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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 1993

INFORMAL SESSION

On Tuesday morning the PrepCom met briefly in informal session before adjourning for the rest of the day so that various groups could hold consultations. The Chair, Amb. Penelope Wensley, opened the session by recapping what the PrepCom accomplished last week.

First, Wensley and Under-Secretary-General Nitin Desai made introductory statements. The PrepCom agreed on its work programme for the two weeks, but recognized the need to be flexible and adjust as things evolved. The Secretariat introduced the major documents, A/CONF.167/PC/6, 9 and 10 and representatives from SPREP and Caricom introduced the reports of the two regional technical meetings, contained in A/CONF.167/PC/7 and 8. During the three and one half days of general debate that followed, delegates heard 70 statements. A key statement was made by Vanuatu on behalf of AOSIS. Some delegates made formal requests for that statement to be made an official document and, as a result, it will be attached to the final report of the PrepCom.

AOSIS prepared a formal paper containing basic elements for an action programme, which was endorsed by the G-77 and China and submitted to the PrepCom. This document is expected to be formally introduced on Wednesday as A/CONF.167/PC/L.5. In the meantime, the PrepCom agreed to accept the paper as the basis of work. The Committee completed a first reading of chapters I-XIV of the paper on Friday and there appeared to be a large measure of agreement on the content of the paper. On Friday, the PrepCom also heard a report from Minister Harcourt Lewis from Barbados on preparations for the Conference, as well as a report from the Secretariat on operations of the voluntary fund. Wensley concluded her review by saying that last week was a most productive week that was characterized by a constructive atmosphere that maintained the momentum and captured the spirit of Rio.

XV. IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING AND REVIEW: All the participating delegates agreed on the importance of Chapter XV. Belgium, speaking on behalf of the European Community, and other delegates made reference to several aspects that needed greater emphasis, such as the role of the private sector, capital flows, economic diversification and the liberalization of trade.

A major emphasis throughout delegations' comments was the need to build upon existing efforts and progress already achieved. In particular, some delegates insisted on the need to take advantage of other opportunities on the international

agenda where the sustainable development of SIDS will be discussed. Regarding references to Agenda 21, the representative of the US asked that, wherever possible, this document use previously agreed text in Agenda 21. The US also highlighted the dangers of multilateral assistance since there is a predisposition of multilateral development agencies to favor large programmes, whereas in SIDS, smaller and less expensive projects aimed at capacity building might be more appropriate.

Implementation should be carried out within existing institutions as much as possible, not only within the UN, but also in the financial institutions. In this respect, the importance of the efforts of regional development banks was highlighted. It was also deemed important to increase coordination among donor countries. Japan called for greater clarity on the practical aspects of transfer of finance and technology.

With regard to the triangular approach, delegates highlighted the lack of balance between national responsibilities and regional and international responsibilities in Chapter XV compared to the other 14 chapters. There is a need to strengthen implementation at the national and regional levels. However, regional implementation should be flexible enough to allow for local particularities to surface.

There was also extensive discussion on how the process should relate to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and in the work of the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD). Australia, Iceland, Japan and UNEP agreed that the SIDS follow-up process needs to be well integrated into the work of the CSD. Some delegates expressed their concern over a possible increased bureaucratization of the DPCSD and the dangers inherent in giving the Secretariat more monitoring authority. It was stressed that monitoring authority should, in fact, remain with governments. The Nordic Group felt that it might be easier for SIDS to prepare one report for both the CSD and the SIDS follow-up process at the same time.

There was also some confusion regarding the vulnerability index. Reference was made to the indicators on sustainable development that are being developed by the CSD, and the need to ensure that they are appropriate to SIDS.

Delegates highlighted the need for a stronger role for NGOs and other major groups, particularly the role of women.

It was argued that the outcome of this Conference should be discussed by UN agencies and other international bodies to develop a coordinated plan of action and to decide which agency or body is best placed to provide the necessary

Earth Negotiations Bulletin is written and edited by Pamela Chasek (pchasek@cdp.apc.org), Charlotte de Fontaubert (61155@chopin.udel.edu), Langston James Goree VI "Kimo" (kimo@web.apc.org) and Rachel Kyte (rkyte@cdp.apc.org), with funding from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (iisd@web.apc.org). Additional funding for this volume of the *Bulletin* has been provided through the Caribbean Community and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme by the Environment and Natural Resources Group (ENR) of the United Nations Development Programme, which supports this effort for greater transparency and outreach to the NGO community worldwide. The authors can be contacted at their electronic mail addresses and, during the Conference, by phone at +1-212-355-7300, ext. 1603 and by fax at +1-212-753-9366. IISD can be contacted by phone at +1-204-958-7700, by fax at +1-204-958-7710 or at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD. The contents of *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be freely used in other publications with appropriate citation. This volume of *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* is uploaded into the APC computer conference env.islands.



agency or body is best placed to provide the necessary support. A representative from the UN Regional Commissions said they were ready to assist in the preparation of development and environmental management plans. Talk about a second follow-up Conference was perceived as premature at this stage.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS: During the morning's session, Wensley distributed a paper titled, "Summary of Comments." This paper, prepared by the Secretariat over the weekend, contained a summary of the comments on Chapters I through XIV of the G-77's basic elements for a programme of action. Wensley asked delegates to inform her or the Secretariat if there were any omissions or inaccuracies in this paper. The Holy See said that its comments on Chapter XIV (Human Resource Development) were not adequately reflected in the "Summary." The Holy See had questioned whether family planning can be categorized as a service by all States. He also clarified his other comments on this chapter. As there were no other comments at this time, the Chair adjourned the informal session.

AOSIS MEETING

The Chair cancelled the PrepCom's informal session Tuesday afternoon to allow AOSIS/G-77 to continue its work in integrating the comments of non-G-77 delegates, NGOs, UN agencies and others into the "Basic Elements" text. They expect to produce a revised text overnight. They are also incorporating some of their own ideas into the text as there was some internal criticism within AOSIS due to omissions in the first draft. The meeting was not expected to address the structure of the document, although this clearly remains a major issue for a number of delegations. It was expected to be another late night for AOSIS, especially for the delegates who have been playing a mediating role between the two major regional groups within AOSIS.

INTER-AGENCY MEETING

The Secretariat convened a meeting of agency representatives after the PrepCom adjourned Tuesday morning. During this meeting, the agencies discussed the preparation of a new document that will summarize and highlight activities in the UN system relevant to small island developing States. The first attempt at such an exercise, A/CONF.167/PC/6, met with sharp criticism from many of the delegates in that it was too general and did not include reports from all of the relevant UN agencies. This new document is expected to have a sharper focus on the particular problems of SIDS and how they are being addressed within the UN system. Some agency representatives expressed concern, however, that it would be impossible to collect and collate all of the necessary information in such a short period of time. Nevertheless, the Secretariat hopes to make this document available to governments in January so that they will be able to study it in advance of the Barbados Conference.

IN THE CORRIDORS I

In the corridors, delegates have been expressing concern with the follow-up to the Conference, specifically the monitoring and review of the programme of action. The question seems to be how to allow SIDS to have their own reporting process while not overloading their reporting capacity, bearing in mind the reporting duties related to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and other bodies.

The CSD is the UN institution established to monitor the implementation of the UNCED agreements, and, so it is argued, is the appropriate forum for SIDS monitoring and review. But how should SIDS be dealt with by the CSD? The follow-up to this Conference needs due attention while, at

the same time, SIDS concerns should be integrated throughout all programme areas of Agenda 21. Mindful of past mistakes and the consequent marginalization of issue areas within the UN (two such issues, Africa and women, come to mind) the follow-up to the SIDS Conference should appear as a distinct item on the agenda and also be addressed in each report submitted by agencies or governments, where appropriate, in whichever cluster of Agenda 21 is under discussion.

The job of the focal point, or whatever name is given to the post-Conference coordination within the DPCSD, would be to ensure this integration, and to manage interagency coordination. If this Conference can find an effective mechanism, it will be advancing the cause of all Agenda 21 review and UNCED follow-up. Several delegates have noted that this issue is of greater importance at the present than calls for a second conference.

IN THE CORRIDORS II

PrepCom delegates have been hard at work over the last week drafting and commenting on the basic elements for the programme of action to be adopted in Barbados in April. As the end of the PrepCom quickly approaches, however, there has also been some thought given to what will happen next. It does not appear likely that the PrepCom will be able to complete the draft programme of action by Friday. Although there has been talk about a second PrepCom or intersessional consultations, neither of these options appear likely at this time as the problem of ensuring adequate representation of all interested States, in light of the limited funds available, appears to be unsurmountable. The most probable scenario is that there will be extended pre-session consultations in Barbados immediately before the Conference. How many days of pre-session consultations will be needed has yet to be determined.

At the Barbados Conference itself, there might also be a Committee of the Whole that will finish negotiating the programme of action as well as the second expected outcome of the Conference -- the Barbados Declaration. This proposed Declaration has been the subject of informal consultations over the past week. There appears to be consensus that such a declaration is necessary and the Barbados delegation has indicated that it would like to prepare the first draft. This draft would then serve as the basis for negotiations at the Conference.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

The PrepCom will meet in formal session at 10:00 am today in the Trusteeship Council Chamber to introduce document A/CONF.167/PC/L.5, Position of the Group of 77 and China on Basic Elements for an Action Programme for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This document is the formal version of the AOSIS/G-77 text introduced informally last week.

The Chair is then expected to convene an informal session where the revised text of AOSIS/G-77, prepared last night, will be introduced. This text should form the basis for negotiation. However, as non-G-77 delegates will not have seen the paper in advance, it is likely that the Chair will again adjourn the session to allow time for regional groups to meet and delegates to consult with their capitals. The Chair may also decide to embark on a reading of the text *ad referendum*, pending the result of these consultations as time is now at a premium.

The Secretariat has made arrangements for the use of Conference Room 8, if the Chair should desire, for the afternoon session. Chances are good that discussions will continue in the Trusteeship Council Chamber due to the limited seating capacity in Room 8.