

Earth Summit Bulletin

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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 1992

FINANCIAL RESOURCES (PLENARY)

The Plenary's informal session on financial resources reconvened today after a one and one-half hour delay during which the G-77 completed its joint statement on financial resources. Vice-Chair John Bell proposed a three-stage plan for the morning's session: Pakistan's presentation of the G-77 statement; additional general discussions; and interventions focussing on the text under negotiation, L.41.

Ambassador Jamsheed K.A. Marker, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN and spokesperson for the G-77, intervened on behalf of the G-77 and China and responded to the request by the European Community for clarification of Document L.41. His statement began by recalling Resolution 44/228 that placed the onus of responsibility for environmental destruction on unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries. He then went on to identify ideal levels of ODA as a percentage of GNP; the principles of any financial agreement; the financial mechanisms necessary for the implementation of Agenda 21; and the means to achieve necessary funding levels.

The European Community called Pakistan's intervention a "remarkable synthesis" and requested the Chair to distribute copies of the text. Several other countries intervened in support of the G-77. As Bell was about to move on to other matters, the US requested the floor. Ambassador Bohlen said that he had prepared, and could have presented, a conciliatory intervention, however, he chose not to do so as he was disappointed in what the G-77 had said, calling its position inflexible. While he planned to withhold final judgement until after he had read the text, he suggested that the G-77 had hardened its position, requiring him to obtain further instructions from Washington.

Several minutes later, PrepCom Chair Tommy Koh, strolled over to the US table and took Bohlen together with Marker into the corridor. They returned several minutes later and Pakistan intervened, saying that the G-77 was disappointed with the US response to its work. He hoped that the US would return to the negotiations after they had studied the G-77 text more carefully.

Bell adjourned the meeting early and invited the delegates to carefully review the G-77's position before returning to the third session of this informal group this afternoon.

Although the United States did not respond directly to the points they identified as unacceptable in the G-77 statement, many delegates and NGOs felt that the following areas in the text might present problems for the US:

- Domestic resources in developing countries are already committed to meeting basic needs and thus the developed countries, who are largely responsible for environmental degradation, "must provide the major part of the resources required for sustainable development";
- Specific targets of 0.7% of GNP as a necessary level for ODA by 1995 and 1% by the end of the century;
- No reallocation of existing multilateral and bilateral flows to developing countries for development purposes;
- Any global fund should be used for global as well as national and local sustainable development projects.

Two negotiating errors appeared to have occurred over the past three days. First, the EC asked for a clarification of L.41, reopening several fundamental finance issues of concern to the G-77 that had been resolved at PrepCom III. Secondly, the United States responded directly to a document that is not under negotiation.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

The Plenary began its second session of informal discussions on the issue of technology transfer with a short briefing on the Secretariat's costing exercise (as referred to in paragraphs 34 and 35 of document PC/100/Add.9) by Nay Htun of the UNCED Secretariat. He mentioned that the costs do not include any costs for other conventions and that the basis for calculations are available for all figures identified in the document. The costing figures are an attempt to reflect the critical mass of activities needed to launch each programme area. Some countries continued to question the Secretariat's methodologies and Mr. Htun encouraged all interested delegates to review the Secretariat's calculations.

After approximately 30 minutes of procedural discussion, the paragraph-by-paragraph general discussion of the text continued where it left off yesterday, with Programme Area B - "Improving Capacity to Develop and Manage Environmentally Sound Technologies." By the end of the afternoon, most delegates that had not submitted amendments in writing had expressed them verbally. This concluded general discussion of the text.

Several areas of contention emerged during this discussion, although serious debate did not occur at this time. Receiving the most attention were the paragraphs under the sub-heading "Promote long-term collaborative arrangements." A number of developing countries felt that these paragraphs should form a separate programme area to be entitled "Transfer of Technology." Other countries pointed to the overly narrow focus on the role of multinational companies in technology transfer.

A number of government delegates seemed pleased with the progress made in today's session, but there is still concern about structural aspects of the document as well as certain phraseology. An African country intervened to say that the group needs to move ahead and that constant regrouping and introduction of new issues should be avoided where possible.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Vice-Chair Ambassador Utheim agreed to extend the time period for additional comments and amendments until 10:00 am Friday morning, as a concession to the Group of 77 who needed time to consolidate positions.

EARTH CHARTER (WORKING GROUP III)

Working Group III attempted to continue discussions around the principles summarized in the compilation Document L.8, however, the Working Group quickly adjourned to allow time for the G-77 to work on its proposed text. The Working Group reconvened at 5:30 pm to hear interventions from NGOs as well as from the G-77, who reported that their text would be ready for distribution by 6:00 pm and tabled formally Thursday morning. Portugal, on behalf of the European Community, announced that the EC would also table its own contributions on Thursday.

The NGO interventions, which were particularly poignant and inspiring in their messages, considerably elevated the level of debate which, hitherto, was embedded in procedural quagmires. NGOs called for incorporation of such important principles as the oneness of humanity and its interdependence with the Earth; recognition of the Earth's finite ability to renew itself; the important role of the Earth's first peoples; the urgency of the environment and development crises, which we now face; the fact that the resolution of conflict by military means impedes sustainable development; acknowledgement of responsibility for poverty and environmental degradation and adoption of sustainable consumption and production.

Bella Abzug, on behalf of the Women's Environment and Development Organization, expressed outrage at the global economic policies that are forcing governments everywhere to disregard and suppress environmental and human rights. Specifically, she called for the immediate release of such respected activists as Wangari Maathai, leaders of the Sarawak Indigenous People's Alliance, as well as the 40 Chipko activists.

IN THE CORRIDORS

There are rumors that the Deputy Executive Director and the Assistant Director of UNEP have been advised that their positions may be terminated in a few months as part of the streamlining of UN agencies that is currently being planned under the aegis of overall UN reform. This is particularly curious in light of the stated commitment of governments to work toward the strengthening of such important UN agencies as UNEP and UNDP to ensure the overall achievement of UNCED goals. Potential streamlining of these bodies would appear to be consistent with the overall trend within the UN system of enhancement of peacekeeping capacities and contraction of political affairs and policy development capacity. The potential streamlining and contraction of UNEP and UNDP's mandates could lead to a larger development policy role for the World Bank and, most notably, for the actual donor countries.

SPECIAL INFORMAL EVENING SESSION OF PLENARY (3 MARCH)

While this PrepCom addresses the substantive matters of the Conference, the Brazilian government is busily preparing for the logistical challenge of hosting the largest ever gathering of world leaders. Many governments had expressed concern that preparations were moving slowly and that coordination within the Brazilian Working Group for UNCED (GTN) was lacking.

Since the last PrepCom, Minister Flavio Perry has become the Executive Secretary of the GTN, much to the relief of the diplomatic missions in Brasília. Mr. Perry is the "events man" for the Brazilian Ministry of External Affairs (Itamaraty) and has handled all the preparations for the last two visits of the Pope to Brazil. He was called in by Carlos Garcia to pull together the disjointed efforts of the GTN. In a no-nonsense manner, Perry has streamlined the GTN and announced to the countries planning to attend UNCED that the services previously offered to them would have to be severely restricted. This move has calmed the diplomatic community which felt that the Brazilians had accepted an unmanageable workload for their preparations.

Perry addressed an informal session of the Plenary Tuesday night and made the following points:

- The Government of Brazil (GOB) will provide three cars to each delegation (one for the Head of State and two for the security detail);
- The GOB will keep 8,000 hotel rooms reserved until April 1, but since only 58 countries have contacted the GTN to date, he encouraged the remaining countries to make reservations as soon as possible;
- In order to facilitate this process, the GTN has set up an office within the UN until 13 March;

- The GOB will provide 12 square meters of free office space to each government and an additional 80 square meters for US\$80 per day.

Perry will hold a press conference today at 10:00 am in the Dag Hammarskjold Lounge on the 12th floor of the Church Center (777 UN Plaza).

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY AT PREPCOM

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER: The Plenary's informal session on technology transfer will open discussion on document PC/100/Add.11, "National mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building." Yesterday, Brazil made the suggestion that this document should be consolidated with the documents on technology transfer (PC/100/Add.9) and science (PC/100/Add.10). It is possible that this issue will be raised again today.

STRUCTURE OF AGENDA 21: Don't look for this agenda item today. The matter has been postponed to later in the session. Notwithstanding, there is much speculation about the possible restructuring of Agenda 21. In particular, the possibility that certain chapters of Agenda 21 around which there may be agreement, could be extracted out of Agenda 21 for signing in Rio. This, of course, would lead to further post-Rio negotiations in order to reach agreement on the remaining chapters. Watch for the US and other Northern countries to continue to push for the narrowing of the scope of Agenda 21, in particular the exclusion of those programme areas which they maintain are more appropriately dealt with in other fora (ie., trade and radioactive waste).

FINANCIAL RESOURCES: Vice-Chair John Bell had originally planned for an informal-informal negotiating session today. Due to several delays, today's afternoon session will be an informal discussion of document L.41. Look for the European Community to table its common position on the negotiating text (L.41) that arrived too late yesterday to be included. Also look for the United States and Pakistan, on behalf of the G-77, to continue voicing their mutual disappointment and disdain for the other's positions.

EARTH CHARTER: Look for the G-77 to table its proposed text and for heated debate thereon. Speculation that the G-77 text would be tabled as an actual negotiating text appears to have spurred on other major blocs, such as the European Community, and other countries, such as the United States, to table text of their own. Watch for continued protracted discussion regarding the appropriate text to be used as the basis for negotiations. As well, look for possible continued discussion around the principles set out in the Compilation Document L.8, rev.1.

SCHEDULE OF PREPCOM IV EVENTS

OFFICIAL MEETINGS

March 5	10:00 am	UN Conference Room 4	Plenary (technology transfer)	Open
March 5	10:00 am and 3:00 pm	UN Conference Room 1	Working Group III (Earth Charter)	Open
March 5	3:00 pm	UN Conference Room 4	Plenary (financial resources)	Open

NGO MEETINGS

March 5	9:00 am	CCUN Conference Room 10H	CONGO (Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations)	NGOs
March 5	9:00 am	UN Conference Room C	NGO Strategy Session	NGOs
March 5	9:00 am	2 West 64th St.	Peoples' Forum	NGOs
March 5	9:00 am	The Episcopal Church Center 815 2nd Ave.	Indigenous People's Issues	Indigenous People's NGOs
March 5	10:00 am	UN Conference Room C	Women's Caucus	NGOs
March 5	11:00 am	CCUN 12th Fl. Dag Hammarskjold Lg.	Briefing on the "South-North Terms of Trade Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development" Paper	NGOs
March 5	12:00 pm	CCUN Conference Room 10H	Earth Charter Working Group	NGOs
March 5	1:30 pm	CCUN 2nd Fl. Hospitality Center	NGO Orientation	NGOs
March 5	2:00 pm	CCUN Conference Room 10H	NGO Strategy Session on Forests Issues	NGOs
March 5	6:00 pm	UN Conference Room 1	NGO Government Dialogues	Open
March 5	6:00 pm	UN Conference Room (TBA)	Daily Briefings on the Negotiations	NGOs and Press
March 5	7:00 pm to 8:00 pm	UN Conference Room 4	NGO Plenary	NGOs
March 5	7:30 pm	CCUN 11th Fl. Hardin Room	Poverty and Affluence Working Group	NGOs