



THE FRAGILE MOUNTAINS

DELAYED RECOGNITION BY UNCED

The inclusion of an independent programme area on mountains brings long overdue global attention to these fragile ecosystems. Since Stockholm 1972, the extreme fragility and the delicate relationship of the environment and development in the mountains has received inadequate attention in global environmental platforms. It was not until a group of individuals from various parts of the world began an independent exercise called "the Mountain Agenda," that UNCED began to take notice. The Mountain Agenda has now been accepted and adopted within the official UNCED process. PC/100/Add.18 was developed with the assistance of an NGO from Nepal.

Mountains play a very important role in the health of the global environment, particularly as sources of freshwater. The availability of large volumes of water at substantial altitudes has also created hydro-electric potential in the mountains. The issue of large mountain dams, however, is in need of close examination for potential environmental impacts. In a similar way, mountains also provide habitat for some of the richest stock of biodiversity in the world. Extensive commercial exploitation of the mountain forests and deforestation has impacted on this rich biodiversity.

The human dimension associated with environment and development in the mountains also needs special attention. Due to their relative inaccessibility, mountain societies have evolved and sustained themselves in a resource-prudent lifestyle which also has generated some of the most extensive cultural diversity in the world. As it becomes more important to talk of change in lifestyles, much can be learned from the mountain communities.

With this in mind, the mountain chapter in Agenda 21 contains two extensive programme areas:

- **Generating and strengthening knowledge about mountain ecosystems:** Mountains are characterized by complex ecosystemic linkages and a high degree of vulnerability to ecological instabilities. Within the proper understanding of the potentials and limitations of mountain development, it will be necessary to generate deeper scientific understanding of these delicate ecological linkages. Without quick generation of such scientific knowledge, mountains are under the risk of irreversible ecological damage. This programme area recommends the establishment of regional mountain institutions to help generate and disseminate the necessary scientific knowledge.
- **Promoting integrated development of mountain watersheds and alternative livelihood options:** Mountain areas are generally rich in natural resources, however, mountain people are generally poor and marginalized. The issues of environment and development may be more closely intertwined in the mountains than in the plains. Thus, sustainable development of mountains has to take advantage of the rich resources as well as specific advantages of the mountains, like weather and scenic beauty.

PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH 1992

FINANCIAL RESOURCES (PLENARY)

After two days of informal consultations, an informal-informal session of the financial resources group met yesterday morning. Vice-Chair John Bell did not table a Chair's text, as many expected, allowing instead the G-77 to present its negotiating text (L.41./Rev.1). This document, in the form of a new chapter for Agenda 21, had been prepared in G-77 drafting sessions Monday and Tuesday. Several delegates diplomatically thanked the G-77 for their contribution. Privately, certain developed country delegates were grumbling that this document was a fallback to old po-

sitions, although couched in kinder, gentler language. In particular, there was concern that the G-77 text calls for all financing of Agenda 21 to come from new funds, in addition to existing levels of ODA. The meeting broke for one hour while the delegations reviewed the draft. When the meeting resumed, the greater than expected number of interested parties made work impossible in the small room. The meeting moved to Conference Room 4 and the migration of delegates between chambers reminded one NGO of weekend safari sights at PrepCom I.

It appears that the negotiating parties have two options at this point: 1) To refuse to negotiate on the basis of the G-77 text; or 2) To begin the laborious process of amending and discussing this document. Some observers have noted that an impasse at this point may be an advance in negotiations, forcing the G-77 to privately consult with the OECD countries (principally the US and the EC) to forge a compromise. The whole situation is complicated by internal problems that two of the country groupings have with their rotating chairs. Bell's compromise text, which does not even unofficially exist at this point, may resurface, although the chances are slim. The EC position will be critical in determining the direction of the negotiations.

DESERTIFICATION (WORKING GROUP I)

Working Group I met in a closed informal-informal session from 3:00 - 5:00 yesterday afternoon to continue negotiations on PC/100/Add.17 on desertification. At 5:00 pm the session was transformed into an open informal session to deal with Programme Areas E and F. Agreement was reached on their format in the remaining hour.

Programme Area F, "Encourage and Promote Popular Participation and Environmental Education Focusing on Desertification Control," was a newly drafted version drawn up as a result of consultations between the African Group, the European Community and the United States. For the most part, this new text closely followed the format of the original African text, with a few minor additions.

Interestingly, this new text highlighted the roles of local communities in programme/project implementation. Canada was quick to insist that specific reference be made to the inclusion of women and indigenous groups throughout the items in Programme Area F.

As the session was about to close, it was pointed out that there were a number of items still left unresolved, including paragraphs 10 and 13, as well as the sections on means of implementation. The working group was unable to approve existing submissions for these sections and so deferred them for future discussion.

OCEANS (WORKING GROUP II)

Two contact groups established by Working Group II Chair Bukar Shaib met yesterday morning to negotiate text for the first two programme areas of PC/100/Add.21: coastal areas and marine pollution. The contact group on coastal areas made little progress in its attempt to define and differentiate between objectives and activities (paragraphs 8-13). The contact group on land-based sources of marine pollution was limited in its progress as well. A number of countries are moving further away from a global to a regional or national approach to controlling this type of marine pollution. In addition, there were signs that some of the countries that agreed on the Nairobi recommendations (PC/113) in December, are now retrenching from earlier positions. Agreement on the integration of objectives and activities from PC/100/Add.21 and PC/113 does not appear to be imminent.

Working Group II continued its informal discussion of PC/100/Add.21 on oceans yesterday afternoon. Delegates spent the entire session discussing Programme Areas C and D: "Sustainable Use and Conservation of High Seas Living Resources" and "Sustainable Use of Living Marine Resources under National Jurisdiction." Shaib requested that delegates start with a general

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paragraph-by-paragraph discussion and leave the problem areas to another contact group.

Before any discussion of the contents of the document could begin, several countries stated their opposition or support for the division of the subject of marine resources into two programme areas instead of one. After this debate, the Chair led the delegates through a paragraph-by-paragraph discussion. Most heeded the Chair's call and kept to general statements, rather than proposing amendments to the text.

The most contentious issues were not even discussed yesterday. Since there were five unresolved issues under these programme areas at PrepCom III, text for these issues was never even written in PC/100/Add.21. These issues include: state obligation for flag vessels and violations of regulations; straddling stocks and highly migratory species; development of international control, surveillance and enforcement systems; marine mammals; and polar regions. At the conclusion of the day's session, Shaib announced that the United States will lead a new contact group to deal with marine living resources.

EARTH CHARTER (WORKING GROUP III)

Working Group III reconvened yesterday morning to continue reading through the G-77 Earth Charter text (L.20). The Chair, Dr. Bedrich Moldan, requested the delegations to restrict their interventions to specific comments, proposals and amendments pertaining to L.20 and not to engage in actual negotiation nor argue the merits of the G-77 text.

The Nordic bloc (L.27), the European Community (L.25), Argentina (L.26) and the UK and Denmark (L.28) tabled new text. Of particular note was the UK/Denmark text which set out a proposed preamble based on the work of NGOs from around the world.

Discussion then resumed with the principle-by-principle analysis of the G-77 text starting with Principle 4 "Integration of environment and development", which was not a particularly contentious issue. Principle 5, "Main responsibility", was far more divisive. Many northern countries were concerned about the apparent negative tone of the principle, not to mention the disregard of the concept of "common but differentiated" responsibilities, which was agreed to at PrepCom III. Pakistan, on behalf of the G-77, responded to developed country concerns by reminding the working group that the thrust of Principle 5 was entirely consistent with the letter and spirit of Resolution 44/228.

Developed country concerns around Principle 6, "Equity", focused mainly on the apparent ambiguity of the principle. In particular, delegations requested clarification on the concept of "equal shares of global environmental space". They also noted that the principle, as drafted, could be interpreted in such a way as to be contrary with the overriding goal of sustainable development. Principle 7, "Special needs of the developing countries", calls for a new form of international cooperation to include transfer of technology on concessional terms and new and additional financial resources. Most Northern countries stated that specific reference to technology transfer and new and additional resources were inappropriately included in the Earth Charter as they are the focus of separate Agenda 21 chapters. Developing countries suggested by contrast that the specific elements referred to in Princi-

ple 7 reflected the two fundamental components of the new form of international cooperation called for in this Principle.

With regard to Principle 8, "Environment and Trade", most Northern countries had no problem with the first sentence which refers to the need for states to "cooperate to promote an international economic environment supportive of sustainable development". States were less supportive of the second sentence, which calls for developed countries to ensure that "their actions are conducive to the growth of the world economy in general and the development of the developing countries in particular". Northern countries were unanimous in their call for the deletion of the third sentence which states that "global environmental considerations cannot justify restrictive trade practices." Many Northern countries pointed out that this sentence is inconsistent with the current practice under international environmental instruments such as the Montreal Protocol, not to mention the specific rules of international lending institutions. On the third sentence, Pakistan noted that the prohibition is aimed at unilateral trade practices and not international environmental laws.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY AT PREPCOM

POVERTY, SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES (PLENARY): Plenary's first discussion on this topic will begin this afternoon. Watch to see what the US position will be in on the Consumption chapter. A number of countries are expected to propose that national policies geared to the protection of basic human needs must be insulated from structural adjustment policies. Watch for the extent to which countries are prepared to give real prominence to the importance of poverty eradication. There is a growing concern among developing countries that population is being tied to environmental degradation.

MANAGING FRAGILE ECOSYSTEMS (WORKING GROUP I): This is the first time within UNCED that the issue of mountains will be addressed as a separate agenda item and work will begin on the Agenda 21 chapter, PC/100/Add.18. Discussions will probably be led by Nepal and the countries of the Andean Group. No major problems with this document are foreseen.

OCEANS (WORKING GROUP II): Working Group II will reconvene this morning to continue its discussion of the oceans text (PC/100/Add.21). The Chair will first ask for reports from the contact groups on coastal management and marine pollution. If there is no progress to report from the contact groups, general discussion will then continue with Programme Area E on critical uncertainties and climate change. Throughout the day, contact groups will meet behind closed doors to negotiate text on coastal management, marine pollution, and marine living resources.

EARTH CHARTER (WORKING GROUP III): Unless the Saturday morning session allocates time for the Earth Charter, this morning's session of Working Group III will represent the last opportunity for countries to read through the G-77 text and table amendments. Ten principles remain to be discussed today. Once this exercise is complete, the Chair (in consultation with the key players) will synthesize all amendments and proposals into a single document that will form the basis for actual negotiations.

SCHEDULE OF PREPCOM IV EVENTS

OFFICIAL MEETINGS

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|----------|----------|----------------------|---|------|
| March 12 | 10:00 am | UN Conference Room 1 | Working Group I (fragile ecosystems) | Open |
| March 12 | 10:00 am | UN Conference Room 4 | Working Group II (oceans) | Open |
| March 12 | 3:00 pm | UN Conference Room 4 | Plenary (poverty, sustainability, health and education) | Open |
| March 12 | 3:00 pm | UN Conference Room 1 | Working Group III (Earth Charter) | Open |

NGO AND OTHER MEETINGS

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| March 12 | 9:00 am to 10:00 am | UN Conference Room C | NGO Strategy Session | NGOs |
| March 12 | 9:00 am to 6:00 pm | AFS Bldg. Galatti Lounge | Conference on Sustainable Agriculture | Open |
| March 12 | 10:00 am to 11:00 pm | UN Conference Room C | Women's Caucus | NGOs |
| March 12 | 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm | CCUN 2nd Floor Hospitality Center | NGO Orientation | NGOs |
| March 12 | 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm | CCUN 8th Fl. Grumman Room | NGO Strategy Meeting on Finance | NGOs |
| March 12 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm | CCUN 8th Floor | NGO Oceans Working Group Meeting | NGOs |
| March 12 | 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm | CCUN Tillman Chapel | NGO Strategy Meeting on Biotechnology and Biodiversity | NGOs |
| March 12 | 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm | CCUN Conference Room 10H | NGO Working Group on Forests | NGOs |
| March 12 | 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm | CCUN Conference Room 10H | NGO Drafting Group for Human Settlements Paper | NGOs |
| March 12 | 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm | UN Conference Room 4 | NGO Government Dialogue & NGO Plenary | NGOs |