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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES CONFERENCE

The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States 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), Ioan Barac (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 SIDS 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 sustainable development planning.

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 meeting for the Atlantic/Caribbean/Mediterranean regions 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 UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

FIRST MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

The first session of the PrepCom was held in New York from 30 August - 10 September 1993. By the conclusion of

the two-week session, 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 entirely in brackets. As a result, delegates called for an additional session of the PrepCom to be convened so that negotiations could 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 review of the draft Programme of Action for the sustainable development of SIDS. General Assembly Resolution 48/193, adopted on 21 December 1993, also decided to convene the first UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados from 25 April to 6 May 1994, including a high-level segment from 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 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 funds for the Conference.

RESUMED SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

The PrepCom met in a resumed session from 7-11 March 1994 at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates spent most of the week in informal sessions where they painstakingly negotiated the remaining bracketed text in the Programme of

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Action (A/48/36). For the most part, delegates based their comments on a comprehensive informal paper prepared by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), "Suggested Amendments to the Draft Action Programme for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States." This document contained the AOSIS/G-77 amendments and other comments and facilitated the work of the Committee during the week. While delegates spent the most time on Chapter XV, "Implementation, Monitoring and Review," and the preamble, they also managed to review and remove some brackets in the other 14 chapters, as well as comment on the nature of the Barbados Declaration.

Most of the bracketed text remains in the preamble and Chapter XV. Sections of the preamble that remain in brackets include: human beings as the center of concern for sustainable development; reference to environmental destruction caused by external interventions; despite population density, the small population size of SIDS inhibits them from generating economies of scale; the vulnerability of the economic performance of SIDS; women's critical contributions to sustainable development; the special situation and needs of the least developed countries; and references to national governments as being primarily responsible for the implementation and financing of the action programme.

In Chapter XV, issues remaining to be resolved include: reference to the international community's commitment to meeting Agenda 21 agreements on implementation; the role of the public in decision-making; reordering of economic priorities in the use of resources and increased use of economic instruments; the role of the private sector and the rights of resources owners and intellectual property rights; increasing public awareness and information dissemination; the sharing of financing responsibilities for sustainable development in SIDS; the role of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in monitoring implementation of the Programme of Action; and other institutional follow-up to the Conference.

PRE-CONFERENCE CONSULTATIONS

Pre-Conference consultations were held Sunday, 24 April 1994, to reach agreement on several procedural and organizational matters. The recommendations will be transmitted to the first session of the Plenary. Amb. Besley Maycock, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the UN, was elected Chair of the consultations. The decisions taken were based on document A/CONF.167/3, "Organization of Work, including Establishment of the Main Committee of the Conference." The provisional rules of procedure, as contained in document A/CONF.167/2, were adopted. Costa Rica, on behalf of the Latin American and the Caribbean Group, nominated the Prime Minister of Barbados, L. Erskine Sandiford, as the President of the Conference and Branford Taitt, the Barbados Minister of Foreign Affairs, as the *ex officio* Vice-President. Maycock announced that the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) had proposed New Zealand and Germany and the Asian Group proposed Samoa and China as Vice-Presidents. Nominations to complete the Bureau were postponed until Monday to allow the African and Eastern European regional groups to select their candidates.

The provisional agenda, as set out in document A/CONF.167/1, was approved. The proposals contained in document A/CONF.167/3 regarding the division of agenda items between the Plenary and the Main Committee, time limits for general debate, the establishment of the Main Committee of the Conference, the timetable for work, the organization of meetings, the High-Level Segment, the Credentials Committee, and procedures for the preparation of the report of the Conference, were adopted for recommendation to the Conference. The Chair announced that all efforts will be made to accommodate delegations who are not represented at the Head of State or ministerial level

to participate in the High-Level Segment. The Chair adjourned the meeting so that delegates could "go to the beach."

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

Trinidad and Tobago, as Chair of AOSIS, has held a series of informal consultations with key delegations in New York on the outstanding differences over the preamble and Chapter XV, Implementation, Monitoring and Review. Many of the problems that remained at the end of the resumed PrepCom have been resolved, although work remains to be done on details of the specific funding mechanism for SIDS and other issues on finance.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

NATIONAL WELCOMING CEREMONY: The Government of Barbados will host the National Welcoming Ceremony beginning at 9:30 am at the Sir Garfield Sobers Complex. The session will be opened by L.V. Harcourt Lewis, the Minister of the Environment, Housing, and Lands of Barbados, with opening remarks from Prime Minister Erskine Sandiford, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Samuel R. Insanally (Guyana), President of the UN General Assembly and AOSIS Chair Amb. Annette des Iles (Trinidad and Tobago).

PLENARY: The first Plenary session is scheduled to begin at 3:00 pm in Conference Room 1 at the Sherbourne Centre. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will present the opening remarks, followed by L. Erskine Sandiford, who will speak after his election as President of the Conference. The Plenary will then address a series of procedural items. The Pre-Conference Consultations, held Sunday, agreed to recommend proposals on each of these items, which are expected to be contained in document A/CONF.167/L.3. It is likely that the delegates will move swiftly through: the adoption of the rules of procedure; the adoption of the agenda; the election of officers other than the President; the organization of work, including establishment of the Main Committee of the Conference; and the appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee.

The Plenary will then hear a report on the results of the Group of Eminent Persons on Sustainable Development of SIDS, possibly presented by Samuel R. Insanally, President of the General Assembly. This group of 10 persons met on 21-22 April, under the patronage of Dame Nita Barrow, Governor-General of Barbados, to examine progress and prospects for sustainable development and its implication for SIDS. The Group will present a series of recommendations (A/CONF.167/5) that may include: enhanced collaboration between governments and NGOs; a more flexible Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a funding mechanism; a strengthening of AOSIS; the establishment of an International Centre for Sustainable Development for SIDS; a UN institutional mechanism for focus on SIDS; and an inventory of biological resources in SIDS. The last item of today's agenda will be a presentation of a case study on the topic of "Tourism and Sustainable Development" by George Vassiliou, former President of the Republic of Cyprus.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE CONFERENCE: General debate will begin on Tuesday morning and continue through early next week in Plenary. Representatives from each government and many NGOs, UN specialized agencies, regional and other intergovernmental organizations are expected to speak. The Main Committee will meet on Tuesday, 26 April to elect Penelope Wensley as the Chair and begin work immediately on the outstanding bracketed portions of the draft Programme of Action. The Main Committee is scheduled to continue its work until Wednesday, 4 May. The High-Level Segment will meet on Thursday, 5 May and the morning of Friday, 6 May. The Plenary will meet on Friday, 6 May to consider the work of the Main Committee and adopt its report, before the Conference is closed.