



## SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### SAVING THE WORLD'S FOOD SYSTEMS

Many nations have begun to focus on questions of sustainable agriculture in light of the link between environmental degradation in agriculture and the problems of hunger, oversupply, and trade and price supports. National and international discussion of sustainable agriculture was initially informed by a successful local and regional farm sector response to environmental degradation, often referred to as organic, ecological or biological agriculture. Recently, certain institutional, corporate and government interests have incorporated sustainable agriculture into their policies and programs, with the result that the term "sustainable agriculture" can mean either ecologically diverse organic small farm systems or the further industrialization of agriculture through biotechnology.

UNCED treatment of the issue reflects this competition of designs for the future of food production. The basis for PC/100/Add.19, "Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development" (SARD), was established at the FAO/Netherlands conference held in April, 1991. At that conference, the following definition of sustainable development was accepted:

"The management and conservation of the natural resource base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development (in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors) conserves land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, is environmentally sound, technically appropriate and economically viable and socially acceptable."

FAO is now translating the concept of SARD into an operational reality. The current draft of the SARD framework in Agenda 21 represents a comprehensive integration of criteria of environmentally sound management practices in all aspects of food and fiber production. Alternative production technologies identified in the draft include integrated pest management, low input systems and integrated plant nutrition systems. NGOs have recommended strengthening the document to include: currently established alternative technologies; reduction of waste in production; harvest and distribution in industrialized countries; and establishment of an international ecological agricultural network.

## PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 1992

### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS (PLENARY)

Work began yesterday afternoon in Plenary on the first of a series of issues grouped together as the Social and Economic Dimensions. First discussed were the topics that include Combatting Poverty, Changing Consumption Patterns, Demographic Dynamics and Sustainability (PC/100/Add.2).

The Vice-Chair reminded the delegates that they had only 9 hours to work through the four topics in the "Poverty Cluster", urging them to intervene through their regional spokespeople. He moved directly to a paragraph-by-paragraph reading of PC/100/Add.2, telling the delegates that they could make a positive contribution by remaining quiet if they only wished to agree with the text or other speakers.

The G-77 announced that since they were still reviewing the text, they were not yet prepared to table their amendments. The Chair requested that all delegations submit their contributions in writing by 3:00 pm today. It appears that Add.2 will be re-visited next Wednesday by the Plenary.

As the group moved from paragraphs 4 through 66, the CANZ group, the US and the EC stressed the importance of NGOs and work at the community level in addressing the problem of poverty. The chair, in response to a question about the role of NGOs, said that he intends to let NGOs speak to this issue and is working on a mechanism to have NGO text taken into consideration. After the meeting many NGOs said that they were pleased that so many countries were willing to incorporate NGO positions into their interventions. NGOs working on the issue reported that about 90% of their textual proposals on this issue have been incorporated into the EC and CANZ amendments to PC/100/Add.2.

The US proposed the deletion of paragraphs 16 through 31, from the introduction to the chapter called "Changing Consumption Patterns", through the end of the first programme area, "Focusing on Global Consumption." They had no major problems with the second programme area. They were not supported in their amendment by CANZ or Norway who called this chapter the key to the success of UNCED.

### MOUNTAINS (WORKING GROUP I)

Working Group I commenced negotiations on its next agenda item, "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development" (PC/100/Add.18). Both Austria and the United States had prepared and distributed copies of their proposed amendments to the Secretariat text. The first hour of discussions was spent reviewing the objectives of the proposed programme areas. Several proposals called for the strengthening or establishment of local or regional institutions to encourage "bottom-up" approaches to solving the problems of fragile mountain ecosystems.

In the second hour, discussion moved on to the planned activities in this chapter of Agenda 21. When the United States proposed an amendment on the transfer of technology, several nameplates flew into the air. After several objections to the proposed text, the Chair pleaded with the delegates to limit their suggestions to avoid points being taken up elsewhere.

This exchange is symptomatic of a larger problem developing in the negotiations. The multi-dimensional aspects of the Pre-Com negotiating process and the linkages between these various layers over the last two weeks have been causing problems in this and other venues. Until issues such as institutions, financial resources and the transfer of technology are resolved, whole areas of the Agenda 21 chapters, such as means of implementation and activities will have to be passed over for now.

The discussion around paragraph 10 focused on the need for national governments to maintain and establish a variety of data and information mechanisms. An initiative by the Côte d'Ivoire to encourage governments to act to restore and protect hazardous areas was supported by the group. However, the language suggested by the Chair softened the point by stating "and take appropriate action", instead of specifically detailing what action.

### OCEANS (WORKING GROUP II)

Working Group II held its sixth informal session on oceans yesterday morning. The session opened with a statement by John Bell of Canada, who elaborated on Canada's position on high seas fisheries. The discussion on PC/100/Add.21 then resumed with Programme Area E, "Addressing critical uncertainties for the management of marine environment and climate change." Discussion progressed smoothly on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis as this programme area was non-controversial.

Programme Area F, "Strengthening international, including regional cooperation and coordination," proved to be slightly more contentious. Sweden opened the discussion by stating that in all of the other programme areas in the oceans document there are sections on strengthening international and regional cooperation, and perhaps it was unnecessary to have a separate programme area on this topic. India and Kenya supported Sweden, but Canada, Argentina and the US said that it is necessary to have some

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of the paragraphs in this section, especially those that deal with cooperation and coordination between institutions. Vice Chair Bukar Shaib suggested that the programme area be revised rather than deleted altogether. The rest of the morning's discussion focussed on editing this programme area to remove repetitions and remove any mention of establishing new bureaucracies or institutions.

When India and Sweden suggested deleting paragraph 127, about the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, New Zealand responded that the Office of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea had been abolished in February. He added that since this move would undermine the coordination of oceans activities within the UN, paragraph 127 should not be deleted.

During the course of the day, the three contact groups established by Shaib met to discuss the programme areas under their jurisdiction. The contact group on coastal zone management (Programme Area A) apparently reached consensus on the list of objectives and activities and will present text to the working group today. The contact group on land-based sources of marine pollution was not as successful, as there was still no agreement on the integration of objectives and activities from PC/100/Add.21 and PC/113 (the experts' recommendations from December's meeting in Nairobi).

**EARTH CHARTER (WORKING GROUP III)**

Working Group III resumed its reading of the G-77 text (L.20) yesterday afternoon starting with Principle 9, "Environmental, economic, social and cultural diversity". Northern countries appeared to have problems with all aspects of the principle. The first sentence calls upon states to respect and conserve ecological, economic, social and cultural diversity. Countries such as Japan and the US called into question the relevance of this sentence to the Earth Charter. As well, they questioned the propriety of charging governments with the responsibility to "conserve" cultural diversity. Countries such as Australia requested a reference to women and indigenous people in this sentence.

The second sentence, which calls for differentiated environmental standards along economic lines was met with significant resistance by Northern countries. In particular, they urged that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities be used instead. As well, Northern countries pointed to the fact that the potential relaxing of environmental standards in developing countries would attract unscrupulous corporations and their polluting practices. On this point, Pakistan agreed to work with developed countries to close this loophole. The second paragraph calls for the recognition of the importance of sustainable use of biological diversity. Northern countries called for a broader formulation to include other ecological resources.

Notwithstanding the overall consensus around the concepts enshrined in Principle 10, "Scientific understanding and research and development, and exchange of information", certain Northern countries called for clarification of the term "free exchange and transfer of scientific knowledge". Pakistan explained that the concept of free exchange was not meant to apply to technology per se but rather to scientific knowledge and experience. The US stated

that states should not mandate the free exchange, but rather, they should encourage and facilitate the exchange.

There were no substantial problems with Principle 11, "Endogenous capacity-building". Principle 12, "International and transboundary movement of hazardous activities and substances" was met with some resistance. Most Northern countries stated that the specifics were more appropriately left to Agenda 21 or such international instruments as the Basel Convention.

Iceland was the only Northern country who expressed clear support for inclusion of the specifics in Principle 12. Iceland reminded delegates that the task at hand was not to draft a legally-binding instrument but to address fundamental questions of environment and development and to signal to the world the extent of the commitment of the international community to deal with these matters.

Principle 13, "Contamination", was by far the most contentious. The Principle charges States with responsibility for "the damage caused to the global environment by the use of all weapons of mass destruction" and refers to the use of weapons of mass destruction as a crime against both humanity and the environment. Notwithstanding its acknowledgement of peace as an essential pre-condition to sustainable development, the US attempted to convince delegates that the use of weapons of mass destruction was not objectionable when used in accordance with the rules of humanitarian law. This prompted emotional and eloquent responses from many developing countries that referred to Principle 26 of the Stockholm Declaration which calls for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Iceland boldly aligned itself with the G-77 on this point, charging delegates to consider the very serious implications of retrenching from the important commitments agreed to at Stockholm. No substantive amendments were made to principles 14 and 15.

**THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY AT PREPCOM**

**OCEANS (WORKING GROUP II):** Working Group II will reconvene this morning to continue its discussion of oceans (PC/100/Add.21). The working group will probably finish its first reading of the document, since the only programme area that has not been discussed is Programme Area G on sustainable development of islands. The working group will also receive a report from the contact group on coastal zone management that apparently has reached agreement on objectives and activities within this programme area. The other two contact groups -- land-based sources of marine pollution and living marine resources -- will probably meet during the course of the day.

**SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND LAND RESOURCES (WORKING GROUP I):** After leaving the deserts and the mountains behind, Kjellén moves on to promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development in the morning (PC/100/Add.19) and an integrated approach to planning and management of land resources in the afternoon (PC/100/Add.15).

**SCHEDULE OF PREPCOM IV EVENTS**

**OFFICIAL MEETINGS**

March 13	10:00 am	UN Conference Room 1	Working Group I (land resources: sustainable agriculture)	Open
March 13	10:00 am and 3:00 pm	UN Conference Room 4	Working Group II (oceans)	Open
March 13	3:00 pm	UN Conference Room 1	Working Group I (land resources: integrated management)	Open
March 14	10:00 am	UN Conference Room 1	Plenary (poverty;health;education)	Open
March 14	10:00 am	UN Conference Room 4	Working Group III (Earth Charter)	Open

**NGO AND OTHER MEETINGS**

March 13	9:00 am to 10:00 am	UN Conference Room C	NGO Strategy Session	NGOs
March 13	10:00 am to 11:00 am	UN Conference Room C	Women's Caucus	NGOs
March 13	10:00 am to 1:00 pm	CUNY Graduate Center Auditorium	TOES Forum: Alternative Economic Visions	NGOs
March 13	2:00 pm to 3:00 pm	CCUN 8th Fl. Grumman Room	NGO Strategy Meeting on Finance	NGOs
March 13	2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	UN Conference Room C	Technical Briefing on Threats to Coral Reefs Ecosystems and Coastal Zone Pollution	Delegations & NGOs
March 13	2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	CCUN 11th Fl. Hardin Room	Strategy Meeting on Biotechnology and Biodiversity	NGOs
March 13	2:30 pm to 6:00 pm	UN Conference Room B	Forest Management Discussion	Open
March 13	3:00 pm to 5:00 pm	CCUN Conference Room 10H	Meeting on PC/100/Add.6	NGOs
March 13	3:00 pm to 6:00 pm	CCUN 8th Fl. Grumman Room	NGO Working Group on Forests	NGOs
March 13	6:00 pm to 8:00 pm	UN Conference Room 4	NGO Gov't Dialogue and NGO Plenary "Biodiversity & Biotechnology"	NGOs
March 14	10:00 am to 11:00 am	UN Conference Room 9	NGO/Government/Secretariat Dialogue on Forests	Open