SUMMARY OF THE PREPCOM MEETING FOR THE CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
30 AUGUST - 10 SEPTEMBER 1993

The Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States concluded its only scheduled session at UN Headquarters in New York on 10 September 1993. The Conference, which will be held in Barbados from 25 April - 6 May 1994, is one of the major outputs of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

In her opening statement, PrepCom Chair Penelope Wensley (Australia) set the context for the meeting. "We meet at a time when expectations of the United Nations have never been higher, when the demands on the system have never been greater, when the world community is struggling to cope with a proliferation of political and economic crises and problems. So we are competing for attention, for resources, for the commitment of governments, and for the provision of staff support for our work by the UN and its agencies." This meeting was one of the first opportunities for governments to "roll up their sleeves, and get down to the hard work of turning the ideas and concepts of Agenda 21 into practical concrete plans, measures and programmes which will produce results."

By the conclusion of the two-week meeting, the PrepCom had set the process in motion for the adoption of a programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS). However, many felt that more negotiating time will be needed before this document is ready for adoption in Barbados next year. So, in the closing session, the PrepCom requested the General Assembly to consider continuing the preparatory process, which may mean convening an additional session of the PrepCom, to allow governments more time to work on the Programme of Action and an opportunity to initiate negotiations on the Barbados Declaration -- the other proposed product of the Conference -- which was not formally discussed during this session. It will not be known until the General Assembly concludes in December whether and when there will be a second PrepCom, given the current UN financial situation and continued opposition to this idea from some delegations. What is known, however, is that unless governments return to the negotiating table with a positive attitude and a desire to promote sustainable development in small island developing States, a second PrepCom will not solve anything.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SMALL ISLANDS STATES CONFERENCE

The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States has its roots in the UNCED preparatory process. Participants at the third meeting of the UNCED Preparatory Committee expressed considerable interest in the problems facing small island developing States and requested the Secretary-General to add a programme area on islands to the oceans chapter (17) of Agenda 21.

When Programme Area G, "Sustainable Development of Small Islands," was first presented at PrepCom IV in New York in March 1992, it was accepted by the delegates with comparatively little debate. The objective of the programme area is to adopt and implement sustainable development plans for islands, including the utilization of marine and coastal resources, the maintenance of biodiversity and the improvement in the quality of life for island peoples.

Paragraph 17.131 of the final text of Agenda 21 stated that: "Small island developing States, with the support, as appropriate, of international organizations, whether subregional, regional or global, should develop and strengthen inter-island, regional and interregional cooperation and information exchange, including periodic regional and global meetings on sustainable development of small island developing States with the first global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States to be held in 1993."

THE 47TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The UN General Assembly resolution establishing the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was one of the five major resolutions on UNCED follow-up to be negotiated during the 47th General Assembly in 1992. The final resolution states that the Conference will:

- Review current trends in the socio-economic development of small island developing States;
- Examine the nature and magnitude of the specific vulnerabilities of small island developing States;
- Define a number of specific actions and policies relating to environmental and development planning to be undertaken by the States, with help from the international community;
- Identify elements that these States need to include in medium- and long-term sustainable development plans;
- Recommend measures for enhancing the endogenous capacity of these States; and
- Review whether institutional arrangements at the international level enable these States to give effect to the relevant provisions of Agenda 21.

ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

The Preparatory Committee for the Conference held its organizational session in New York on 15-16 April 1993. Penelope Wensley, Australia's Ambassador to the United
Nations in Geneva and Ambassador for the Environment, was elected Chair of the PrepCom. The four Vice-Chairs are: Takao Shibata (Japan), Marian Dinu (Romania), John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) and José Luis Jesús (Cape Verde). Barbados, as host country, is an ex officio member of the Bureau. Ioan Barac (Romania) was elected at the substantive session of the PrepCom to replace Dinu, who was posted to Washington.

The Committee had before it three documents for consideration: the draft provisional agenda (A/CONF.167/PC/1); a report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for the Conference (A/CONF.167/PC/2); and the draft provisional rules of procedure (A/CONF.167/PC/3).

The discussion on the draft guidelines for the work of the PrepCom was the most contentious. Issues that generated debate included the responsibilities of the international community in providing small island developing States access to financial resources; and the international community's responsibility to small island developing States regarding "access to environmentally sound and energy-efficient technology, including delivery mechanisms." Most of the guidelines recommended that the PrepCom's consideration of the role of small island developing States should include actions at the micro level aimed at environmental and development planning, measures for enhancing local skills and expertise, and medium- and long-term planning for sustainable development. The guidelines also emphasized the importance of regional technical cooperation on environmental problems and the necessary for regional organizations and commissions to participate in this process.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETINGS

As part of the preparatory process, two regional technical meetings were held. The first meeting for the Indian and Pacific Oceans was coordinated by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and was held from 31 May - 4 June 1993 in Vanuatu. The report of this meeting is contained in document A/CONF.167/PC/7. The second regional technical meeting for the Atlantic/Caribbean/Mediterranean region was held in Trinidad and Tobago from 28 June - 2 July 1993. The meeting was coordinated by the Caribbean Community (Caricom) with the assistance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The report of this meeting is contained in document A/CONF.167/PC/8.

The meetings recommended that the PrepCom consider the following priority areas as the basis for developing an action programme for small island developing States (SIDS): climate change and sea-level rise; natural and environmental disaster preparedness; environmentally sound management of wastes and toxic substances; coastal and marine resources; freshwater resources; land resources; management of energy resources; management of tourism development; conservation of biological diversity; national institutions and administrative capacity; regional institutions and technical cooperation; transport and communication; management of science and technology; human resources (population, education, urban development and health); and environmental legislation.

The regional technical meetings also endorsed and recommended to the PrepCom guidelines for implementation, monitoring and review of the action programme for SIDS. The recommendations include action to be taken at national, regional and international levels. They also encouraged the participation of NGOs and other major groups in policy formulation and called for further work on developing a vulnerability index that would better reflect the particular situation of SIDS.

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

The PrepCom opened on Monday, 30 August 1993 at UN Headquarters in New York. Representatives from 94 countries and 16 UN agencies participated in the meeting. The PrepCom also accredited 68 NGOs that do not have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). After three and one-half days of general debate, the PrepCom began consideration of a draft programme of action for the sustainable development of SIDS. The programme of action was drafted by the members of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) and was submitted to the PrepCom by the Group of 77. This draft became the focus of discussion and negotiation. By the end of the two-week meeting, delegates had agreed ad referendum to a large portion of the 15-chapter text, yet still left major issues in brackets or not fully negotiated, including the preamble, the structure of the document, and Chapter 15 on implementation, monitoring and review.

GENERAL DEBATE

The general debate focused on activities of the UN system in preparation for the Conference and consideration of plans and programmes to support the sustainable development of SIDS. Most of the government delegates, UN agencies and NGOs identified the problems faced by SIDS and elements that should be included in the programme of action to be adopted by the Conference.

SIDS have unique vulnerabilities and limitations, explained Amb. Robert van Lierop in his opening statement on behalf of AOSIS. During the course of the general debate, a number of countries made specific references to these vulnerabilities. Physically, SIDS are small and often geographically remote. Some SIDS have dense populations, most have a narrow range of natural resources, and limited freshwater resources. The fragility of island ecosystems make coastal, solid waste and fisheries management high priorities. SIDS are vulnerable to the effects of global warming, particularly the sea-level rise that poses a threat of potential loss of the entire territory of some islands. SIDS are also threatened by dumping at sea, nuclear testing in the Pacific, and natural disasters. A number of delegates, including Fiji, Mauritius, and Micronesia, mentioned that one of the consequences of natural disasters is the high cost of insurance, when available at all. St. Kitts and Nevis pointed out that up to 30 percent of national budgets are often absorbed by the need to respond to natural disasters. Tourism can also have negative effects on SIDS, including intensive activity in the coastal area. The fight against drug trafficking further constrains sustainable development, especially in the Caribbean. Among the economic problems and constraints, SIDS have small domestic markets and face difficulties in penetrating international markets, primarily due to transportation costs and limited access to the most recent technologies and means of production.

Furthermore, the technology developed by industrialized countries is not always appropriate for SIDS and needs to be adapted.

Some of the human constraints to sustainable development of SIDS include the brain drain and migration of young people; inadequate training and educational opportunities; and high unemployment, especially among the young.

During the debate, Belgium, on behalf of the European Community, raised the point that SIDS benefit from higher levels of ODA than other developing countries and also contain a large number of expatriates who contribute their knowledge and expertise to the local economies. A number of representatives from SIDS pointed out, however, that ODA levels do not accurately reflect the real situation. A number of delegates commented specific proposals or issues that should be included in the programme of action for the sustainable development of SIDS, which will be
adopted in Barbados. The G-77 and AOSIS advocated the use of a triangular model, which would include national, regional and international initiatives. Several delegates stated that the Rio agreements must be turned into practical action-oriented programmes that benefit SIDS. Malta, Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda all mentioned the need to develop a vulnerability index to replace GNP per capita measurement. Other general issues raised included the need to support the achievement of international and national development objectives in the development planning processes of SIDS; the need for new and additional financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technology as opposed to the need to maximize existing levels of assistance; the role of NGOs, women and other major groups in the implementation of this programme of action; and the need for international cooperation, including better performance by regional and international organizations. On this issue, it was also mentioned that the UN should establish the capacity and designate focal points to promote sustainable development in SIDS.

Delegates also pointed out a number of other more specific proposals during the general debate. The US and the Solomon Islands stressed the need for integrated coastal zone management. UNEP and China agreed that there is a need to improve data and information exchange. It was also suggested that the programme of action address communications, energy conservation, disposal of toxic and hazardous wastes, development of natural resources, development of marine resources, emergency preparedness, response to sea-level rise, tourism development, strengthening drug enforcement efforts; and land resources management. Other issues raised include health and population policies, the need for export diversification, development planning and capacity building.

Iceland stressed the need to include islands supporting small communities, not only small island developing States. Many of the islands in the Arctic suffer from the same problems as SIDS.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN THE UN SYSTEM

The discussion of A/CONF.167/PC/6, Overview of the activities of the UN system, took place with only half a dozen UN agencies and the Regional Commissions present. While the Secretariat was thanked for its efforts, many delegates pointed to some of the shortcomings of the document. In particular, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, France, Iceland, and Canada noted that the activities described were not always specific to SIDS. In addition, issues of concern to SIDS, such as communication and transport, were not always addressed in sufficient detail.

Australia called for a new document providing a complete picture of what the UN is doing, what it can do, and how well it is doing it. Kiribati reminded participants that some UN agency programmes will not benefit SIDS that are not members of the agency in question. Vanuatu added that the imperfections of the report reflect the imperfections of the UN system. The US urged the international community to make the best use of the institutions already in place and to implement existing obligations. Canada suggested that a questionnaire be circulated to assist in evaluating programmes carried out at the national level and to include relevant comments in an inventory compiled by the Secretariat. Cuba suggested that the participants meet once more before Barbados when they have a better sense of what is already being done and a clearer idea of what is needed.

Miles Stoby, from the Secretariat, urged the delegates to remember that the UN has no specific mandate to deal with SIDS as such. He indicated that a new document could be prepared for Barbados if its focus was more clearly defined. He suggested that as information systems are expensive, a SIDS referral point within the UN system could be created.

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 ready and prepared 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 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 Nicholas Drayton, Chair of the NGO Liaison Committee, who spoke on behalf of the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA). CCA is consulting with other NGOs in preparation for the Conference. He urged governments to include NGOs on their 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.

OPERATIONS OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND

Miles Stoby 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 received only US$154,783. This figure includes contributions from Canada, Chile, Sweden and New Zealand. There have also been contributions 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 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.

ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

On Thursday, 2 September 1993, the G-77 formally introduced a paper drafted by AOSIS containing basic elements for an action programme on the sustainable development of SIDS. This paper contained drafts for 14 of the 15 proposed chapters in this action programme. The following afternoon, the G-77 introduced a second document containing the text for Chapter 15 on implementation, monitoring and review. On Wednesday, 8 September 1993, the G-77 tabled two more documents: a revised version of the basic elements paper (Chapters 1-14) and a paper containing the preamblariole and basic text sections for each of the chapters. The second half of the PrepCom focussed on the discussion and negotiation of these documents.

Each of the substantive chapters contained three sections: national, regional and international action -- the triangular approach. Although this met with general agreement, not all of the delegates were pleased with the overall structure of this document. It was pointed out by a number of delegates that some of the chapters in the G-77
document address cross-sectoral or "horizontal" areas while others address sectoral areas. More visibility needs to be given to the horizontal subjects and they should be reordered as follows: XIV. Human Resource Development; X. National Institutions and Administrative Capacity; XI. Regional Institutions and Technical Cooperation; and XIII. Science and Technology. Having reordered these chapters, the long and the brief ones at the beginning of the document. Another question was raised about the overall structure of the document. The G-77 responded that they envision a single, integrated document with the preamble first, followed by the 15 chapters, each preceded by a Basis for Action section. Regarding the order of the chapters, he said that the current structure has been agreed upon by the G-77 and the sponsors. The G-77 was able to accept the reordering, but not the relocation of the chapters to the beginning of the document. He said that they would discuss this further in informal meetings.

The following is a chapter-by-chapter summary of the status of this document.

PREAMBLE: The preamble was introduced late in the second week of the meeting by AOSIS/G-77. It highlights the major problems faced by SIDS and the need to give a sense of urgency to the actions that are needed. A number of disagreements emerged during the course of the discussion on the preamble. Many of the contentious issues mirrored those that had arisen earlier in the negotiations.

On the structure, some delegates felt that the text was too long and that some of the issues belonged in the Programme of Action rather than in the preamble, as is customary in international agreements. In particular, references made in the preamble to the subsequent chapters met with some opposition on the part of those who had previously advocated reorganizing the chapters to place emphasis on the cross-sectoral ones. Some delegates called for a more balanced preamble, while the authors saw it as a means to present all the difficulties and constraints to the sustainable development of SIDS. These so-called "negative aspects" were highlighted in the document and it was argued that they should be counter-balanced by "positive" elements such as the opportunities and natural resources that SIDS can draw upon. In fact, most delegates supported the views on the very purpose of this Conference. For SIDS, the "negative" language in the preamble is a clear reflection of their dire situation. They indicated that balancing the preamble is not as important as conveying the sense of urgency dictated by the situation. No agreement was reached on this point.

The paragraph on financial aspects was another source of disagreement. A number of delegates did not think that finance and reference to Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 belonged in the preamble, instead arguing that reference should be made to Agenda 21 as a whole and the responsibilities of all actors in its implementation. The authors insisted on retaining this paragraph and, therefore, it was bracketed along with a large part of the remainder of the text.

In view of these differences, the Chair concluded that it was clear that a thorough second reading was called for and she invited all parties to examine the document and the comments that were made with great care so that a compromise could be reached. Due to the lack of time, a second reading did not take place.

I. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA-LEVEL RISE: This chapter highlights the possible impact that such phenomena might have on SIDS. This was identified as a problem that confronts SIDS in particular and yet originates at a global level. This was apparent in the references made to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the need for its ratification and entry into force. These references met with some opposition as delegates sometimes felt that the current PrepCom should not interfere with ongoing negotiations in other fora and so this part of the text remained in brackets. Means to respond to this phenomenon included monitoring and predictions, integrated coastal management as a way to provide response measures to the effects of climate change, and greater exchange of information and experience between SIDS. SIDS and NGOs alike, however, stressed the futility of adopting such measures if an effort is not carried out at the global level to reduce CO₂ emissions in an attempt to mitigate global warming and its impacts on sea-level rise.

II. NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS: This chapter emphasized the need for SIDS to increase their preparedness and response capacities to natural and environmental disasters. This can best be achieved through the promotion of early warning systems, strengthening broadcast capacity and telecommunication links, and other initiatives relating to natural disaster considerations in development planning. A particular point of disagreement was how much importance should be attached to insurance-related difficulties for SIDS caused by their vulnerability to natural disasters.

III. MANAGEMENT OF WASTES: The special vulnerability of SIDS to this problem was highlighted, particularly in view of reduced land surfaces in these countries. A more controversial element was the issue of hazardous and toxic wastes and the outstanding question of transboundary movement of these substances and the use of SIDS and their territorial seas for the disposal of waste generated by other States. The right of SIDS to refuse entry of hazardous substances into their territories was also mentioned. This issue was not resolved and the text remained in brackets. Measures likely to alleviate these problems include emission discharge and pollution standards, promoting awareness and education, ratification and implementation of the relevant conventions and the development of regional and international cooperation.

IV. COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES: This chapter aims at developing SIDS' management capacities in both the coastal area and in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). This can best be achieved through the elaboration of an integrated coastal zone management methodology appropriate to SIDS, monitoring programmes for coastal and marine resources, developing capacities for sustainable harvesting and processing of fisheries resources and establishing clearing houses for coastal and marine environmental information. The capabilities of SIDS to effectively survey and monitor activities in the EEZs and to develop sustainable cooperative and facilitate mutually advantageous fishing agreements between SIDS and foreign fishing groups. In this respect, participation of SIDS in the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks is to be encouraged and facilitated. Some delegates required clarification on points such as foreign fishing within SIDS' EEZs or on the high seas and so this issue was one of the few in this chapter where consensus was not immediate.

V. FRESHWATER RESOURCES: The importance of freshwater resources for SIDS and the limits they can set to sustainable development was highlighted. These resources need to be managed in a sustainable manner through efficient technologies for the catchment, production, conservation and delivery of freshwater. Regional cooperation in training and research should be enhanced to develop technical assistance and linked water resource databases for relevant decision-making tools, including forecasting models for water management planning and utilization. Climate change and its adverse impacts on freshwater resource availability also need to be taken into consideration. This part of the document gave rise to little debate and the text was left unbracketed.

VI. LAND RESOURCES: Due to increased population pressure and related land-use conflicts, management plans need to be elaborated in conjunction with other uses and policies. Appropriate forms of land tenure are to be encouraged as well as attention to physical planning in both urban and rural environments. Appropriate
aforestation and reforestation programmes can ensure watershed and coastal protection and reduce land degradation. Sustainable land management actions can encourage capacity building for monitoring the rate and extent of land use changes and foster sharing of information and experience on sustainable land use practices and policies. It was also mentioned that, in accordance with Chapter 7 of Agenda 21, the availability, accessibility, and usability of indigenous and traditional knowledge of SIDS settlements need to be improved through national and international action.

VII. ENERGY RESOURCES: In view of SIDS dependency on energy imports, energy conservation and the development of renewable sources of energy need to be encouraged. This may be achieved through strengthening research capability in the development of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, geothermal, hydroelectric, ocean thermal energy conversion, wave and biomass. SIDS need to be assisted in developing national capacity to effectively plan, manage, and monitor their energy sectors. Some of the recommendations on transfer of technology and the use of double-hulled tankers were not acceptable to all and, thus, remained in brackets.

VIII. TOURISM RESOURCES: Tourism is perceived as both an opportunity for SIDS development and an activity that must be integrated with environmental and cultural concerns. Competition for land resources is acute and tourism development should be neither disruptive nor detrimental to other viable sectors. Integrated planning and policies are to be developed to ensure sustainable development through Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs), guidelines and standards. It is important to ensure that tourism and each island’s environment and culture are mutually supportive. The text contains no bracketed sections.

IX. BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES: This chapter emphasizes the importance of biodiversity, and particularly of marine and coastal species, to SIDS. The sustainable management of these resources requires greater awareness and education, ratification and implementation of relevant international and regional conventions, establishment of buffer stocks and gene banks for reintegration into the environment, and continued studies and research on these resources. The importance of support by local communities is also emphasized. There was no disagreement on any of the sections in this chapter.

X. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY: This chapter addresses the need to integrate environmental concerns into national institutional and administrative arrangements, specifically in terms of economic and development planning. Many of the action points concern national and international support for capacity building, once national priorities have been established. Issues discussed in greater detail included the extent to which the chapter should refer to all levels of government in the national context and the need to involve the public in decision making processes. The delegates were able to agree on compromise text on these two issues.

XI. REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION: This chapter concentrates on the role that UN and non-UN regional organizations can play in assisting SIDS at the national level, instituting and implementing regional programmes, and coordinating projects and assistance. Still outstanding is the question of the harmonization of environmental legislation and policies between SIDS.

XII. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION: The focus of this chapter is the lifeline provided SIDS by transport and communication. The prohibitive costs of both of these services -- due to SIDS distance and isolation -- and the need to find innovative solutions to this problem is the focus of the action points. Still to be resolved are whether or not to include references to quarantine, which may have impact on GATT agreements, and to what extent land transport modernization has lagged behind major changes and continues to degrade the environment.

XIII. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: As well as emphasizing the important role of science and technology in building SIDS capacity for sustainable development, this chapter examines the need to increase the use of environmentally-friendly technologies and how they can be made available to SIDS. The chapter also addresses the need to better utilize and promote indigenous knowledge while improving science and technology education and training opportunities. There are no outstanding substantive issues remaining.

XIV. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: This chapter looks at mechanisms to improve the quality of life in SIDS. Recognizing that programmes should focus on the well-being of island peoples, the chapter addresses issues of population policy, housing, the role of women and other major groups, as well as the links between environment and health, housing, and education. There is no agreement yet on references to population policy and the fundamental rights of the human person and the family.

XV. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW: Focusing on the means of implementation for most of the activities in the fourteen previous chapters, this chapter addresses issues of finance, trade, transfer of environmentally sound technologies for cooperation and capacity building, environmental legislation and training, and institutional arrangements.

This chapter is at a less advanced stage of negotiation and has many outstanding issues that are included in brackets. These include: national reporting by SIDS on progress in implementing the outcomes of Barbados; the need for more detailed paragraphs within the national implementation section in order to better balance the three sections (national, regional and international) within this chapter; coordination of the roles of regional agencies; the bulk of the finance text; and the suggestion that the international donor community should only supplement national efforts for sustainable development. Also to be resolved are suggestions on the need to diversify exports and reduce SIDS dependence on single commodities, references to the need to protect intellectual property rights, and the nature of a focal point within the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DP/CD) to oversee and coordinate UN system implementation of the outcomes of the Barbados Conference and determine how to relate the programme of action to the work of the CBD.

CLOSING SESSION
The PrepCom came to a close on Friday afternoon, 10 September 1993. Although the Chair had hoped to have one more informal negotiating session during the day on Friday, not all delegates were prepared to return to the table to further negotiate the controversial issues in Chapter 15 and the preamble. To further complicate matters, there was no possibility of getting interpretation and other conference services for a Friday evening session, so that the Chair was forced to conclude the PrepCom at 6:00 pm.

In its final session, the PrepCom adopted the following decisions:

- To recommend to the General Assembly that the Conference be held from 25 April - 6 May 1994 in Barbados.
- To recommend to the General Assembly that one day of pre-Conference consultations take place on Sunday, 24 April 1994.
- To adopt A/CONF.167/PC/L.7, "Information needs on current donor activities in support of sustainable development in small island developing States." This decision, proposed by Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand and Sweden, requests the Secretary- General, in consultation with the relevant UN agencies and organizations to prepare a report containing relevant information on donor activities in
support of sustainable development in SIDS. It also invites bilateral, regional and multilateral donor agencies, as well as NGOs, to provide similar input. The information is supposed to be aggregated at the sub-regional and sub-sector level. This decision was taken in response to the dissatisfaction by some delegations with the information presented in A/CONF.167/PC/6 on the overview of system-wide activities relevant to SIDS.

- To adopt the draft provisional agenda for the Conference, as contained in A/CONF.167/PC/11.
- To adopt the report of the Preparatory Committee, as contained in A/CONF.167/PC/L.6

After much discussion, two other decisions were taken regarding the future work of the PrepCom. The first of these involved the status of documentation. The Chair stated that the PrepCom had before it document A/CONF.167/PC/L.5 and Add.1, the G-77 and China’s "Basic elements for an action programme on the sustainable development of small island developing States. L.5 contains the basic elements for Chapters 1-14 and Add.1 contains Chapter 15. However, the PrepCom spent considerable time developing these documents and now has before it an additional informal paper containing the preamble and basis for action, a first revision of the basic elements paper and two integrated working texts prepared by the Secretariat. Wensley requested the delegates to consider extending the work on these texts beyond the end of the PrepCom. He would like to carry forward. As the discussion progressed, it appeared that all delegates were in agreement and a decision was taken to request the Secretariat and the Rapporteur to produce a full, consolidated text called A/CONF.167/PC/L.5/Rev.1. This text will include the preamble, to be followed by Chapters 1-15, including a basis for action and programme areas for each chapter. It was also decided to include all comments made during the discussions on the preamble and Chapter 15 as attachments or an accompanying document. The text will include a note explaining that some portions of the text have been agreed to, others remain bracketed for further negotiation, and other parts of the document (the preamble and Chapter 15) have not yet been negotiated.

The final decision taken by the PrepCom followed a lengthy discussion on how best to proceed between now and the Conference. There was a wide divergence of views as some delegates believed that the work should be taken forward to Barbados and completed at the Conference itself by the Preparatory Committee. Other delegates saw value in conducting inter sessional work between now and April. Numerous delegates expressed their views on the matter. Some of the concerns raised included the budgetary implications of intersessional work, the availability of dates on the UN calendar for a possible second PrepCom, the efficient use of time, the need to ensure adequate representation of SIDS, and the success of the Conference. The Chair proposed, and the Committee agreed, to request the General Assembly to explore options for continuing the work of the preparatory process.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE PREPCOM

The outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, along with the implementation of Agenda 21 as a whole, is being held hostage to the inability of the UN system and its member States to adapt to new global realities. After 20 years of gamesmanship and rhetoric on environmental protection by the State parties, it was agreed to an action plan -- Agenda 21 -- in Rio last year. The UN system, however, is not set up to execute it. This two-week PrepCom demonstrated this weakness at all levels -- inter-agency, Secretariat, and intergovernmental.

At the inter-agency level, this PrepCom highlighted a number of areas where the UN agencies are still unable to adjust their focus and adapt their thinking to the increased level of cooperation and coordination that is necessary to implement Agenda 21. For example, document A/CONF. 167/PC/6 was supposed to provide a summary of UN agency activities related to the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS). However, much of the information in the document was criticized as being too general, not sufficiently specific to SIDS and not including all agencies. In its introduction to the document, the Secretariat pointed out that although they tried to include reports from all agencies in the document, not all agencies contributed. Agency representatives pointed out that it would be impossible to include all the information from all agencies when many of their programmes are not SIDS specific, but many have an applicable component.

There was also a display of the all too familiar rivalry between different agencies, UN bodies and Regional Commissions over who should show leadership in what areas. Most UN agencies are now reviewing their projects and programmes to bring them in compliance with the relevant programme areas of Agenda 21. Furthermore, Agenda 21’s call for increased coordination and cooperation between UN agencies is gradually being implemented within the framework of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD). What many agencies are finding, however, is that old bureaucratic and institutional difficulties are proving difficult to overcome. New ideas and approaches are having a hard time penetrating the status quo. Without greater creativity and innovation on the part of the agencies, the UN system will never be effective in the implementation of Agenda 21 or the sustainable development of SIDS.

At the Secretariat level, the SIDS Conference and this PrepCom appeared to be lost in the shuffle of reorganization, budget constraints and countless other demands on the UN system. Until only a few months ago, the Secretariat for this Conference only had one full-time member. The poor quality of the documentation for this PrepCom, the lack of Secretariat guidance throughout the process, and the limited resources, especially for public information and other activities aimed at increasing the visibility of this Conference, illustrates this problem. The Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), which includes the Secretariat for this Conference, was only created last December and has been given far more responsibilities than its limited staff and budget can adequately handle.

Eventually, the creation of the DPCSD should allow the UN a more flexible and integrated response to the implementation of Agenda 21. Yet its present state of disarray had an effect on this PrepCom.

Problems with conference services led to the loss of at least 25 percent of available negotiating time. Only one week before the PrepCom began, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced a wide range of cost-cutting measures, including the elimination of evening, weekend and holiday meetings. As a result, the PrepCom was not able to meet on Monday, 6 September (a US holiday) and was unable to have interpretation and other services provided at evening sessions. The lack of available rooms and other misallocated or underused facilities cut down the amount of negotiating time. As long as it is given low priority by the UN Secretariat, this Conference will continue to lack adequate infrastructure, substance and public relations.

Perhaps the PrepCom suffered the most at the intergovernmental level, where a series of missed opportunities left many delegates alike with a sense of frustration. The Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) missed a number of opportunities to advance its cause. This group of 41 small island developing States was originally formed to galvanize support for small islands faced by the dangers of climate change and sea-level rise. As it proved to be a ineffective group during the climate change negotiations as well as during the UNCED preparatory process. In fact, AOSIS was responsible for the programme area on small island States, Chapter 17(G) of
Agenda 21, which includes the call to convene this Conference. Furthermore, ACSIS largely drafted the resolution concerning the Conflicts of the Conference. However, the PrepCom, like so many other country groups in history, ACSIS found that while it could be united on a single issue, there were many more issues that divided it. As a result, ACSIS had a good deal of difficulty developing a common position with so many disparate members. ACSIS members then went to their national governments to get the different types of environmental problems, different degrees of remoteness and vulnerability to external forces, different amounts of natural and human resources, different regional perspectives and cultural attitudes. Many ACSIS members were new to the UN and many were quite skeptical, in particular, was in which groups function at UN Headquarters in New York. Quite often the priorities of the Pacific SIDS did not match those of the Caribbean SIDS that in turn, did not match those of the Indian Ocean, Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean SIDS. As a result, the preparation of the draft elements to be included in a programme of action proved to be quite a formidable task.

When the PrepCom began, developed country delegates and groups, the Chair and the rest of the G-77 allowed ACSIS to take the lead. During the first few days of the Conference, ACSIS members worked hard behind the scenes to develop the draft elements for a Programme of Action from the contents of the reports of the regional technical meetings, although it had been expected that this draft would have been prepared in advance of the PrepCom. Nearly four days of negotiating time were lost, however, as it took ACSIS longer than anticipated to reach agreement on the text. Perhaps, it was a mistake to draft the negotiating text during the 1st week of Agenda 21 for SIDS rather than on some critical issues. Part of this delay was due to the fact that according to UN procedure, the G-77 had to endorse the ACSIS text before it could be submitted to the Committee, since ACSIS is not a group recognized by the UN. Also, with the majority of ACSIS members also members of the G-77, it is at present inconceivable that G-77 would allow a sub-group to forward positions on their own. It was not until mid-way through the second week of the PrepCom that the G-77 agreed to allow the Chair of ACSIS to also speak on behalf of the G-77, thus eliminating one step in the process. There was a certain degree of tension between the Chair and the ACSIS representatives during this period of the preparation of the draft elements of the Conference.

The higher priority given to the Conference by all governments will help to secure its success, not least by forcing Secretariat to accord it more priority.

ACSIS's leading role started to diminish as the second week began. The previous Friday, non-G-77 delegates made their preliminary comments on the ACSIS/G-77 draft text and ACSIS announced that they would redraft the text based on these comments. However, ACSIS did not work over the long weekend and it was not until Tuesday that redrafting began. As a result, consideration of the revised text could not take place until Wednesday evening (after the text was redrafted, the G-77 approved it and non-G-77 delegates had the opportunity to look at it). Still the text failed to incorporate many of the comments made in the first reading by non-G-77 delegations. The loss of practically two days of negotiating time forced the Chair to step in and exercise great control over the process in order to maintain momentum. Many ACSIS delegates were not pleased with this turn of events and went so far as to complain that the process, which had been taken away from them, was moving too fast. Yet, with only two more days left in the PrepCom the Chair felt that she had no choice, but to try to keep the negotiations moving forward.

Frustration with the process continued to mount during the two nights and one day of informal negotiations as old UNCED tensions started to resurface, particularly during the discussions on financial resources and technology transfer in Chapter 15. ACSIS introduced Chapter 15, dealing with means of implementation, at the end of the first week. ACSIS had deliberately introduced the action points (Chapters 1-14) separately from the means of implementation. Chapter 15 was introduced only after introducing Chapter 15 so late in the process worked to their advantage. Chapter 15 was also undermined by the lack of balance between the three points of the triangle, national, regional and international action. In fact, there had been discussion within ACSIS on whether national actions should be mentioned at all in this chapter. During the initial discussions, even the use of agreed language from Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 proved to be controversial, as two donors made it clear that they would not provide any new and additional financial resources. Although most of the donor countries endorsed these views, from an economic point of view, they were frustrated by the drafting of Chapter 15 which put all emphasis on the international community.

The last day of the PrepCom brought a procedural issue, which had been simmering throughout the meeting, to a boil --- the possibility of a second session of the PrepCom. Although the resolution establishing this Conference only made provision for one PrepCom, from the very beginning ACSIS countries based their strategy on the assumption that there would be another session. Informally, the Secretariat also indicated that this was envisaged, although the Chair had not. A number of UN agencies were also under the impression that there would be a second PrepCom. The Chair and the majority of the donors thought that one PrepCom would be sufficient and any unfinished business could be completed in Barbados during the Conference. For two weeks rumors flew and finally, on the last day, the issue of a second PrepCom was formally discussed. Delegates remained as divided as ever and, finally, the Chair suggested that the PrepCom request the General Assembly to consider continuing the preparatory work, which would include the option of holding a second PrepCom. Had this not been an issue, it is possible that the Committee would have completed more work. Yet, with the knowledge that another PrepCom was there for the asking, ACSIS delegates were able to move at a slower pace and postpone resolution of some of the more difficult issues, particularly the means of implementation. It is not clear, however, if any of these issues, especially implementation, will be able to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction even if there is a second PrepCom. It was a high stakes gamble by ACSIS and the Chair to remain unopposed at this stage. However, it takes the decision. Clearly, ACSIS does not want to go to Barbados with Chapter 15 unresolved, thus giving donor countries the chance to hold the success of the Conference hostage. Yet, this will be the case if the General Assembly does not approve a second PrepCom.

Few delegates and observers were completely satisfied when the PrepCom adjourned Friday evening. Although much work was accomplished, especially with regard to Chapters 1-14, there was still a sense that this process was not going to result in an adequate Programme of Action for the implementation of Agenda 21 in small island developing States. Perhaps another intergovernmental conference is not the answer. But until the International community in general and the UN in particular is able to develop a new method for addressing issues on environment and development, Agenda 21 implementation will continue to be more rhetoric than action.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD

FUTURE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE: On the last day, the PrepCom agreed to request the General Assembly to explore the options for continuing the work of the preparatory process. Delegates are deeply divided on this issue, as the Plenary discussion indicated. The European Community, the UNCED Chair, the US and the ECCAN believe a second session is necessary, given the current budgetary constraints within the UN system. The US expressed the view that a second PrepCom is inconceivable
as long as UN peacekeepers were being killed due to insufficient funding. The G-77 and AOSIS support a second PrepCom. Canada, Australia and New Zealand are willing to consider the possibility, but asked for more detail on the financial implications and insisted that SIDS have adequate representation. If the General Assembly agrees to convene a second session, it is likely to take place in February 1994.

48TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY:
The next session of the General Assembly is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, 21 September 1993. The provisional agenda for the session (A/48/150) lists 157 items. Consideration of the Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is item 100(e), together with the reports of the INC for the Desertification Convention and the Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Since the SIDS Conference is part of the implementation of decisions and recommendations of UNCED, its report is expected to be referred to the Second Committee of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly will have to endorse: the report of the Organizational Session and the Preparatory Committee; the draft rules of procedure; the participation of associate members of Regional Commissions; the dates of the Conference (25 April - 6 May 1994); and the question of other intersessional work, including another PrepCom session.

SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES: The Secretariat will be busy in the coming months preparing for the General Assembly, the possible second PrepCom, and the Conference itself. One of the Secretariat's most daunting tasks is the preparation of the report containing relevant information on donor activities in support of sustainable development in small island developing states, as requested in document A/CONF.167/PC/L.7. This report, which is supposed to include information on a sectoral level provided by UN and other intergovernmental agencies, donor countries and NGOs, must be completed by January 1994. The Joint Planning Unit in the DPCSD will bear the brunt of the responsibility for putting this report together. The Secretariat still has to determine a mechanism for soliciting and incorporating input from NGOs and non-UN agencies. In order to complete the task requested of it, the Secretariat expects to tax available personnel and in preparation for the Conference itself, the Secretariat will have a second planning mission to Barbados later this year. They are also working with UNDP to establish an electronic mail link between the Conference Secretariat, UNDP and the National Planning Committee in Barbados.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CHAIR: The Chair, Amb. Penelope Wensley, will be busy during the intersessional period, consulting with the major players on both procedural and substantive issues. There are a number of opportunities that present themselves, including future climate change sessions and desertification negotiations. She will also be spending some time improving the profile of the Conference and its issues with media interviews and will continue to speak with UN agencies and others to garner support. Having mentioned the importance of the private sector on a number of occasions, watch for Wensley to encourage business and industry to become involved in the Conference.

BARBADOS DECLARATION: The Conference is expected to have two major outputs: the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Barbados Declaration. Although the Chair had originally hoped to establish a working group to begin negotiating the text of the Barbados Declaration, this was not realized. The Government of Barbados has expressed its desire to draft the Declaration and it is expected that a draft will be ready to be presented at either the next PrepCom session or at the Conference itself.

EMINENT PERSONS PANEL: Dame Nita Barrow, the Governor-General of Barbados, is putting together a panel of approximately 12 eminent persons on the issues related to the Conference. A meeting is tentatively set for January in Barbados. The list of eminent persons has not yet been finalized, but recommendations have been received. Some of the nominations are said to include: Maurice Strong, Sir Sridath Ramphal, U.S. Vice President Al Gore, and Bishop Sir Paul Reeves, Chairman of the NGO Group on the Year of Indigenous People. The meeting is expected to produce a declaration or other document to be sent to the Conference.

JOURNALISTS WORKSHOP: A journalists' workshop is being organized by Professor Vishnum Persaud of the University of the West Indies. It is expected to take place in either January or February in Barbados. Journalists and editors from around the world will be invited to focus on the issues and the importance of media attention to the issues raised by the Conference. There is also the possibility that a second workshop will be conducted a few days before the Conference itself, depending on funding. For more information about these workshops and other outreach programmes, contact Lei LeLaulu, Outreach Coordinator, Conference on Small Island Developing States, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Room S-2977-E., United Nations, New York, NY 10017; phone: 212/963-7074; fax: 212/963-5935.

UN AGENCIES: UN agencies are expected to assist the Secretariat in the preparation of a report on current donor activities in SIDS, as called for in A/CONF.167/PC/L.7. Although some agencies shared the criticism addressed to PC/6 and expressed their willingness to pursue intergovernmental work, it is still unclear how much can be achieved before January, when the report is due. It is still uncertain how and when these efforts will be carried out. The representative of one of these agencies mentioned that software and infrastructure are available but that the will to cooperate may be lacking.

NGO PREPARATIONS: A Non-Governmental Liaison Committee has been established by the Barbados National Planning Committee. Chaired by the Caribbean Conservation Association, the Committee plans a number of activities in the period before the Conference. The NGOs hope to maintain close contact in a network after the PrepCom, hold national NGO meetings, hold regional meetings that will focus on regional positions as well as training NGOs on lobbying and techniques, and hold a meeting of the regional focal points before Barbados. In Barbados, they will convene the NGO Forum three or four days before the Global Conference itself and then run concurrently with it. The pre-conference session will focus on how to influence the process, while the remainder will concentrate more on workshops and substantive presentations. NGOs are also invited to consider plans and mechanisms for NGO follow-up. For more information, contact Nicholas Drayton, Caribbean Conservation Association, Savannah Lodge, The Garrison, St. Michael, Barbados, W.I., phone: 809/426-9635; fax: 809/429-8483.