



Earth Summit Bulletin

Vol. 1 No. 6

Published by Island Press with contributions from the NGO community

9 March 1992

PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY, 6 MARCH 1992

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS (PLENARY)

The Plenary's informal session on financial resources and mechanisms reconvened Friday to continue discussion on the remaining four paragraphs of PC/L.41. Vice-Chair John Bell opened the fourth session of this group by asking the participants to help clarify the paragraphs one-by-one and to look for areas of agreement and divergence.

Paragraph (d) addresses the nature of the proposed funding mechanism. Since the G-77 clarification of L.41 clearly spelled out that governance of "the Fund" should include a list of criteria, including the items in paragraph (d), there was little discussion.

Bell moved on to (e), which calls the transfer of funds from developed to developing countries "compensatory". Many observers felt that the discussion on this item showed a maturation of the PrepCom debate, moving from Second Committee "finger-pointing" and polemics into real dialogue on partnership. The Russian Federation stated, "a solution is possible if we do not politicize the debate; not inject ideology into the debate." India said that the word "compensatory" was not accusatory but qualified the nature of the funding; that it be provided as grants and not as loans.

The group spoke to both paragraph (f), that deals with the notion of "partnership in additionality," and (g) that addresses the issue of the need for a supportive international economic environment. Debate moved quickly, prompting some to note that it appeared the participants were eager to move into informal-informals as soon as possible and leave L.41 behind.

The Nordic countries proposed a list of elements for a package on financial resources. It calls for established targets of ODA as a percentage of GNP, the use of existing mechanisms for Agenda 21, increases in contributions to IDA, strengthening of the Multilateral Development Banks and UNDP, implementation of the December Paris Club agreement of December 1991 for debt relief to the poorest countries, new and additional resources to be administered by the GEF, and meeting agreed contributions to the Montreal Protocol fund.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER (PLENARY)

The Plenary finished its first reading of the cluster of documents on technology transfer on Friday. The Vice-Chair, Bjornar Utheim, expressed great satisfaction with the progress made so far.

The afternoon began by completing the paragraph-by-paragraph discussion of PC/100/Add.11 on capacity building. Among the amendments proposed was one by Portugal, on behalf of the European Community, which requested that paragraphs 13 and 14 under the heading "Means of Implementation" be bracketed until a decision is made on financial resources.

The Vice-Chair then made several introductory remarks on the third document under consideration, PC/100/Add.10, "Science for Sustainable Development." He explained that this document is an elaborated version of PC/52 and L.49 as well as the results of the International Conference on an Agenda of Science for Environment and Development, held in Vienna in November 1991.

When the floor was opened for general comments, Australia stressed the need to justify the high cost of the programmes to be implemented. Sweden said that the document lacks any mention of social science, legal and human aspects and the participation of women and indigenous people. A paragraph-by-paragraph discussion of the document followed. Comparatively few amendments were made and most of them were non-controversial. The Russian Federation requested that the whole document be amended to include countries with economies in transition. Portugal, on behalf of the EC, said that it was premature to deal with the means of implementation until a decision is made on financial resources.

EARTH CHARTER (WORKING GROUP III)

Working Group III convened in a formal capacity Friday morning. The Chair, Dr. Bedrich Moldan, provided a brief overview of the decision taken by the authors of the various Earth Charter texts on which text would serve as the basis of negotiation. In brief, the G-77 text (L.20) will be used as the starting point, without prejudice to the status of all the other texts submitted (ie., L.21 (US); L.22 (Japan); L.23 (Canada); and L.24 (Australia)). All "L" documents are now to be given equal status and delegates were given a 5:00 pm deadline to submit additional text. The rest of the morning's formal session included presentations by Japan, Canada, Australia and the US regarding their texts and a general discussion of the G-77 text.

Reactions to the G-77 text included: the need for a high-sounding preamble; the desire for a positive document which does not specifically apportion blame; the need to strike a greater balance between the anthropocentric and ecocentric dimensions of the problem; and the importance of ensuring that the special needs of developing countries are sufficiently reflected.

By 12:30 pm, Working Group III was transformed into an informal session so actual negotiation of the G-77 text could commence. Principle 1, "National sovereignty over natural resources" (ie., Stockholm Principle 21), was the first to be addressed. Many governments were of the view that it would be best suited for inclusion in the preamble. Some thought it should be restated verbatim, while others argued for greater elaboration which would take into account the important fact that UNCED, unlike Stockholm, is charged with the mandate to consider development as well as environmental problems.

Negotiations around Principle 2, "The human being as the center of environmental concerns" were more contentious. Developing countries argued that the achievement of sustainable development cannot be realized until fundamental human needs are met. By contrast, certain developed countries went so far as to suggest that it is unrealistic to assume that freedom from disease, hunger and poverty can, in fact, be guaranteed. Other developed countries supported the pleas from developing countries to consider their special needs but pointed out that Principle 2 could, in fact, be interpreted in such a way as to render "the quality of the environment" secondary to human needs. Such an interpretation would be wholly inconsistent with the entire notion of environment and development integration.

By the end of the afternoon's deliberations, Moldan announced that the European Community, the Nordic bloc and Argentina had submitted texts by 5:00 pm and that they would be ready for distribution by Tuesday and taken up in a formal session on Wednesday morning.

PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS SATURDAY, 7 MARCH 1992

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS (PLENARY)

Saturday's informal-informal session on financial resources and mechanisms met to begin drafting text to be negotiated during the coming week. Vice-Chair John Bell transformed the meeting into an informal session and distributed copies of an informal note for discussion on the potential elements of convergence and areas requiring further discussion and resolution. This document had been prepared by the Vice-Chair to summarize the content of the discussions on L.41 held during the past week, in light of Wednesday's statement by Pakistan for the G-77. This document includes 11 areas where the Vice-Chair believed there to be points of agreement, including: the desire to build a global partnership based on mutual commitments; the need to use available financing sources in a coordinated partnership at the global, national and regional levels; an agreement that there be no erosion of existing development flows; and the need for changes in the

governance of funding mechanisms. The areas requiring further discussion include: the type of funding mechanism to be used; how incremental costs are to be met; the principles of a changed governance for "the fund"; how contributions are to be assessed; and ways to create new partnerships for strengthening national capacities for sustainable development.

It was decided early in the meeting that it would be a rational use of time to discuss the methodology to be used to move from L.41 to a negotiating text. They agreed that Saturday's session would focus on the differences between the group's perception of the discussion and Bell's note. There was also consensus that Bell would hold private consultations with the chairs of the regional groupings before the next session, scheduled for Wednesday. The heads of the regional groups will meet Tuesday night and may discuss the possibility of holding informal-informal night sessions on this subject.

Bell's text was warmly received by the delegates. Beyond the diplomatic niceties, there was appreciation for the effort made to distill the debate into a form that could be discussed point-by-point during the private consultations. Discussion was restrained since, as one G-77 delegate put it, members are required to "speak within the discipline of their group" and this was a new document that had not been discussed in the regional group meetings. The debate was successful in signalling to Bell the problems with his text that should be brought up in the private meetings with the heads of the regional groups on Monday and Tuesday.

The task at hand for Bell is not only to find possible points of consensus around the problematic areas but also to determine the form that the agreement might take -- a new chapter for Agenda 21 or a statement of principles on financial resources.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER (PLENARY)

The Plenary's informal discussion of the technology transfer cluster of documents continued on Saturday morning. By the end of the session, the group had reached agreement on the capacity building document, as amended.

Vice-Chair Bjornar Uthheim began the discussion by introducing a "Chairman's Non-Paper" on capacity building. The non-paper was a compilation of all amendments put forward during discussions held earlier in the week. Before discussion could get underway, however, one country delegate complained that the document was only available in English. A representative from the Secretariat explained that they worked almost all night to prepare this document and, hence, there was no time for translation. Uthheim compromised by agreeing to read all amendments aloud so that the non-English speaking delegates could hear the simultaneous interpretation.

For the most part, the morning's discussion went very smoothly, as most of the proposed amendments were not viewed as controversial. There were a few sticking points, however. For example, one country had a problem with China's proposed terminology "technical and technological cooperation." After several minutes of going back and forth between the two, India proposed

a compromise: "cooperation in and related to technology transfer and know-how." India explained that this was one of the few unbracketed terms in the climate change convention currently under negotiation and, thus, should be easily agreed upon here.

Programme areas and means of implementation that are related to financial resources and institutional matters will remain in brackets until the PrepCom's discussion of these issues is complete.

Finally, there was a bit of confusion in paragraph six over the sentence, "The national planning process together with the national sustainable development action plans or strategies should provide the framework for such cooperation and assistance." One developing country felt that since all countries do not have national sustainable development action plans, this phrase should be deleted. Two European countries disagreed. A compromise was finally reached where the phrase would remain, but the words "where appropriate" would be added.

This is the first chapter of Agenda 21 that has been agreed upon, albeit informally, during PrepCom IV. The amended document will now be printed, translated and passed on to the Plenary for approval.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY AT PREPCOM

WORKING GROUP I: Working Group I will be convened for the first time this session by the Swedish Chair, Bo Kjellén. Most probably Kjellén will announce his work plan and the group will adopt the agenda for this session and move on to Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Desertification and Drought. Look for a move to produce a more binding commitment on arid and semi-arid lands from one of the African states, to be supported by the Nordics. Required reading for this agenda item will be PC/100/Add.17, PC/110, PC/117, PC/118 and The Declaration of Fortaleza (from the conference in January on Impacts of Climatic Variations and Sustainable Development in Semi-Arid Regions).

WORKING GROUP II: The first meeting of Working Group II at this session will convene this morning. The working group is expected to adopt the agenda and then move directly into consideration of PC/100/Add.21, "Protection of the oceans: options for Agenda 21." Negotiation on marine living resources, particularly those related to marine mammals, high seas fisheries and Antarctica, is expected to be the most difficult. This is due in large part to the problems of the International Whaling Commission with Iceland having withdrawn; the ongoing negotiations on large drift-net fishing; and the controversy between Malaysia and the Antarctica Treaty members to address the Antarctic regime in Agenda 21.

THE CORRIDORS: There will be a briefing on the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) by the three partners (UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank) from 11:00 until 12:30 in the Trusteeship Council.

SCHEDULE OF PREPCOM IV EVENTS

OFFICIAL MEETINGS

March 9	10:00 am and 3:00 pm	UN Conference Room TBA	Working Group I (formal)	Open
March 9	10:00 am and 3:00 pm	UN Conference Room TBA	Working Group II (formal)	Open

OTHER MEETINGS

March 9	8:45 am to 5:00 pm	CUNY Graduate Center on 33 W 42nd St.	Trade, Environment & Development Conference	Open
March 9	9:00 am to 10:00 am	UN Conference Room C	NGO Strategy Session	NGOs
March 9	9:00 am to 5:00 pm	Labouisse Hall - UNICEF Building	Global Family Children's Event	Open
March 9	10:00 am to 11:00 am	UN Conference Room C	Women's Caucus	NGOs
March 9	11:00 am to 12:00 pm	UN Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium	"Save the Planet" Children's Performance	Open
March 9	11:00 to 12:30 pm	Trusteeship Council	Briefing on the GEF	Open
March 9	12:30 pm	CCUN 12th Fl. Dag Hammarskjöld Lg.	Citizens Response to the U.S. National Report for the Earth Summit	Press
March 9	1:00 pm to 2:00 pm	CCUN Room 10H	World Wide Air Pollution Survey	NGOs
March 9	1:15 pm	UN Conference Room 7	UNCTAD Briefing on the "Polluter-Pays", "User-Pays"	Open
March 9	1:30 pm to 2:30 pm	CCUN 2nd Fl. Hospitality Center	NGO Orientation	New NGOs
March 9	1:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Cafe-Bar next to UN Conf. Room 4	Latin-American and Caribbean NGOs Meeting	LA&C NGOs
March 9	2:00 pm to 3:00 pm	CCUN Room TBA	NGO Strategy Meeting on Forest Issues	NGOs
March 9	3:00 pm to 5:00 pm	Conf. Room on UNIFEM Building - 304 E 45th St.	Forum on Human Rights and the Environment	NGOs
March 9	6:00 pm to 7:00 pm	UN Conference Room 4	NGO Government Dialogue	NGOs
March 9	6:15 pm to 8:00 pm	UN Conference Room 6	Financial Mechanisms for Development and the Environment & Strategies and Mechanisms which Favor Technology Transfers for Sustainable Development	Delegates
March 9	6:30 pm	General Assembly Hall	Cultural Event	Open