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CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY, 29 APRIL 1994

PLENARY

CAMBODIA: Amb. Ouch Borith said that SIDS have been spokespersons for the adoption of ocean conservation measures at the global level. Cambodia has emerged from twenty years of war and is not indifferent to SIDS.

ISRAEL: Valerie Brachya said that regional and international efforts have focused recently on coastal zone management, in recognition of the need to formulate guidelines for sustainable development in coastal areas.

FIJI: Amb. Ratu Manasa K. Seniloli said that SIDS are among the most fragile ecosystems. Sea-level rise will have profound effects on the economy of these islands, even though they generate very little of the greenhouse gases.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Parry M. Zeipi, Minister for Environment and Conservation, called on the international community to support the inclusion of SIDS, especially those of the South Pacific, on the GEF Board.

MALTA: Amb. Joseph Cassar stressed the cultural heritage of the island peoples. He reminded delegates that the use or ill-use of resources under SIDS' jurisdiction impacts the world as a whole.

NEW ZEALAND: Priscilla Williams conveyed a message from the people of the island community of Tokelau, one of the smallest SIDS in the world, at a time when the responsibility for the affairs of Tokelau is transferred from New Zealand to the people of Tokelau.

CHILE: Miguel A. Gonzalez said that in recent years a dense network of interests that goes beyond national borders has developed and States now have a duty to show solidarity.

HOLY SEE: Archbishop Renato R. Martino said that human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development and that development initiatives must respect the full dignity and freedom of those affected by them.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION: Dr. Gunnar Kullenberg proposed that SIDS prepare an integrated, jointly sponsored intergovernmental cooperative programme to ensure sustainable use of their adjacent ocean resources and coastal areas for development.

NIGER: Adamou Seydou said that although they are separated by seas and oceans, Niger and SIDS share a common cradle, the continent of Africa. With growing solidarity, developing countries can rid their lives of poverty, hunger and lack of housing.

UNITED STATES: Elinor Constable said that all countries of the world are interconnected. While problems of SIDS may be different, the risk is the same if we do not take care of our environment. She also raised the issues of integrated coastal zone management, coral reefs and climate change.

MONTserrat: Terrence Daniel highlighted Montserrat's experience in waste management, natural disaster preparedness, and coastal and marine resources management. He also stressed the importance of human resources and the role that the UN can play.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADULT EDUCATION: Ijahnya Christian said that NGOs engaged in education at the grassroots level recognize a relationship between what has gone wrong on this planet and educational processes that may not have focused on learning for sustainability.

COMMONWEALTH HUMAN ECOLOGY COUNCIL: Zena Daysh said that the new Commonwealth is a model that should be followed and she drew attention to the meeting her organization will hold in the UK this year.

INFORMAL PLENARY

The Plenary met in an informal session on Friday afternoon to consider the Barbados Declaration. Two documents formed the basis for discussions: the proposal for the Barbados Declaration tabled during the resumed PrepCom in March (A/CONF.167/L.2) and an updated draft proposal that was tabled on Friday morning (A/CONF.167/L.4). The Chair of the informal session, Amb. Besley Maycock (Barbados) welcomed comments from delegates. He proposed the establishment of a contact group that will meet to hammer out the Declaration. Another informal session of the Plenary will be convened on Tuesday afternoon or evening to consider the work of the contact group.

Delegates made both general and specific comments about the draft Declaration, which were repetitious of debate at the resumed Prepcom. They included:

- Correct the imbalance between the preamble and the operative paragraphs (L.4 contains 20 preambular and 7 operative paragraphs).
- The Declaration must be written in such a way as to ensure that it is accessible and understandable by all people in the world. Its current formulation, which resembles a UN resolution, may not be appropriate.
- The Declaration should be relevant to SIDS.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Maycock announced the members of the contact group, which will hold its first meeting on Monday morning. Members include, but are not limited to: Algeria, Egypt, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, India, China, US, Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Australia, Afghanistan, Cape Verde, Seychelles, Micronesia, Samoa, Tanzania, Jamaica, the Philippines and Cuba.

MAIN COMMITTEE

The Main Committee initially convened in a formal session to hear an NGO statement. Jocelyn Dow, on behalf of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era (DAWN), stressed the need for partnership between

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governments and NGOs, adding that if all South Africa can vote in our lifetime, everything is possible. She added that if no new financial resources are available, the debt burden should be removed, which would allow SIDS to fund their own development.

The Chair then convened an informal session to consider the bracketed sections of the Preamble (A/CONF.167/L.1).

Paragraph 1: It was agreed that brackets around the reference to the relationship of this Conference to the agreements reached in Rio would be removed and the text moved to the end of the Preamble with the addition of the following: "Agenda 21 represents a comprehensive document and wherever referred to in this document should be referred to as a whole." The third section also to be moved will now read: "The Programme of Action identifies priority areas with specific actions necessary to address the special challenges faced by SIDS. In fulfilling these actions several cross sectoral issues are identified, for example, capacity building, including human resource development, institutional development at national, regional and international levels, cooperation on the introduction of environmentally sound technologies, trade and economic diversification, and finance."

Paragraph 2: After much debate, the text now refers to the needs and aspirations of human beings and their responsibility towards present and future generations.

Paragraph 4: Brackets were removed and the second sentence now reads: "Recent human history contains examples of entire islands rendered uninhabitable through environmental destruction owing to external causes...."

Paragraph 6: It was agreed that this paragraph could be deleted if the concept of SIDS' custodianship over a large part of the world's marine environment is added to paragraph 5. Consultations will be held.

Paragraph 7: The brackets were removed after the text was amended to link population and economies of scale as follows: "Although their population density may be high, many SIDS have small populations in absolute terms, insufficient to generate economies of scale in several areas...."

Paragraph 10: The brackets were removed with amendments that note that SIDS tend to have limited access to concessionary resources and that their incomes have been unstable over time.

Paragraph 11: Brackets were removed and the amended text encourages youth to contribute to the decision-making process and calls for the elimination of obstacles to women's participation in that process.

Paragraph 13: The brackets were removed with agreement on the following at the beginning of the paragraph: "In establishing the basis for a new global partnership for sustainable development, States have acknowledged their common but differentiated responsibilities in respect of global environmental degradation as stated at Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration. At Principle 6 it was stated that the special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable should be given special priority."

Paragraph 14: Agreement was reached on the last sentence: "The reports of the Regional Technical Meetings, held in preparation for this Conference, remain an important point of reference since they contain a broad collection of recommended actions for the pursuit of sustainable development in SIDS."

Paragraph 15: Despite some amendments, it was agreed to return to this paragraph on finance once agreement is reached on the finance issues in Chapter XV. It remains in brackets.

Paragraph 16: This paragraph remains in brackets pending further consultation as one group felt that the specific needs of some SIDS and the least developed SIDS needed to be specifically mentioned.

In the afternoon, the Chair asked for progress reports on various consultations taking place on Chapter XV. Paragraph 93 was agreed as follows: "Taking into account

the relevant work of international economic and trade organizations, study should be undertaken on the effects of trade liberalization and globalization on the sustainable development of SIDS, including relevant recommendations."

Agreement was also reached on paragraphs 117 and 118 on the vulnerability index. The last sentence of 117 reads "Consideration should be given to how such an index, and studies undertaken on small island developing States by other international institutions, might be used in addition to other statistical measures as quantitative indicators of fragility." Paragraph 118 now reads: "Appropriate expertise should continue to be utilized in the development, compilation and updating of the vulnerability index. Such expertise could include scholars and representatives of international organizations which have at their disposal the data required to compile the vulnerability index. Relevant international organizations are invited to contribute to the development of the index. In addition, it is recommended that the work currently underway in the United Nations system on the elaboration of sustainable development indicators should take into account proposals on the vulnerability index."

The Chair went on to remove brackets in Chapters III-IV. In paragraph 22 (transportation of wastes), there was disagreement on who should bear the burden of the impact of passage of ships with toxic and radioactive wastes through oceans and seas. It was agreed to take the issue back into the corridors, if not to the depths of the seabed.

In paragraph 25 (the World Coast Conference), it was agreed that the brackets could be removed from C(v) and the final section, pending editorial changes by the Secretariat. There will be further consultations on paragraph 27 (groundwater resources).

Paragraph 35A(ii), (incentives for efficient energy technologies), will be the subject of further consultations. Agreement was reached on 35C(iii) (mechanisms for transfer of energy technology). Brackets were lifted on 35C(iv), after it was agreed to encourage institutions to incorporate energy efficiency principles.

Brackets remain around paragraph 42A(vii) (intellectual property rights). Brackets were removed around 48 (assistance offered SIDS by regional commissions). Paragraph 52C(v) remains in brackets as delegates disagree on the costs of telecommunications. In paragraph 58, the discussion on the all too familiar argument on the merits of "family planning" as opposed to "responsible planning of family size" saw many of the same arguments rehearsed. It will be resolved in the corridors.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite the dark predictions in recent months that this Conference would not attract large numbers of delegations, this is not the case. Over 100 governments are represented in Barbados by more than 400 delegates. Furthermore, over 70 Heads of State or Government and ministers are expected for the High-Level Segment. Among those expected to arrive during the week are Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Fidel Castro.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Today should be the last day of the general debate. Check today's Journal for the speakers' list. Look for a possible "political" statement from the Pacific NGOs.

MAIN COMMITTEE: The Main Committee will resume at 10:00 this morning. The agenda for the day will be shaped by progress made in the various consultations held over the weekend. The Chair, Penelope Wensley, held an extended bureau meeting on Saturday morning to discuss the paragraphs on finance and other delegates were supposed to coordinate consultations on other bracketed paragraphs in the text. Look for consultations to continue today. The Chair has requested services until 9:00 this evening.

CONTACT GROUP ON THE BARBADOS DECLARATION: Amb. Besley Maycock will conduct the first meeting of his contact group on the Barbados Declaration at 10:00 am.