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## CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS ADJOURN IN NEW YORK

### LITTLE PROGRESS MADE DURING TWO-WEEK SESSION

The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC) adjourned on Friday, 28 February. While the government delegates achieved some success in reaching agreement on some of the issues under negotiation, a number of contentious issues must be resolved before the Earth Summit. With a little more than one week of negotiating sessions scheduled before the June conference, there are fears that the failure of the INC to produce a significant agreement will greatly diminish the importance of the documents to be signed by the world's leaders in Rio de Janeiro.

**Working Group I** is responsible for negotiating the preamble; principles; objectives; commitments for stabilization and reduction of emissions; and commitments on financial resources and technology transfer. To date, it has made little progress. The United States, which has not agreed to specific commitments on targets and timetables for stabilizing emissions of carbon dioxide continues to block any substantial progress toward a meaningful convention. On the issue of financial resources, the US\$75 million pledged by the United States may be helpful. It does not, however, resolve the fundamental issues of whether funds will be provided on a voluntary or assessed basis, nor how the provision of funds will be linked to the commitments taken by developing countries.

**Working Group II**, which is responsible for institutional issues, has been, in effect, held hostage by the stalemate in Working Group I. Among the most important matters still to be resolved are the establishment of subsidiary bodies; reporting mechanisms; the role of non-governmental organizations; and the use of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) or an alternative funding mechanism for implementation of the convention.

The fifth session of the INC will resume in New York from 30 April - 8 May. According to *Eco* (the NGO newsletter of the Climate Change Negotiations), if the INC is to successfully negotiate a substantive Climate Change Convention, the following issues must be resolved:

- The US must commit to specific targets and timetables for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, in light of the stated commitments of other industrialized countries.
- An inter-sessional meeting must be convened between those countries that have been asked to make specific CO<sub>2</sub> reduction commitments (primarily the OECD countries).
- The current mode of decision-making must shift from a consensus-based to a majority-based process to prevent minority views from impeding progress.
- Developing countries need to continue to push the industrialized nations to make firm, meaningful commitments.
- All participants must shift their thinking from a national to a global perspective.

## PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS

### OVERVIEW OF THE UNCED PREPARATORY PROCESS

*Editors' Note: Beginning tomorrow, this column will feature highlights of the previous day's proceedings in the Plenary and the three working groups.*

The fourth session of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) begins today in New York. This is the final opportunity for formal negotiation on all of the agenda items, including the Statement on Forest Principles, the Earth Charter/Rio Declaration and Agenda 21. The success of the Earth Summit rests

largely on the progress that may or may not be achieved during the next five weeks.

The PrepCom was created by the United Nations General Assembly to: flesh out the agenda of the Earth Summit; establish the terms of reference; and develop a general consensus on the parameters of the issues to be discussed. The PrepCom is composed of members of the approximately 170 national delegations who are participating in UNCED.

**PrepCom I** was held in August 1990 in Nairobi. At that meeting, the agenda and the negotiating procedures were agreed upon and two working groups were established. Working Group I deals with the issues of atmosphere, land resources, forests, biodiversity and biotechnology. Working Group II deals with oceans, freshwater and wastes. Countries also requested the UNCED Secretariat to prepare thirty reports on the various issues on the UNCED agenda, referred to as PrepCom ("PC") documents.

**PrepCom II**, which was held in March 1991 in Geneva, was devoted primarily to the review of the Secretariat's PC documents. It was hoped that substantive negotiations on the Agenda 21 documents would begin yet little negotiation actually occurred. Nevertheless, Working Group III on legal and institutional issues was created. In addition, the delegates agreed not to negotiate a separate forest convention but a statement on forest principles to be used as the basis for future negotiations on forestry issues.

**PrepCom III**, which was held in August 1991 in Geneva, continued the work of the previous two PrepComs and moved the process of defining the issues to actual negotiation. The Secretariat had prepared the initial negotiating texts for each Agenda 21 subject area (ie., atmosphere, biodiversity, etc.). These documents (cited as PC/#/Addendum.#) outline the basis for action; goals, objectives and targets; programme areas; and implementation requirements. PrepCom III also addressed the legal and institutional issues within the mandate of Working Group III and the cross-sectoral issues under the mandate of the Plenary (ie., financial resources, technology transfer, poverty, sustainability, health and education and economic issues). Very little progress was made during PrepCom III towards reaching agreement on the major programme areas within Agenda 21. Agreement was not reached on most of the text and, in several cases, substantive negotiations had not even commenced due to lack of time and problems with the availability of translated documents.

According to many NGOs and developing countries, PrepCom IV must address a number of key issues if the Earth Summit is to be a success. These include:

- **Resolution of the North-South debate.** During PrepCom III the recurring conflict between North and South prevented substantive discussions on the central issues. Specifically, the Group of 77 stressed that their primary objective at UNCED was to raise their living standards; that UNCED has an ecological bias; and that many key issues of concern to developing countries, such as toxic wastes and desertification, had not been addressed adequately. By contrast, the North wants the South to practice conservation, better resource management and population control while the South wants the North to finance the move toward conservation, provide access to new technologies and address other inequities.
- **Support for the negotiating process.** The UNCED Secretariat is clearly overburdened due to the tremendous amount of documentation it has had to provide. As a result, prior to PrepComs II and III, many documents were not completed or translated on time for review by the governments prior to meetings. The lack of translators and interpreters at PrepCom III also took its toll on the negotiations. If sufficient translation and interpretation services are available at PrepCom IV, it is possible that greater progress will be made.
- **Lack of integration between environment and development.** The economic policies and practices of all countries are