Environment, Housing and Lands of Barbados, briefed the PrepCom on his government's preparations for the Conference. The Sherbourne Centre, as well as the other locations for the Conference, will be completed and furnished well in advance of the Conference. Arrangements are in progress to identify and reserve the requisite accommodations for the participants. An independent NGO Liaison Committee has been established with responsibility for all aspects of the participation of NGOs in the Conference. The Government of Barbados has also decided to stage an exhibition to run parallel to the Conference. The exhibition, titled "Village of Hope," will include discussions and workshops, thematic displays and exhibits, and an exhibition of technology, all bearing the theme of sustainable development of SIDS. Two events are also planned for January 1994: a media workshop and an eminent persons meeting.

The next speaker was Nicolas Drayton, on behalf of the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA), Chair of the NGO Liaison Committee. CCA is consulting with other NGOs in preparation for the Conference. He urged governments to include NGOs on delegations. CCA hopes to bring NGO perspectives into the Village of Hope. CCA is also planning the NGO Forum that will convene in advance of the Conference and run concurrently. He thanked all agencies and governments that have supported NGO participation in this process. Tupou Vere, speaking on behalf of Pacific Island NGOs, supported Drayton's comments.

OPERATIONS OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND: Miles Stoby from the Secretariat briefed the PrepCom on the status of the voluntary fund. The Secretary-General is seeking US\$950,000 to provide for the participation of representatives from SIDS in the Conference process. As of today, the Secretariat has only received US\$154,783. This figure includes contributions from Canada, Chile, Sweden and New Zealand. Pledges have also been received from Italy and Liechtenstein. On Thursday, the UK pledged £30,000 for support of the participation of Caribbean delegates and NGOs and mentioned that it is considering support for Pacific delegates as well. The Dutch and Japanese are also considering contributions to the fund. Stoby made a strong appeal for contributions. He also explained that the Secretary-General may seek additional voluntary support for NGO participation, the public information programme, representation of journalists from SIDS at the Conference, and the development of a SIDS information system.

Japan indicated that it is seriously considering its contribution, but cannot pledge a specific amount at this

time. Vanuatu, on behalf of AOSIS, thanked those governments who have pledged and contributed to the fund.

INFORMAL SESSION

The Chair proposed that the document introduced by G-77, building on the reports of the regional technical meetings and other Conference documents, should form the basis for discussion. The Chair asked for general comments to be followed by a closer section-by-section examination, focusing on substance rather than structure. She asked delegates to indicate problems, gaps, change of emphasis, duplication and reorganization of activities within the triangular approach. She indicated that comments would not be binding.

I. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE: This section met with broad agreement and it was recommended that the effects of sea-level rise be evaluated at the local level. The emphasis was placed on the local manifestations of a global problem, while attempting to solve the problem on a global scale. It was also recommended that the question of national competence and capacities be further addressed.

II. NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS: Three points were raised: the management of natural resources in the mitigation of natural disasters, such as the role of mangroves and coral reefs in coastal protection; the coordination with the WMO and other organizations of disaster warning and preparedness and the transmission to end users of this information; and reference to the upcoming Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction. There was a request for clarification on the "National Disaster Emergency Fund" proposed in this chapter.

III. MANAGEMENT OF WASTES: There was concern to increase national capacity to ratify and implement the many existing conventions affecting waste issues, including the Basel and London Conventions. There is also a need to increase the level of awareness of the situation of SIDS and their participation in ongoing and upcoming related international negotiations. Attention was drawn to the London guidelines on prior consent and the rights of SIDS to refuse to allow hazardous substances onto their territory.

IV. COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES: Delegates asked that a reference be made to the Law of the Sea due to its special consideration of SIDS. It was pointed out, however, that such a reference should be action-oriented. Also raised was the need for a complete inventory of marine flora and fauna to be carried out at all levels. There should be a distinction between management of marine resources and the coastal zone. Integrated coastal management was identified as an integral component of sustainable development of SIDS. It will also be important to involve stakeholders at the local level and to create a link between the management of land and marine resources.

There was a call for greater intra-generational equity in fisheries management. Whereas demographic pressure is

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likely to increase in SIDS, access to fisheries needs to be limited if overfishing is to be avoided. Alternative sources of employment will need to be developed through a greater diversification of economic activity. Reference was made to the UN Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and its particular relevance to SIDS. The participation of SIDS in this process was encouraged. It was also recommended that reference be made to land-based sources of pollution, education and training, and the specific problems of global climate change and sea-level rise.

V. FRESHWATER RESOURCES: One delegate mentioned that there should be a reference to public awareness at the national level as well as at the international level. It was also mentioned that climate variability, as well as climate change, affect the supply of freshwater resources. The use of treated wastewater should also be included in this chapter.

VI. LAND RESOURCES: Delegates pointed out a number of issues that had been omitted: crop diversification; soil erosion; access to international markets; and the importance of watersheds. It was also recommended that reference to human settlements be strengthened since humans should be the focus of sustainable development in SIDS. Some felt that the application of coastal zone management programmes should be delayed until national development planning policies are established. In general, it was felt that more reference could be made to social issues and the importance of women, indigenous people and the NGO community. The need to include forestry management in this chapter was also raised.

VII. ENERGY RESOURCES: Delegates suggested inclusion of the following: references to appropriate pricing at the national level; Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) as a source of renewable energy; effective transfer of technology; and indigenous sources of renewable energy.

VIII. TOURISM RESOURCES: It was pointed out that land use planning and coastal zone management should be included when discussing integrated planning for sustainable tourism development.

IX. BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES: One delegate mentioned marine and other ecosystems with high biodiversity and productivity, such as coral reefs, temperate and tropical wetlands and other spawning areas, mangroves, and sea grass beds. There was a call for an inventory of flora and fauna and for special attention to be given to the biodiversity of endemic species. It was clarified that "buffer stocks" are those released into ecosystems after a natural disaster to minimize the loss of biodiversity.

X. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY: Regional and international assistance should focus on integrating environmental concerns into socio-economic development planning. Training and legislative assistance should be provided to SIDS to overcome obstacles to the ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments. A number of delegations felt that this issue should be given a higher priority and that ways in which it relates to other chapters should be considered.

XI. REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION: Although this chapter calls for the establishment of a SIDS Technical Assistance Programme and regional sustainable development centres, priority should be given to existing centres and programmes. The importance of the legal aspects of environmental issues and sustainable development was also mentioned by several delegates. The need to include reference to harmonization of legislation was also raised. One delegate asked if there was any role for the regional development banks in this section.

XII. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION: There was a call for telecommunications to be considered a natural resource. The management of domestic telecommunications facilities should be included, as should the need to increase training on telecommunications applications for natural disaster response. Regarding transport, one delegate called for greater cooperation in maintaining infrastructure.

XIII. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: One delegate commented that training programmes for integrated coastal management by UNDP and the UN Department of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea are particularly relevant to SIDS. Marine science programmes should include SIDS scientists and a flow of information should be established between researchers in industrialized countries and SIDS.

XIV. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: In the course of the discussion on this chapter, it was suggested that the structure of the paper be modified to place greater emphasis on the human aspect. One delegate questioned the reference to family planning as it is not necessarily suitable to all SIDS or cultures. Others responded that provisions on population issues should be retained in the text. Other aspects highlighted include training and preparedness for natural disasters; the establishment of development curricula that includes information on AIDS; and references to specific economic tools such as cost-benefit analysis and resource valuation. Many delegates mentioned the necessity to highlight the role of women and other major groups.

IN THE CORRIDORS

There has been frantic activity Conference Room 2 as NGOs draft amendments to the G-77 paper being discussed by the PrepCom. NGOs from SIDS have been allowed to attend AOSIS meetings, but generally feel that the paper is too weak on human resource issues. As one NGO put it, there is not enough talk of people. Late in the afternoon, NGOs circulated proposed amendments that included: supporting SIDS affected by drought and desertification; strengthening the Climate Change Convention to include legally-binding commitments; establishing vulnerability indices for ecosystems, habitats and communities; referring to subsistence fishermen and women; increasing land use accessibility; adopting energy efficiency guidelines for transport systems; and involving local populations in ecotourism planning.

Some NGOs and delegates are concerned that the role of NGOs and major groups is not treated adequately in the G-77 paper. While NGOs are seeking to strengthen language throughout the paper, many wish to strengthen and build upon references in Chapter XV on implementation, monitoring and review.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

INFORMAL SESSION: The PrepCom will meet in informal session today. The first item on the agenda will be discussion of Chapter XV, Implementation, Monitoring and Review, of the G-77 paper. The text of this chapter was introduced by Colombia, on behalf of the G-77 and China, at the conclusion of Friday's meeting. There are four sections of this chapter: national, regional, and international implementation, and monitoring and review. The section on international implementation contains the following subheadings: Finance, Trade, Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies for Cooperation and Capacity Building, Environmental Legislation and Training, Institutional Arrangements, and Vulnerability Index. While there has been general agreement so far on the priorities and the reordering of those priorities in the action programme, how they will be delivered and financed -- the subject of this chapter -- may provoke protracted debate today. Look for NGO and major groups' suggestions on how they would like their roles in the sustainable development of SIDS to be dealt with in this chapter.

The second item on the agenda is expected to be a discussion of the structure of the document, an issue raised continuously on Friday. Then, delegates will revisit issues raised during Friday's informal discussion of Chapters I through XIV of the G-77 draft, based on a checklist prepared by the Chair. Look for continued discussion between the Chair and members of the G-77 both in the corridors and during the informal session about the method of work for the rest of the week.