



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 8 No. 12

Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

Monday, 7 March 1994

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SMALL ISLANDS STATES CONFERENCE

The resumed session of the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States begins today at UN Headquarters in New York. The one-week session will focus on finalizing the Draft Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, particularly the preamble and Chapter XV, "Implementation, Monitoring and Review." These two sections had remained in brackets at the conclusion of the previous PrepCom session held in September 1993.

The Conference, scheduled for 4-15 April 1994 in Barbados, has its roots in Chapter 17 of Agenda 21. UN General Assembly resolution 47/189, which established the Conference, set the following objectives: review current trends in the socio-economic development of small island developing States (SIDS); examine the nature and magnitude of the specific vulnerabilities of SIDS; define a number of specific actions and policies relating to environmental and development planning to be undertaken by these 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 Jesus (Cape Verde). Barbados, as host country, is an *ex officio* member of the Bureau. The PrepCom adopted guidelines suggesting that its consideration of the role of small island developing States should include actions at the micro level aimed at environment and development planning, measures for enhancing local skills and expertise, and medium- and long-term planning for sustainable development.

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 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 assistance from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE SESSION

The substantive session of the PrepCom was held in New York from 30 August - 10 September 1993. 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 SIDS. The draft programme of action contains chapters on the following: climate change and sea level rise; natural and 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. While delegates were able to reach agreement on the majority of the chapters in the programme of action, the preamble and the chapter on implementation, monitoring and review remained largely in brackets. As a result, delegates called for an additional session of the PrepCom to be convened for negotiations to continue.

48TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At its 48th session in the fall of 1993, the UN General Assembly decided that the first session of the Preparatory Committee should be resumed for a period of five working days to complete the preparatory work assigned to it, including the draft programme of action for the sustainable development of SIDS. General Assembly Resolution 48/193, adopted on 21 December 1993, also decides to convene the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados from 25 April to 6 May 1994, which will include a high-level segment on 5-6 May. The resolution urges that representation at the Conference be at the highest possible level and decides to convene one day of pre-Conference consultations at the venue of the Conference on 24 April 1994. The resolution also endorses the decisions of the PrepCom regarding the participation of associate members of regional commissions and NGOs in the Conference and its preparatory process; endorses the PrepCom's decisions regarding the provisional

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rules of procedure and the provisional agenda for the Conference; requests the Secretary-General to ensure the timely submission of the report of donor activities requested in decision 11 of the PrepCom; requests the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to widely disseminate the goals and purposes of the Conference; and invites all Member States and organizations in a position to do so to contribute to the voluntary fund for the Conference.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The PrepCom for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States will resume this morning in Conference Room 2. PrepCom Chair Penelope Wensley will open the resumed session and is expected to get right down to the first item of business: adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters. The provisional agenda for the week, as contained in document A/CONF.167/PC/12, is as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Preparations for the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States:
 - (a) Organization and programme of work of the Conference;
 - (b) Participation of non-governmental organizations in the Conference and its preparatory process;
 - (c) Preparations by the host Government;
 - (d) Operations of the voluntary fund.
3. Consideration of plans and programmes to support the sustainable development of small island developing States and the utilization of their marine and coastal resources:
 - (a) Draft Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;
 - (b) Information on donor activities in support of sustainable development in small island developing States;
 - (c) Consideration of proposals for a Barbados Declaration on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.
4. Adoption of the report on the Preparatory Committee on its resumed first session.

After adopting the agenda, the PrepCom will briefly discuss items 2 and 3 in formal session before adjourning. The PrepCom will not meet again in formal session until Friday afternoon.

It is expected that the Chair will make an introductory statement this morning. Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 77, is also expected to provide some introductory remarks. In its statement, Algeria will probably announce that the Chair of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), Trinidad and Tobago, will speak on behalf of the G-77 for the remainder of this session. This was the procedure adopted during the September session of the PrepCom. It is likely that the G-77 statement will be followed by introductory remarks by the Chair of AOSIS. Trinidad and Tobago assumed the Chairmanship of AOSIS earlier this year, replacing Vanuatu.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: When the Plenary has concluded its business this morning, the Chair will convene the first in a series of informal sessions that will focus on the Draft Programme of Action. These informal consultations will take place in Conference Room 5. Over the past six months, there have been a number of regional and inter-regional discussions on the Draft Programme of Action. These discussions have concentrated on the two sections of the document that remained in brackets at the conclusion of the

September session: the preamble and Chapter XV, "Implementation, Monitoring and Review." AOSIS has also prepared a document based on suggested amendments to the Draft Programme of Action. This document has been circulated informally to other delegations and may be formally tabled during the week. Otherwise, informal consultations will be based on the Draft Programme of Action contained in document A/48/36, the report of the PrepCom to the General Assembly.

If these regional and inter-regional discussions were productive, it is likely that great progress will be made this week in resolving differences in Chapter XV on the following issues: 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 regional agencies; the bulk of the finance text; and the suggestion that the international donor community should only supplement national efforts towards sustainable development. Also to be examined are recommendations 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 (DPCSD) to oversee and coordinate implementation of the outcomes of the Barbados Conference by the UN system and determine how to relate the programme of action to the work of the CSD.

With regard to the preamble, a number of issues remain to be resolved including its structure, length, balance, and reference to financial issues. If sufficient progress is made on the preamble and Chapter XV early in the week, the PrepCom may have time for a reading of the entire document before adjourning on Friday.

REPORT ON DONOR ACTIVITIES: At its session in September, the PrepCom requested the Secretariat to prepare a report containing relevant information on current donor activities and support of sustainable development of SIDS. This report is contained in document A/CONF.167/PC/13. This report includes information on a sectoral level provided by UN and other intergovernmental agencies, donor countries and NGOs. The report has been organized to follow the progression of chapters in the Draft Programme of Action. For each subject, such as transport, communications, human resource development, freshwater resources, etc., the report will list the UN organizations and agencies, non-UN intergovernmental organizations and NGOs that are funding relevant projects.

BARBADOS DECLARATION: The Government of Barbados, in consultation with interested delegates, has taken the initiative in preparing a Barbados Declaration on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It appears as though both AOSIS and donor countries have agreed on the structure of the Declaration, but a draft text is not yet available. It is expected that a draft of this Declaration will be circulated later in the week.

BARBADOS INFORMATION CENTER: The Barbados Government will be using Conference Room E as an information center during the week of the resumed PrepCom. Information will be available on Conference facilities, travel arrangements, accommodations and other activities.

NGO RESOURCE ROOM: Meeting space for non-governmental organizations has been set up in Conference Room D for the length of the PrepCom. Computers will also be available in this room for NGO use.