



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 25 APRIL 1994

### NATIONAL WELCOMING CEREMONY

The Government of Barbados welcomed Conference participants to its country with a colorful National Welcoming Ceremony at the Sir Garfield Sobers Complex Monday morning, amidst pomp and circumstance, music, dancing, and TV cameras that broadcast the event live throughout the region. In his opening address, the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Rt. Hon. Erskine Sandiford, welcomed all delegates and NGOs to Barbados and invited everyone to mix business and pleasure within the limits of national laws. He described the many vulnerabilities of small island developing States (SIDS). He added that Barbados is also doing what it can to implement sustainable development policies.

The next speaker was UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He said that this Conference marks the first time that a UN global conference is held in a small island developing State. The UN strives to make development a national reality.

Samuel R. Insanally, the President of the 48th UN General Assembly and Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations, said that this Conference marks the first test of the commitments made by the international community at the Earth Summit in Rio two years ago. SIDS should use their great human potential to confront the environmental challenges before them.

Amb. Annette des Iles, the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the UN, assured everyone that AOSIS will do everything it can to ensure the Conference is a success. She invited all developed countries to join AOSIS in implementing the commitments they made in Agenda 21.

Following the speeches, there were a series of dance, cultural and musical presentations from the Royal Rarotongan from the Cook Islands and a number of Caribbean dance companies, including the Barbados Dance Theatre Company, the Plantation Dancers, Dancing Africa, St. Lucian Cultural Group and a spectacular limbo performance by the Pinelands Creative Workshop. There was also a performance by the Barbados Combined Choirs and the Royal Barbados Police Force Band. Perhaps the most

creative performance was given by the students of Barbados Secondary Schools, who danced themselves into a human reproduction of the logo of the Conference. At the conclusion of the dance, a 14-year old Barbadian girl gave an impassioned plea to everyone to work hard, using their hands and their heads, to achieve sustainable development.

### OPENING PLENARY

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali welcomed the delegates and noted that this Conference marks an important moment in the history of development and it faces three special tasks: to draw attention to the special needs of SIDS; to address the particular issues that impact SIDS; and to add to the momentum generated in Rio. The international community as a whole, as well as SIDS themselves, will look to the Conference for leadership. Boutros-Ghali spoke of the unique characteristics of SIDS: distance from markets and supplies; scarcity; the small size of populations; lack of economies of scale; costs of communication and transport; and their vulnerability to natural and man-made environmental damage. He noted that the development and destiny of SIDS is linked to coastal and marine resources. Too often poor coastal and marine management has undermined sustainable development. He cautioned that unless properly managed, tourism can degrade the environment upon which it depends. But more than anything else, people are an asset to SIDS. He urged the Conference to address the impact of population on the development of SIDS. The Conference must also ensure that the agreements reached in Barbados can be implemented. Developing countries need financial and technical resources to implement Agenda 21 and, despite the progress in many fields, developed countries need to provide an enabling economic environment for this to happen. He noted that only Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands have achieved the target of 0.7% of GNP for ODA and that Finland, once in that league, had recently dipped below the target. France and Belgium have committed to achieve this level of funding by the year 2000, yet the average within the donor community is still 0.33%, a figure that has remained static for over a decade. Increases from Japan have been offset by decreases in aid from other countries. The Secretary-General stressed the role of the UN -- where the General Assembly affords each member State, no matter

*Earth Negotiations Bulletin*® (enb@igc.apc.org) is written and edited by Pamela Chasek (pchasek@igc.apc.org), Charlotte de Fontaubert (61155@chopin.udel.edu), Langston James Goree VI "Kimo" (kimo@pipeline.com) and Rachel Kyte (rkyte@igc.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 by: the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Caribbean Community (Caricom), the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) and the Environment and Natural Resources Group (ENR) through the United Nations Development Programme; the British Development Division in the Caribbean; the World Bank; and the UNICEF Division of Public Affairs. The authors can be contacted at their electronic mail addresses. 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. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate citation. This volume of *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* is uploaded into the APC computer conference <env.islands> and can be accessed on the Internet through the gopher at <igc.apc.org>.

how small, one vote -- as the forum for international cooperation on development.

The newly-elected President of the Conference, Erskine Sandiford, Prime Minister of Barbados, told the delegates that the international community had done Barbados a great honor by convening this meeting. The Conference has its roots in the UNCED process and is the clear indication that SIDS represent a distinctive category of States that deserve special attention. He added that it has been agreed at the highest level that all States need to act in concert to achieve sustainable development. It is important to put an end to the vicious circle in which a vast majority of countries are locked and that threatens their continued survival. This resolve to change must be translated into concrete action. Sustainable development should be the ultimate goal. It is not an arcane concept, but a matter of survival, which involves a change in values and attitudes toward people. He also called for a greater flow of assistance and more cooperation among SIDS. NGOs will play a crucial role and greater participation needs to take place at the national, regional and international levels.

Sandiford then moved to Item 3 of the agenda (A/CONF.167/1), the adoption of the rules of procedure, as contained in A/CONF.167/2. Item 4 was the adoption of the agenda, followed by the election of officers. Sandiford announced that after the pre-Conference consultations officers had been selected from the following groups: Asia -- Samoa and China; Western European and Others Group -- New Zealand and Germany. The African Group selections were announced as Mauritius and Niger and the Eastern Europeans nominated Hungary, with the other seat to be filled after further consultations. Cuba was selected from the Latin America and Caribbean region. Branford M. Tait, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Barbados, was elected as the *ex officio* member of the bureau. According to the rules of procedure, the Conference then elected Amb. Penelope Wensley (Australia) as the Chair of the Main Committee. The President then moved to Item 6 of the agenda, organization of work, including establishment of the Main Committee of the Conference (A/CONF.167/3). Together with the comments in paragraphs 12-15 of A/CONF.167/L.3, delegates adopted the programme of work. The Conference also took note of the other issues discussed in the pre-Conference consultations, including agreements reached on the High-Level Segment. Item 7(a) on the agenda, the election of the Credentials Committee, saw Austria, Bahamas, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritius, the Russian Federation and the US elected by acclamation. Under Item 8, the President noted that the list of speakers for the general debate would be closed at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, April 27.

Dame Nita Barrow, Governor-General of Barbados, then presented the report of the meeting of the Group of Eminent Persons on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as contained in document A/CONF.167/5. She said that the report contained interesting conclusions on the special vulnerabilities of SIDS that are now more widely understood. While awareness has increased, there is still a lack of appreciation of the value of island ecosystems. SIDS exercise jurisdiction over one-sixth of the Earth's surface and they should seek to use their strengths. The report contains 18 recommendations that are neither particularly expensive nor difficult to apply and that

should be followed if Governments are to live up to their commitments in Rio.

George Vassiliou, former President of Cyprus, then presented the report of a case study on sustainable tourism. This case study is based on the experience of Cyprus. Tourism is the activity that can most impact the environment of any small island State and, in that respect, presents both the greatest promise and the greatest threat. It has a series of negative impacts, both on the environment and on the social fabric of SIDS, and it also affects other sectors of the economy. Growth, therefore, needs to be controlled, and there are limits to the number of tourists that should be admitted each season. Any tourism development that has nothing in common with the people or the environment should be avoided.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** The Conference will begin its general debate in Plenary at 10:00 am in Conference Room 1. The tentative speakers' list for the day begins with Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 77, and Greece, on behalf of the European Union. The subsequent speakers may include Antigua and Barbuda, China, Malaysia, Australia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bahamas, Grenada, Japan and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Possible speakers in the afternoon include: the Caribbean Community (Caricom), Iceland, Marshall Islands, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritania, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, the United Nations Development Programme for Women (UNIFEM) and one NGO representative. The speakers' list for the general debate will be closed at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, 27 April.

**MAIN COMMITTEE:** The Chair of the Main Committee, Amb. Penelope Wensley, will open the meeting this morning in Conference Room 2 by introducing the work that remains to be done. There is concern that the Main Committee now has only one week in which to complete its work as negotiations must end by Tuesday, 3 May, since AOSIS intends to hold a Heads of State Summit on Wednesday, 4 May, preceding the High-Level Segment of the Conference, which will take place on 5-6 May.

Wensley is expected to start with a reading of Chapters I-XIV, allowing AOSIS maximum time to consult on its expected amendments to the Preamble and Chapter XV. It is not yet clear how the NGO comments, incorporated by AOSIS into a composite paper, will be brought into the discussions.

**IN THE CORRIDORS:** During the intersessional period, Trinidad and Tobago, Chair of AOSIS, held informal meetings with other delegations in New York, including those of developed countries, on the institutional arrangements section of Chapter XV and the Preamble. Look for these texts to be offered during the course of negotiations in the Main Committee. Furthermore, AOSIS has prepared a composite text, including NGO comments, to the final document, which may also be introduced during the negotiations.

**NGO ISLANDS FORUM '94:** The site of all NGO activities is located at the Barbados Community College, a short walk from the Sherbourne Center. Activities include a daily NGO briefing from 8:30 - 9:30 am and a series of workshops and other events organized by women, youth, indigenous people and NGOs.