



Earth Summit Bulletin

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PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY EVENING, 16 MARCH 1992

FINANCIAL RESOURCES (PLENARY)

The financial resources working group met in an informal-informal session Monday evening to review the revised G-77 text (L.41/Rev.1). Several Northern countries maintain that the document is an important reference point. However, many stated that the text does not reflect the full extent of discussions that have been carried out over the past two weeks. The Nordic countries reiterated their call for strict time-lines for the compliance with ODA flow obligations as well as new and additional resources for developing countries. The US stated that a great deal of modification to the text would be required to render it acceptable. It referred to the document as "one-sided, unbalanced and unrealistic". The US also referred to the potential of a modified GEF to serve the purpose of a Green Fund. The CANZ group expressed its reluctance to make firm financial commitments in light of domestic economic difficulties in those three countries. The European Community did not appear to have a clear position on the paper. The former Soviet bloc countries expressed their concern about the lack of reference in the document to the special needs of those countries with economies in transition. Since review of the revised text had not been completed by the end of the evening session, Vice-Chair John Bell requested additional comments in writing by yesterday morning so that a new revision text could be compiled. It is unlikely that another session on financial resources will be convened before next week.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE (WORKING GROUP I)

Working Group I met Monday evening to continue discussing sustainable agriculture. The Chair reviewed changes to the text that were suggested in an informal-informal meeting on Saturday. They include the decision to postpone a proposal for a new paragraph on integrating trade and environment policies in sustainable agriculture until after discussions on trade conclude in the Plenary. Some of the changes recommended were: strengthening the roles of different groups; inclusion of wild plants; and critical lands and subsistence agriculture. The Chair postponed discussion of the programme areas on plant and animal genetics until after consideration of biodiversity. Ethiopia objected that this might aggravate the discussion on agricultural uses of biotechnology in the biodiversity debate. The Chair agreed to meet with a small number of government delegations to refine the language on agricultural uses of biotechnology.

PREPCOM HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 1992

FORESTS (WORKING GROUP I)

Working Group I Chair Bo Kjellén convened the first PrepCom IV discussion on forests yesterday afternoon. He hoped that the group would move as fast as possible through the forests using the maps provided by PrepCom III in the form of PC/100/Add.16 and CRP.14/Rev.2 (assisted by new maps in the form of proposed suggestions) and a compass in the form of a good sense of compromise and direction. Considering that there are only four sessions to deal with forests, he pleaded for delegates to avoid unnecessary drafting suggestions. He announced that PrepCom Chair Tommy Koh had requested that all Agenda 21 chapters be finished by a week from this Saturday and that agreement had been reached in all Working Group I agenda items already discussed, except in the area of desertification. Kjellén transformed the meeting into the Ad Hoc Sub-Group on Principles for Forests and passed the chair to Charles Liburd of Guyana.

Liburd greeted the group as old friends and reminded the delegates that he had loaned them brackets at PrepCom III and wanted them back at this session. The US, the G-77, the European Community, Finland, Japan, New Zealand, Canada and Gabon have all presented written amendments. Liburd moved directly to a first reading of those portions of text submitted to the Secretariat at the conclusion of PrepCom III that had not been reviewed by the contact group. Several procedural questions emerged over which portions of the text could be amended: paragraphs containing new text or only new underlined text. One notable intervention from Norway related to plantation forests, incorporating text from the NGO document of suggestions to CRP.14/Rev.2. As at PrepCom III, the question of textual paternity arose when the Vice-Chair attempted to discover the author of an amendment for further clarification. At the end of an hour and a half, all of the new text was eventually placed in brackets.

This was followed by a procedural debate over the methodology to be used to deal with the existing text and the proposed amendments. Four suggestions on ways to proceed seemed to emerge — each supported by various groupings of countries: 1) that the Secretariat "cut and paste" the amendments so that the countries proposing amendments could meet before Friday to consolidate them into a single document; 2) that the Secretariat prepare a consolidated document at the earliest date so that the G-77 could review and use it to prepare a response paper by Friday's session; 3) that all parties meet to consolidate their positions into one bracketed document that could be discussed on Friday; and 4) that work proceed as in Geneva from a compilation text. Liburd decided that there was greatest consensus around proceeding with (1) for now and possibly (4) on Friday, with a compilation text to be prepared by today at noon. The day's work resulted in Liburd's loan of another 16 pairs of brackets to the delegates.

FRESHWATER (WORKING GROUP II)

Working Group II turned its attention to PC/100/Add.22, "Protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources," Tuesday morning. The Vice-Chair, Vicente Sanchez of Chile, made an impassioned plea to the delegates that they only discuss the text that remains in brackets, as there is no sense in renegotiating paragraphs that were agreed to at PrepCom III; that all amendments be submitted in writing before 1:00 pm; and that they organize a contact group to negotiate the actual text.

The morning's discussion served to highlight a number of areas of concern to delegates. Several countries, including Japan and China, are still opposed to restrictions on the construction of dams. China suggested deleting a sentence in paragraph 4 that specifically listed the potential environmental problems caused by construction of dams and water channelization. Colombia and Nigeria, among others, advocated that freshwater resources be considered not only an economic good but a social good. New Zealand went one step further saying that the cultural and spiritual value of water to indigenous people should be recognized.

Most countries supported the incorporation of the results of the International Conference on Water and the Environment, held in Dublin in January (summarized in PC/112) into Add.22. Some countries, including the US and Jamaica, expressed concern about the establishment of "unrealistic" targets and deadlines. Zimbabwe, New Zealand and a number of small island states recommended removing the brackets from Programme Area G, "Impacts of Climate Change on Water Resources."

TOXIC CHEMICALS (WORKING GROUP II)

Discussion PC/100/Add.23, "Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals", began in Working Group II yesterday afternoon. After a long procedural discussion, the Chair, Andrzej Czyz from Poland, led the group in a discussion of text that was bracketed as of the end of PrepCom III. He requested that all new amendments be submitted in writing by 3:00 pm today and estab-

lished a contact group, which will hold its first meeting on Thursday. The Secretariat distributed new draft text for a proposed Programme Area F, "Establishment and implementation of an intergovernmental forum on chemical safety." This programme area is based on the December 1991 Experts meeting in London that discussed draft proposals for an intergovernmental mechanism for chemical risk assessment and management.

Some of the contentious issues that emerged during the discussion were: prevention of the uncontrolled export of substances banned domestically, as stated in paragraph 6; the status of the GATT working group on this subject, in paragraph 38; the prior informed consent procedure, in paragraph 41; and the listing of a few banned substances, such as asbestos and organohalogen compounds, in paragraphs 53(b) and (f). The Working Group did, however, succeed in removing the brackets from four paragraphs.

INSTITUTIONS (WORKING GROUP III)

Working Group III met under the chairmanship of Ambassador Ismail Razali from Malaysia to address institutions for the first time at PrepCom IV. He opened the meeting with a review of the mandate of the working group: to address the legal and institutional issues referred to it by the PrepCom; to review ways and means to strengthen cooperation within the UN on environment and development; to review the role and function of UN agencies; and to examine the way in which institutions can be strengthened to implement Agenda 21. Razali reminded the working group of the task before them: to prepare draft Agenda 21 chapters on institutional arrangements and regional organizations.

The rest of the morning was taken up with general comments addressing the group's mandate. Northern and Southern countries agreed that they should not create any new institutions, but rather should focus on the need for programme coordination and a high-level body to provide policy direction on environment and development. Other points raised include the following: the General Assembly as the main policy-making forum on environment and development; alternatively, reliance on ECOSOC for the same function; strengthening the mandates of specialized UN agencies; and the role of NGOs in regional and sub-regional organizations.

EARTH CHARTER (WORKING GROUP III)

The G-77 held an open meeting with all delegates yesterday afternoon to review its revised Earth Charter text (referred to as an "approach paper"). Since the OECD countries had not reviewed the text in detail, they reserved substantive comments until they had the opportunity to formulate a collective response. Notwithstanding, numerous OECD country delegates expressed concern about the direction the text has taken. In particular, it does not appear to build on the discussions held by Working Group III last week. One key issue raised by OECD country delegates last week was the apparent imbalance between environment and development in the first G-77 text, L.20. The revised text appears to be as imbalanced as the first text. Another important issue raised last week was the need to frame principles in positive language. The revised text continues to apportion blame to developed countries.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY AT PREPCOM

POVERTY (PLENARY): This morning's formal meeting of the Plenary may begin with a report by NGOs on the results of the December Global NGO Forum held in Paris. The meeting will then be transformed into an informal session to discuss the documents in the cluster on poverty, sustainability, health and education (PC/100/Add.2,5 and 6).

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY (PLENARY): The debate on document PC/100/Add.3 made little progress on Monday and may slow down further this afternoon in light of the thorny issues to be discussed, such as the cost of international cooperation; the complex relationship between environment and trade; and the macroeconomic policies related to environment and development.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER (PLENARY): Discussion on the compilation document on technology transfer will begin this evening. After the Plenary discussion of PC/100/Add.9 during the first week, the Secretariat compiled all proposed oral and written amendments into a single document that was distributed last Friday. Watch for the US to continue to press for a shift towards "technology cooperation," even though UN Resolution 44/228 refers specifically to technology transfer. The US will continue to resist the relaxing of intellectual property rights. Look for such alternative solutions as opportunities for developing countries to seek redress vis-a-vis restrictive trade practices/access to technology in other fora, such as domestic tribunals.

FORESTS (WORKING GROUP I): Working Group I will devote two sessions today for negotiations on PC/100/Add.16 "Combating deforestation". Countries that have tabled amendments include Australia, Czechoslovakia, the US, Canada and New Zealand with others sure to follow.

RADIOACTIVE WASTE (WORKING GROUP II): The highly contentious issue of radioactive waste will be addressed for the first time by PrepCom IV tonight. One of the most heated issues is the London Dumping Convention moratorium on the dumping of low-level radioactive waste at sea. The US, France and the UK are calling for that moratorium to be lifted. A large number of countries support the continuation of this moratorium. As well, watch for the US to call for the elimination of any reference to radioactive waste in Agenda 21.

OCEANS (WORKING GROUP II): Two of the three contact groups on oceans will meet today. The contact group on marine environmental pollution will likely continue discussion of objectives and activities and may discuss Iceland's call for language dealing with radioactive materials at sea. The contact group on marine living resources will continue discussing objectives and activities in both program areas.

FRESHWATER RESOURCES (WORKING GROUP II): The contact group on freshwater resources will hold its first meeting this evening. All amendments to PC/100/Add.22 are due by 1:00 pm. Major points to be negotiated include the integration of the Dublin recommendations, the elimination of text that was bracketed at PrepCom III, and the incorporation of new amendments.

SCHEDULE OF PREPCOM IV EVENTS

OFFICIAL MEETINGS

March 18	10:00 am	UN Conference Room 2	Plenary (Formal Session followed by Informal on Poverty)	Open
March 18	10:00 am	UN Conference Room 1	Working Group I (Forests)	Open
March 18	3:00 pm	UN Conference Room 4	Plenary (International Economy)	Open
March 18	3:00 pm	UN Conference Room 1	Working Group I (Forests)	Open
March 18	8:00 pm	UN Conference Room 4	Plenary (Technology Transfer)	Open
March 18	8:00 pm	UN Conference Room 1	Working Group II (Radioactive Wastes)	Open

NGO AND OTHER MEETINGS

March 18	9:00 am - 10:00 am	UN Conference Room C	NGO Strategy Session	NGOs
March 18	10:00 am - 11:00 am	UN Conference Room C	Women's Caucus	NGOs
March 18	11:00 am - 1:00 pm	CCUN 10-H	NGO Working Group on Finance	NGOs
March 18	1:00 pm	UN Conference Room E	Meeting between CANZ Governments and CANZ NGOs	CANZ NGOs
March 18	2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	CCUN 8th Floor Grumman Room	NGO Working Group on Forestry	NGOs
March 18	2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	AFS - Galatti Lounge	NGO Strategy Session on the Role of TNCs at UNCED	NGOs
March 18	3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	CCUN 10-H	NGO Task Group on Sustainable Agriculture	NGOs
March 18	3:00 pm - 5:00 pm	CCUN 8th Floor Grumman Room	Task Group on Legal & Institutional Matters	NGOs
March 18	3:00 pm - 6:00 pm	CCUN 11th Floor Hardin Room	Meeting on Debt & Development	NGOs
March 18	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	UN Conference Room 2	NGO Government Dialogue & NGO Plenary "Planning for Rio"	NGOs