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CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 1994

PLENARY

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES: Assistant Secretary-General Christopher Thomas stressed that no development model should be imposed unilaterally. OAS technical support programmes emphasize resource management, sustainable tourism and youth employment.

BRAZIL: Amb. João Carlos Pessoa Fragoso hoped that the spirit of Rio will enlighten deliberations here. New and additional financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies on favorable terms for SIDS are priorities.

LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM: Noel Sinclair urged the Conference not to forget the plight of Haiti, an island whose development process is in reverse. Human solidarity must be strengthened.

SINGAPORE: Amb. Chew Tai Soo said that one of the greatest challenges for SIDS is transportation and communication infrastructure development. At the core is human resource development and capacity building.

UGANDA: Anne Mugisha said that if this Conference could clearly define the means of implementation contained within Agenda 21 this would help all developing countries.

ESCAP: Executive-Secretary Rafeeuddin Ahmed noted that many SIDS have been liberalizing their economies, and while most have balanced budgets, inflation remains high.

JAMAICA: Easton Douglas, Minister of Public Service and the Environment, spoke of the economic dependency of many SIDS. SIDS are not mendicants, but States ready for partnership, with strong NGO, academic and civil sectors.

SAMOA: Amb. Tuiloma Neroni Slade said that the Pacific is the largest tuna fishing area and overfishing has a devastating effect on SIDS. He supported establishment of an entity within the UN secretariat to focus on follow-up.

GREENPEACE: Pene Lefale said that SIDS are the most sensitive barometer of sustainable development. He supported banning transboundary movement of wastes, reducing carbon dioxide emissions, and finding new and additional financial resources.

Dr. Vili Fuavao presented a case study on coastal management in SIDS (A/CONF.167/CRP.5).

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA: Resio S. Moses, Secretary of External Affairs, said SIDS must work together to identify common concerns and discuss the means to address them. This Conference is about commitment to action, not only of donors but of SIDS themselves.

SOLOMON ISLANDS: Ezekiel Alebua, Minister for Forests, Environment and Conservation, said the momentum from Rio should not be sacrificed due to

indifference and self interest. He raised the issues of poverty alleviation, transportation of hazardous wastes and sustainable timber harvesting.

ECA: Azm Fazlul Hoque said that of the 52 member countries of ECA, six are islands and three of these are least developed countries. ECA helps SIDS address natural disaster reduction and marine and ocean affairs.

EGYPT: Amr Ramadan said that the ability of SIDS to tackle their problems is limited. Additional financial resources and international support are needed.

SEYCHELLES: Amb. Marc Marengo said his country's development plan ensures that both men and women are part of the decision-making processes. Political commitment, financial and technical investment, and promotion of human resources are essential.

AFGHANISTAN: Abdul Rhaim Ghafoorzai said there are two major problems in the development planning of SIDS: the lack of adequate capacity for the design and implementation of policies and strategies; and a tendency to depend on external consultants.

UNIDO: Gerard Latortue said that UNIDO is willing to cooperate with SIDS on Programme of Action implementation in: sustainable industrial policy; clean and energy saving technologies; small scale industries; human resource development; and utilization of marine resources.

MALI: Mahamane Maiga said that there is a need to define adequate solutions to the problems faced by SIDS. Mali, as a landlocked country, shares with SIDS the high cost of transport and environmental vulnerabilities.

ECLAC: Swinburne Gestrade said there is a need for projects that are specific and relevant to SIDS, such as access to international capital on concessional terms and export compensation schemes.

NAURU: Kinza Clodumar said that SIDS are the curators of much of the world's linguistic heritage and cultural diversity. He noted that Nauru and Australia will sign an agreement on reparations for mineral exploitation.

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK: S.A. Olanrewaju said that the Bank is working on a special initiative for the African island countries. These islands need to be effectively integrated with one another and with the rest of Africa to enhance their development.

COMMISSION DE L'OCEAN INDIEN: Secretary-General J. Bonnelame said that the islands in the Indian Ocean are often forgotten. The problems facing SIDS cannot be dealt with on the national level alone.

COSTA RICA: José de J. Conejo said that education is a key factor in sustainable development. He called for greater financial resources and mechanisms for horizontal transfer of science and technology.

SPREP: Vili Fuavao elaborated on the priority issues facing South Pacific SIDS, including: climate change and

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sea-level rise; energy resources; natural disasters; waste management; coastal and marine resources; capacity building; and environmental management.

CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK: President Sir Neville Nicholls said that the CDB has provided assistance in strengthening national environmental management, conference preparations, and NGO participation.

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM: Pauline Tangiora stressed the issues of self-determination, sovereignty, unemployment, education, economic dislocation, abuse of land by developers, intellectual property rights, and militarism.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE: Joanne Penney deplored the omission of the drug dimension. She noted the effects of drug and alcohol abuse on islanders, the environment and the economy.

PANAFRICAN MOVEMENT: Waldaba Stewart urged that the Programme of Action encourage the creation of a Technology Bank and People's Earth Funds to support island peoples; and the recognition that racism and ethnic discrimination hinder sustainable development.

MAIN COMMITTEE

Although the Main Committee was scheduled to meet at 11:00 am, it did not convene until after 12:00, as informal consultations continued. During the course of the day, the Committee examined outstanding issues in the non-paper on Section D of Chapter XV, Institutional Arrangements, Monitoring and Review; the EU proposals on finance; and the non-paper on the rest of Chapter XV.

In paragraph 1 on new financing mechanisms, AOSIS/G-77 wanted to retain reference to a new international funding mechanism, while many developed countries felt that this would be counter-productive and not in the SIDS' interest. In paragraph 2(b), informal consultations were successful and the new version, as amended, includes a review of implementation of the Programme of Action by the CSD in 1996, by the special session of the General Assembly (UNGA) in 1997, in conjunction with the overall review of Agenda 21, and a full review of the Programme of Action in 1999. In the afternoon, the US removed its reservation on paragraph 2(c), the UNGA's consideration of Conference follow-up.

Paragraph 7 was finally adopted in the afternoon and the last sentence now reads "to this end, the necessary resources should be provided, relying on the most efficient and cost-effective use of resources to fulfill the following functions." In paragraph 15, the reference to both private and public resources remained in brackets.

In paragraph 17, consultations resulted in removal of the brackets around "regional economic integration organizations," which should also take the Programme of Action into account when formulating policy. Agreed language on paragraph 18 now accepts the concept of autonomy for regional commissions in implementation and that they act as focal points for the coordination of follow-up. New language for paragraph 19 was accepted: "The Secretary-General in his report to the 49th UN General Assembly, requested in paragraph 12, should also report on progress made in the implementation of other recommendations above, including a section on the action taken by regional commissions to implement the Programme of Action, particularly at the sub-regional level."

Paragraph 115, which also addresses institutional arrangements, was moved to this section as paragraph 1 bis.

When the negotiations resumed on the new non-paper on Chapter XV, agreement was reached on paragraph 67. The specific reference to Chapter 23.2 of Agenda 21 was deleted and a new first sentence was proposed, with exact language from Chapter 23.1. Agreement was reached on paragraph 92 on commodity markets. The new language provides for better functioning and transparent markets, and assistance to SIDS in their efforts to achieve greater diversification of their commodity sectors.

The Chair invited delegations to comment on the EU proposal on finance. The Chair of the G-77 said that the Programme of Action is already limited due to SIDS' appreciation of constraints on resources; nevertheless it does reveal a need for new and additional financial resources. Agenda 21 accepts shared responsibility for problems and their causation, yet now SIDS are expected to bear the bulk of the burden themselves. She criticized the reliance on the GEF, which was replenished at the lowest possible level and whose funds are not available to all SIDS due to per capita income constraints. She also criticized the over-emphasis on the private sector, which is not strong enough in some SIDS to marshal adequate funds. China added its voice to that of the G-77, stating that the EU proposal was disappointing. The EU stressed again its three-part approach: the better use of existing resources; prioritization of ODA; and the mobilization of new and additional financial resources. Sweden said that it would like to see the 0.7% target for ODA included in the text. It was agreed that the text in A/CONF.167/L.1 would form the basis for negotiation and that the Chair would conduct informal consultations.

On paragraph 69, the finance paragraph in the national implementation section, the brackets were removed around the first sentence. Brackets remained around the second and third sentences dealing with environmental goals and the reordering of priorities, respectively. In the discussion on paragraph 82, AOSIS asked the authors of an amendment still in brackets if they were trying to imply that SIDS governments were corrupt and inefficient. The first set of brackets around the improved access to financial resources was removed.

On paragraph 88, concerning finance, one country introduced a new chapeau, which did not cover the key points required by other groups. There was concern that the Programme of Action should refer to the provision of new and additional financial resources, not only their mobilization, as was the case in Chapter 33.10 of Agenda 21. A suggested composite text to cover paragraph 88(b)-(e) was proposed, based on consultations held at the resumed session of the PrepCom. This was circulated in writing. Other amendments to the tirets were offered. The Chair noted that 88(a) is not bracketed, but that its ideas may appear in a composite text. Consultations will ensue.

In paragraph 89, the majority wanted reference to the CSD working group deleted. New, more concise language was proposed, highlighting the role that the CSD will play in monitoring and advancing new and innovative approaches.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Several NGOs have complained that they were not given the floor in Plenary, although they were on the speakers' list. Only when they remonstrated with the Secretariat were they given a slot at the end of the day. The Secretariat says it could not find the NGOs. NGOs argue they were there. There also appears to be new criteria for speeches in Plenary -- they should be to the point. The UN has never enforced such a rule with vigor before, but on Wednesday the Secretariat removed one speaker from the list as the speech was deemed "political" and not to the issues. Broadly applied, this rule could shorten ECOSOC by one week this July.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The general debate will continue at 10:00 am in Conference Room 1. The Plenary will resume at 4:00 pm in informal session (still in Conference Room 1) to discuss proposals for the Barbados Declaration (A/CONF.167/L.2).

MAIN COMMITTEE: The Main Committee will begin at 10:00 am with a formal session to allow NGOs to speak. Then, in an informal session, the Chair will first ask for reports on ongoing consultations. Next, the Committee will begin consideration of the Preamble. The Chair also intends to consider the remaining bracketed text in Chapters I-XIV before adjourning for the weekend. Conference services have been arranged until 9:00 pm.