



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## SUMMARY OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: 24 FEBRUARY-7 MARCH 1997

The *Ad Hoc* Open-Ended Intersessional Working Group of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) met from 24 February to 7 March 1997 at UN Headquarters in New York. The Working Group focused on the format and substantive contents of the document to be considered at the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) to review the implementation of Agenda 21, which will be held from 23-27 June 1997. During the first week, delegates engaged in a general debate on sectoral and cross-sectoral issues, strengthening the role of major groups, emerging priorities, institutional issues and format of the outcome of the Special Session. During the second week of the Working Group they responded to a Co-Chairs' draft "Proposed Outcome of the Special Session." Delegates received a revised version of the Co-Chairs' draft on Friday, 7 March, to bring back to their capitals for further review prior to the fifth session of the CSD in April 1997.

Most delegates highlighted freshwater, energy and transport, forests and oceans as sectors of new or priority concern. Delegates noted the importance of the cross-sectoral issues of poverty and changing consumption and production patterns, although, as Co-Chair Derek Osborn (UK) said in his closing remarks, more creativity is needed on the first, and new initiatives and resources must be brought to bear. Osborn also noted that renewed efforts by both developed and developing countries are needed on the means of implementation. UN institutional issues, including the strengthening of UNEP, were discussed. Many participants agreed that the Intersessional Working Group's output provides a sound basis from which to develop a substantive product, but some hard thinking will be necessary in the next month as delegates contemplate the ideas that were tabled in New York, and especially as they consider the one section of the text that was largely left unaddressed: the political statement that heads of State and government will send to the world at the Special Session in June.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSD

Agenda 21 called for the creation of the CSD to: ensure effective follow-up of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED); enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity; and examine progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local, national, regional and international levels. In 1992, the 47th session of the UN General Assembly set out, in resolution 47/191, the terms of reference for the Commission, its composition, guidelines for the participation of NGOs, the organization of work, its relationship with other UN bodies and Secretariat arrangements.

The CSD held its first substantive session at UN Headquarters in New York from 14-25 June 1993. Amb. Razali Ismail (Malaysia) was elected the first Chair of the CSD. Delegates addressed, *inter alia*, the adoption of a multi-year thematic programme of work; the

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future work of the Commission and the exchange of information on the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national level.

The second session of the CSD met in New York from 16-27 May 1994. The Commission, chaired by Klaus Töpfer (Germany), discussed cross-sectoral chapters of Agenda 21, including trade, environment and sustainable development, consumption patterns and major groups. On the sectoral side, delegates considered health, human settlements, freshwater resources, toxic chemicals, and hazardous, solid and radioactive wastes.

The CSD held its third session from 11-28 April 1995 in New York. The revised format of the Commission, which included numerous panel discussions, enabled the participants to enter into a dialogue. The Day of Local Authorities, combined with the NGO and government-sponsored panels and workshops throughout the session, enabled the CSD to examine the local aspects of implementing Agenda 21. Chaired by Henrique Cavalcanti (Brazil), the third session examined the second cluster of issues according to its multi-year thematic programme of work. The sectoral cluster for 1995 included: planning and management of land resources; combating deforestation; combating desertification and drought; sustainable mountain development; promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development; conservation of biological diversity; and environmentally sound management of biotechnology. The Commission also established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF).

CSD-4, held from 18 April - 3 May 1996, completed the Commission's multi-year thematic programme of work and began considering preparations for the Special Session. The Commission, chaired by Rumen Gechev (Bulgaria), examined the third cluster of issues according to its multi-year thematic programme of work. In reference to the Special Session, most delegates agreed that the CSD should continue and that it should not conduct another review of Agenda 21. Suggestions as to its future work varied from concentrating on certain sectors (e.g., oceans) to cross-cutting issues (e.g., poverty) and specific problems (e.g. megacities). Many held out hope that in the coming year the CSD could redefine its role and accelerate progress in achieving the promises made in Rio.

## REPORT OF THE CSD INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP

CSD Vice-Chair, Paul de Jongh (Netherlands), convened the first meeting of the Intersessional Working Group and stressed the importance of continuity in the Commission's work. The Working Group elected Co-Chairs Derek Osborn (UK) and Amb. Celso Amorim (Brazil). Amb. Amorim said the goal of the Intersessional meeting is to negotiate a detailed 10-15 page outline document for CSD-5 in April, to be accompanied by a 2-3 page draft preamble or declaration. Co-Chair Osborn said there has been some loss of momentum since UNCED and the international community must rediscover the spirit of Rio.

Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, asked delegations to recognize that this is the first Special Session of the General Assembly to undertake a five-year review of a major UN process. Preparations are being made for UNGASS participation at the highest level. He suggested that the process be as innovative as UNCED. He said some Working Group resolutions could be dealt with at CSD-5 while the political purpose of the Special Session is to secure real high-level political commitment on implementation, financing for sustainable development, technology transfer and capacity-building. He stressed the need to integrate economics into the CSD's work and to increase the Commission's leverage with financing bodies.

Delegates to the CSD Intersessional Working Group engaged in a general debate during the first week of the session. Issues on the

agenda included: assessment of the implementation of sectoral and cross-sectoral issues; strengthening the role of major groups; emerging priorities; and institutional issues and format of the outcome of the Special Session. The Co-Chairs distributed a series of questions and comments mid-week and urged delegates to identify how to respond to the problems they had identified, rather than simply noting the problems. A Co-Chairs' draft on the "Proposed Outcome of the Special Session," based on the first week's discussion, was distributed on Monday, 3 March. Discussions during the second week responded to this draft and identified elements that delegates supported, believed were omitted or preferred to amend or delete. An informal group, chaired by Antonio Mello (Brazil), met on Wednesday, 5 March to discuss the structure of the document.

A revised Co-Chairs' draft was distributed Friday afternoon, 7 March. This re-draft incorporated delegates' comments during the second week and will provide a basis for consultations as participants prepare for the fifth session of the CSD, which will commence on 8 April 1997. The following report uses the structure of the Co-Chairs' revised draft and summarizes the Working Group's discussion on the issues contained therein.

## PROPOSED OUTCOME OF THE SPECIAL SESSION

### STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

The structure of the Co-Chairs' "Proposed Outcome" dominated many statements during discussion of the initial draft on Tuesday, 4 March. The draft consisted of four sections: Statement of Commitment; Assessment of Progress Reached After Rio; Strategies for Implementation; and International Institutional Arrangements. Most changes focused on the third section, Strategies for Implementation, which was divided into three parts: Policy Approaches, Areas Requiring Urgent Action and Means of Implementation. The EU welcomed the Co-Chairs' structure. The G-77/CHINA suggested that the final document follow the structure of Agenda 21. NEW ZEALAND disagreed. The EU and SWITZERLAND suggested that poverty eradication should be an over-arching objective in the section on urgent action. The EU also suggested that changing production and consumption patterns should be an over-arching objective. The EU, CANADA and SWITZERLAND called for a clear distinction between emerging issues on which progress can be made by the CSD and UNGASS and those issues being addressed in other processes. NORWAY divided the issues according to: follow-up to global conferences; on-going processes under UN conventions; and other urgent areas.

An informal group, chaired by Antonio Mello (Brazil), met on Wednesday, 5 March, to discuss the structure of the draft document. Three proposals containing new elements for the section on Strategies for Implementation were distributed. The Co-Chairs' redraft contained two parts, "Comprehensive Policy Approaches and Means of Implementation" and "Areas of Focus, Convention Processes and Follow-up to Global Conferences." The G-77/China's draft also contained two parts: "Comprehensive Approach to Environment and Development," which was divided into "Integration of Economic, Social and Environmental Objectives" and "Conservation and Management of Resources for Development;" and "Means of Implementation." The Norwegian draft (supported by Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Switzerland) contained three parts: "Policy Approaches," "Means of Implementation" and "Areas Requiring Specific Action."

Delegates generally agreed to call the third section "Implementation in Areas Requiring Urgent Action" and to include three subsections: Integration of Economic, Social and Environmental Objectives; Sectoral Issues; and Means of Implementation. They could not agree on the title for the part on

sectoral issues, however, and decided to transmit to the Co-Chairs their agreement that the section contain three parts. Many agreed that the identification of the document's substance would facilitate further consideration of its structure. The Co-Chairs used this generally-agreed structure to guide their revised draft, with the understanding that no commitments to the headings had been made.

### **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

The Co-Chairs' draft indicates that this section could serve as a preamble or declaration. A number of speakers called for the latter. The Statement of Commitment was not discussed as extensively as the other draft sections. Some delegates suggested that it would benefit from high-level input at CSD-5. Many called for a recommitment to the UNCED agreements. EGYPT said any declaration should reaffirm but not replicate the Rio Declaration. MEXICO emphasized that this should be a political statement but not a list of principles. ICELAND said the declaration should be concise and, where possible, set dates and targets. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested that this section highlight long-term objectives. The EU emphasized the need for the text to be forward-looking. PAKISTAN called for references to implementation of commitments. The US hoped that the Co-Chairs would take the necessary time to make this section live up to the Group's expectations.

The Co-Chairs' draft Statement of Commitment contains six points indicating that it should, *inter alia*: be politically attractive and provide a clear focus; reaffirm the Rio documents; highlight the main achievements since UNCED; address the vicious circle of poverty, lack of capacity and resources; reiterate the need for changing consumption and production patterns; and focus on implementation and commitments.

### **ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS REACHED AFTER RIO**

The Co-Chairs' draft "Assessment of Progress Reached After Rio" describes: the effects of globalization; economic, social and environmental trends; participation of major groups; international environmental agreements; finance and official development assistance (ODA) trends; and technology transfer. A number of developing countries emphasized the developmental aspect of sustainable development and the economic difficulties faced by developing countries. Many developed country delegates stressed that the current state of the global environment is not the sole responsibility of industrialized countries. Delegates also highlighted the need for implementation of international agreements on environment and sustainable development.

Delegates made general comments on the Assessment on Friday, 7 March. INDIA, INDONESIA and CHINA emphasized the need for a balanced approach to environment and development. INDIA called for a reference to important principles adopted in Rio, such as common but differentiated responsibilities. PAKISTAN stated that the key issue in achieving sustainable development is capacity, and capacity-building requires action at all levels, global partnership and willingness to go beyond national boundaries. CHINA stated that the draft does not reflect constraints imposed by the current international economic environment on the economic development of developing countries.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that the Assessment should be aimed not only at diplomats but also at the broader public. He called for concrete illustrations of and numerical trends for both problems and achievements, which could be based on the UNEP Global Environmental Outlook. CANADA suggested adding a paragraph on learning and awareness-raising about sustainable development over the past five years. The US and INDONESIA emphasized the importance of regional efforts to achieve sustainable development.

On a paragraph describing the effects of globalization, the EU recommended greater emphasis on the importance of ODA for meeting basic needs. NORWAY called for further stress on the negative environmental impacts, poverty and unemployment in both developing and developed countries that have resulted from globalization and the need to remedy these impacts. COLOMBIA agreed that globalization has not been of equal benefit for all countries, reinforcing the need for ODA to achieve sustainable development. The revised draft notes that while some developing countries have benefited from globalization, others have suffered declining per capita GDP and remain dependent on declining ODA for the capacity-building and infrastructure required for provision of basic needs and more effective participation in the globalizing world economy.

In a paragraph highlighting worsening economic conditions as well as progress in provision of social services, CANADA suggested noting that the decline in population growth rates is attributable not only to the expansion of basic education and health care but also of family planning. PAKISTAN called for more emphasis on the urgency of reducing inequities in the distribution of wealth and resources. The revised draft notes that economic conditions and poverty have worsened in many cases and income inequality has grown. While progress has been made in lowering population growth rates and providing social services, many people still lack access to basic social services, clean water and sanitation.

In a paragraph on global environmental deterioration, the EU and the US noted that the rise in polluting emissions has not solely occurred in developed countries. The EU called for references to: decreases in some polluting emissions in industrialized countries; wasteful consumption and production patterns in both industrialized and developing countries; and depletion of non-renewable resources. NORWAY called for a specific reference to the adverse effects of present trends on biodiversity. CANADA proposed that the reference to fragile ecosystems emphasize the Arctic as an important barometer of global environmental health. PAKISTAN called for a reference to the accelerated rate of desertification. The revised draft notes that although progress has been made in institutional development, international consensus-building, public participation and private sector actions, overall environmental trends are worsening. Based on a proposal by the EU, a paragraph noting that trends in consumption and production patterns continue to deplete non-renewable resources was included.

No comments were made on a paragraph highlighting governmental efforts to integrate environment and development concerns into decision-making. The revised draft notes that approximately 150 countries have established national-level commissions or coordinating mechanisms on sustainable development.

On major groups, the EU emphasized public participation and information. PAKISTAN recommended mentioning the inability of major groups in developing countries to reach their full potential in contributing to sustainable development due to lack of resources and capacity. The revised draft notes that major groups have demonstrated what can be achieved through committed action, sharing of resources and building consensus, and highlights achievements of each major group.

In a paragraph noting the entry into force of several international environmental agreements, the EU proposed references to the entry into force of UNCLOS and to progress made by the IPF. MEXICO said the ratification of these agreements does not mean the problems they address have been resolved and called for a reference to their implementation. NORWAY called for not only implementation but also strengthening of global commitments. The US, EGYPT and MEXICO noted that the global conferences since Rio were overlooked, and EGYPT called for a reference to the lack

of implementation of the action programmes of these conferences. The revised draft notes the entry into force of environmental agreements as a notable achievement, but highlights their limited implementation and the need for further strengthening in some cases. It also states that while the establishment, funding and replenishment of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was an achievement, funding levels remain insufficient.

The final document contains a paragraph noting that progress has been made in incorporating the Rio Principles in a variety of international and national legal instruments. Another paragraph states that several recent UN conferences have advanced international commitment to the social and economic aspects of sustainable development.

A paragraph highlighting the catalytic role of the CSD in forwarding global dialogue on sustainable development incorporates a CANADIAN proposal to emphasize the progress made by the CSD's IPF as a useful example of actions the CSD could take in other areas.

Many developing country delegates proposed separating the initial Co-Chairs' draft paragraph that addressed ODA, the GEF, and debt. A paragraph on ODA notes that most developed countries have not reached the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP and that ODA levels have declined in the post-Rio period. It also incorporates an EU proposal to include the failure to reach the 0.15% target for the least developed countries.

A paragraph noting that the debt situation remains a constraint on sustainable development incorporates an EU proposal to refer to the World Bank/IMF Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. The text calls for further international efforts to reduce debt.

On technology transfer, the EU called for a balance between commitments made by developed countries and need for developing countries to create favorable conditions for technology transfer. PAKISTAN called for recognition that private flows have been concentrated in a handful of countries and sectors, and that the driving force has been profit and not sustainable development. The revised draft states that technology transfer and technology-related investment have not been realized as foreseen in Agenda 21.

### **IMPLEMENTATION IN AREAS REQUIRING URGENT ACTION**

In the Co-Chairs' initial draft, this section was entitled "Strategies for Implementation." The chapeau in the revised draft now includes Agenda 21 language on "common but differentiated responsibilities," which the G-77/CHINA proposed. Implementation was a key theme at the Intersessional, characterizing for some delegations the new post-commitment phase in the Agenda 21 process.

NORWAY said UNGASS should look towards future implementation, identify areas of priority, initiate new processes and invigorate existing ones. COLOMBIA and INDONESIA highlighted an imbalance between implementation of sectoral and cross-sectoral issues. The US and VENEZUELA underlined the importance of regional-level implementation. A number of delegates, including PERU, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA and PAKISTAN, called for renewed political will. CUBA called for action.

The revised draft of the chapeau states that the comprehensive global approach to the achievement of sustainable development, with its recognition of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the importance of international cooperation, is as relevant and as urgent as ever. It calls for a major new effort to achieve the Rio goals.

### **A. INTEGRATION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES**

An introductory section calls for integration of objectives at the policy-level and the operational level. Economic growth is reaffirmed as a pre-condition of sustainable development.

The US, NORWAY and the EU called on UNGASS to recognize the importance of good governance practices as a condition for effective implementation of sustainable development at the national level. COLOMBIA and IRAN resisted the language calling for integration of energy and transport policies. NORWAY and AUSTRALIA supported the introduction of references to women's rights. The debate on a target year for completion of national strategies for sustainable development attracted competing proposals: SWITZERLAND and JAPAN supported 2005, which appeared in the first draft of the Co-Chairs' text; the G-77/CHINA objected to any target date as interference with the work of national governments; and PAKISTAN and the CSD NGO STEERING COMMITTEE backed the target of 2002, which appears in the second Co-Chairs' draft. COLOMBIA and BANGLADESH stressed the need for international support for national strategies. The CSD NGO STEERING COMMITTEE called for enhanced consultation and participatory mechanisms at the national level, notably for indigenous peoples.

The revised draft notes that industry, agriculture, energy, transport and tourism sectors must take responsibility for the human and environmental impacts of their activities, and underlines the particular urgency of integrating energy and transport considerations. Agriculture and water use are also linked, as are marine resource management, food supplies and the livelihood of fishing communities. National strategies, with good governance, are linked to enhanced prospects for economic and employment growth and environmental protection. The section recommends: the target year of 2002 for adoption of national strategies in all countries, taking account of the needs of least developed countries, and enhancement of existing strategies; regulation, economic instruments and information partnerships between governments and NGOs; transparent and participatory processes involving major groups and others, such as the elderly, the media, educators, the financial community and parliaments; and the full participation of women in political, economic, cultural and other activities.

**Eradicating Poverty:** Based on a proposal by several delegations, the section on poverty was moved from the Sectors and Issues section in the first draft. Numerous delegations stressed the urgency of poverty alleviation. Several recommended that poverty eradication be the overarching issue guiding other policies.

PAKISTAN said poverty in developing countries is the most serious enemy of the environment. ZIMBABWE called for a global compact on poverty alleviation. COLOMBIA proposed that large companies in developed countries that benefit from globalization devote some profits to developing countries to help eradicate poverty and create employment. CUBA noted the role of the market economy in creating poverty. The G-77/CHINA proposed adding references to support for micro-enterprises and rural employment and to promoting the involvement of NGOs, women's groups and local communities in projects aimed at poverty eradication and social development. CANADA recommended inclusion of food security and promotion of gender equality. The EU supported adding a reference to gender and the outcome of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS called for full implementation of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) Programme of Action. The NEW YORK CITY BAR and the INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SETTLEMENTS suggested an intergovernmental panel on poverty involving ECOSOC commissions.

The revised text states that poverty eradication is one of the fundamental goals of the international community and the UN system. Policies to combat poverty are linked to the integration of people living in poverty into economic, social and political life and facilitate their participation in resource conservation and environmental protection. Priority actions are identified to: improve access to sustainable livelihoods, entrepreneurial opportunities and productive resources; provide universal access to basic social services; develop social protection systems; and address the disproportionate impact of poverty on women.

**Changing Consumption and Production Patterns:** This section reaffirms Agenda 21's identification of production and consumption patterns as a major cause of continued global environmental deterioration, with the addition of a reference to emerging patterns in higher income groups in some developing countries.

AUSTRALIA introduced a proposal on internalizing the costs of natural resource pricing, including water. COLOMBIA said that wealth, not poverty, as evidenced in unreasonable patterns of consumption and production, is the ultimate cause of environmental degradation. He also called for measures to compensate developing countries for the impact of actions taken to shift existing patterns. SWITZERLAND recommended certification, auditing and ecological accounting to encourage sustainable production. EGYPT proposed a ceiling on per capita energy consumption, which would be operational in ten years time. POLAND advocated consumer education. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested compiling a report assessing the health effects of current consumption patterns. The EU advocated the objective of changing production and consumption patterns as an over-arching objective requiring urgent action. IRAN pressed for consideration of the developmental needs of developing countries.

The revised draft calls for policies to address patterns of production and consumption at the international and national levels, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the polluter pays principle and producer responsibility. The key strategies identified are eco-efficiency, cost internalization and product policies. Specific recommendations include: internalization of costs and benefits in the price of goods and services and eventually pricing natural resources to reflect economic scarcity; core indicators; identification of best practices, especially in developed countries; taking account of the impact of urbanization; adoption of international and national targets or action programmes for energy and materials efficiency; improving governments' procurement policies and management of public facilities; harnessing the media, advertising and marketing in shaping new patterns and encouraging eco-labelling; promotion of eco-efficiency with due regard to developing country export opportunities; and education.

**Making Trade, Environment and Sustainable Development Mutually Supporting:** This section identifies the macroeconomic conditions required to accelerate economic growth, promote poverty eradication and pursue sustainable development, by addressing questions of globalization, trade liberalization and renewed system-wide cooperation involving the UN, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bretton Woods institutions.

A persistent call from the G-77/CHINA was for a balanced approach to developmental needs, including economic growth and development space, and the environmental components of sustainable development. He recalled Rio's acknowledgement of growth as the engine of environmental protection. The PHILIPPINES and AUSTRALIA supported calls for a consensus approach to sustainable development as defined at the WSSD. While BANGLADESH wanted to ensure that environmental measures do not impair market access, SWITZERLAND called for appropriate environmental policies to ensure that trade

liberalization does not harm the environment. The CSD NGO STEERING COMMITTEE also stressed the impact of trade agreements on social goals, and proposed a meeting of trade, environment and possibly development ministers to precede the next WTO Ministerial Conference. She also called for: an understanding that environmental conventions cannot be bound by WTO requirements; an environmental review of the Uruguay Round; and an Intergovernmental Panel on Trade and Sustainable Development. The EU stressed the need for greater responsiveness to sustainable development objectives at the WTO. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION called for emphasis on environmental protection. CANADA cautioned against a proposal to use the General System of Preferences (GSP) to encourage sustainable production.

The revised draft recommends balanced and integrated approaches to enable all countries to benefit from globalization through cooperation and support for capacity-building, establishing environmental and resource management policies alongside trade liberalization, and further efforts to integrate environmental considerations in the multilateral trading system. Recommended actions include:

- timely and full implementation of the Uruguay Round and full use of the WTO Plan of Action for the Least Developed Countries;
- rapid accession of developing countries to the multilateral trading system and efforts to mitigate adverse impacts;
- measures to guard against disguised protectionism;
- analysis of the environmental impact of international transport of goods;
- examination of mutual recognition and equivalency for eco-labelling;
- use of the GSP to stimulate sustainable production; and
- further actions on multilateral environmental agreements, small and medium-sized enterprises, regional issues and foreign direct investment (FDI).

**Population:** The EU and CANADA called for expanding access to family planning. The G-77/CHINA said expanding basic education must reflect the needs of women and the girl-child and called for greater emphasis on universal access to primary health care. AUSTRALIA called for an integrated approach to family and maternal health. The revised draft notes that the current decline in population growth rates must be further promoted by policies for economic development, poverty reduction, further expansion of basic education and health care, and full implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, with international assistance to developing countries.

**Health:** The EU highlighted the need for expansion of basic health services. The US supported a reference to the World Health Organization and the need to protect children from environmental threats. CANADA suggested mentioning WSSD follow-up activities and highlighting the link between health and the environment. The revised draft stresses the need to enable all people to achieve a higher level of health and well-being and to improve their economic productivity and social potential. Priorities include: protecting children from environmental health threats; eradicating major infectious diseases; improving and expanding basic health and sanitation services, and providing safe drinking water; and developing strategies for local and indoor air pollution.

**Sustainable Human Settlements:** Several delegations emphasized the importance of implementing the Habitat II Plan of Action and addressing the pressing environmental problems resulting from urbanization. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA called for a balance between attention to urban and rural settlements. The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION called for recommendations on how to enhance implementation of the

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and on appropriate mechanisms for follow-up after 2000. The revised draft: notes rapid urbanization in developing countries and consequent social and environmental stresses; urges implementation of the Habitat II and Agenda 21 commitments; and calls for acceleration of technology transfer, capacity-building and private-public partnerships to improve provision and management of urban infrastructure and social services.

## B. SECTORS AND ISSUES

**Freshwater:** Most speakers agreed that freshwater is a priority issue and the CSD should play a key role in its consideration. Delegates also debated the need for an intergovernmental process on freshwater.

CANADA, BRAZIL and MEXICO supported the call for international cooperation and an intergovernmental process. The US expressed hesitation regarding action at the international level, as drinking water and sanitation issues are best addressed at more localized levels. The EU also urged caution on establishing a new intergovernmental process. EGYPT suggested that local treaties may be preferable to a proposed global convention on river basins. The G-77/CHINA said bilateral and regional agreements will be more effective and feasible. AUSTRALIA said a time frame should be specified for an intergovernmental panel.

COSTA RICA, on behalf of the CENTRAL AMERICAN REGION, said freshwater resources should be addressed according to national policies and priorities. SOUTH AFRICA called for emphasis on equitable access to freshwater resources and services in arid regions. AUSTRALIA noted the need to involve all stakeholders and to use the best available science. SWITZERLAND proposed attention to regional approaches, upstream-downstream linkages and, with PERU, sustainable development of mountain areas.

The G-77/CHINA, supported by the INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS, said discussing water as an economic good, and thus calling for implementation of pricing policies for cost recovery and efficient allocation, is premature. The G-77/CHINA called for financial and technical support for water supply and sanitation infrastructure in developing countries. BRAZIL underscored the important role of international financial institutions in this regard. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS stated that allowing privatization of water will further aggravate ongoing conflicts over freshwater resources. She called for regulation of mining and other activities having negative impacts on freshwater. The FAO called for promotion of investment in upland conservation. GUYANA called for a reference to inefficient industrial practices.

The revised draft notes increasing stress on water supplies caused by unsustainable use and calls for high priority to freshwater problems. It calls for urgent action to:

- formulate and implement policies for integrated watershed management;
- strengthen regional and international cooperation;
- manage water resource development and use in ways that provide for participation by local communities and women;
- provide an enabling environment for investments to improve water supply and sanitation services;
- recognize water as an economic good and gradually implement pricing policies for cost recovery and equitable and efficient allocation;
- strengthen the capability of information management systems;
- strengthen international cooperation for integrated development of water resources in developing countries;
- make progress on multilateral agreements among riparian countries; and
- foster an intergovernmental dialogue.

**Oceans:** Some speakers proposed the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on oceans, and delegates expressed differing views regarding the establishment of targets to reduce excess fishing fleet capacity. The ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS) called for information systems on oceans and seas protection and stressed the link between implementation and financial and organizational capacities of countries. GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL called on governments to redress fisheries problems and to establish an intergovernmental panel on oceans. CANADA said that specific proposals for an intergovernmental process are premature.

AUSTRALIA said the CSD should be the coordinating body on oceans and coastal areas issues. He supported including an exhaustive list of existing ocean-related legal instruments and action programmes. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said the list of legal instruments should either be comprehensive or deleted. MALTA supported the reference to the Global Programme of Action for small island developing States (SIDS). The G-77/CHINA said implementation of these instruments should be based on common but differentiated responsibilities and requires assistance to developing countries. He emphasized that follow-up and monitoring of existing legal instruments is the responsibility of governments, not the international community. The EU recommended referring to UNEP's Regional Seas Programme and to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

The US supported the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, but he questioned the need for an improved system of oceans governance. He said the FAO is already addressing the issue of excess fishing fleet capacity and did not support the establishment of global or regional-level targets. MEXICO, NORWAY and the FAO called for a reference to the 1995 International Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. NORWAY noted the importance of national and regional efforts to ensure sustainable use and supported: reference to the FAO agreement to promote compliance on the high seas; the establishment of measures and objectives, including targets for fisheries management; and improved control and enforcement mechanisms. AUSTRALIA stated that over-capacity of fishing fleets is perhaps the most critical oceans issue, and supported targets, provided they are based on indicators of ecological sustainability. JAPAN said the CSD should not consider fisheries. He suggested that regional organizations establish any measurable targets and, with the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, advocated deletion of the sub-paragraph on elimination of subsidies and excess capacity. BRAZIL noted considerable differences among countries regarding subsidies and fleet capacity and recommended that their elimination and reduction be conducted "where appropriate." CANADA supported the elimination of excess fishing capacity and endorsed global targets but said the precautionary approach should be used.

The revised draft notes some progress in protecting oceans, emphasizes the need for periodic intergovernmental reviews, and urges:

- an integrated, comprehensive approach to implementing and monitoring existing legal instruments;
- implementation of ocean-related agreements and instruments (with a footnoted list of relevant instruments);
- consideration of establishing measurable objectives, including phasing out subsidies to eliminate or reduce excess fishing fleet capacity, where appropriate; and
- improvement of scientific data and enhancement of public awareness.

**Forests:** Although the Co-Chairs had requested that delegates not address this issue due to the recent conclusion of the IPF, a number of delegates expressed their views on a continued forest

policy dialogue and a possible international convention on forests. NORWAY and BRAZIL noted that it is premature to negotiate a legally-binding instrument on forests because, for such an instrument to be effective, it must be based on consensus. CANADA suggested that UNGASS reach a conclusion regarding the negotiation of a forest convention. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said forest issues should be addressed in a framework separate from the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). COLOMBIA said a high-level CSD working group should continue to facilitate intergovernmental dialogue. Based on a CANADIAN proposal, the revised draft states that the report of the IPF includes a number of options that will be considered at CSD-5.

**Energy and Transport:** Delegates discussed these issues together, as was proposed by the initial draft, but based on suggestions by several delegates, the issues are addressed in separate sections in the revised draft. Most delegations agreed that the CSD should consider energy and transport as priority issues. The issues of energy efficiency, renewable energy and phase-out of lead in gasoline were among those emphasized.

The EU said UNGASS should promote common energy policies and address emission standards and traffic management. SWITZERLAND called on the CSD to take a lead role in coordinating a global strategy on policies and measures for energy efficiency. The US said the CSD should focus on energy efficiency, environmentally sound transportation systems and less polluting fuels. CANADA called for greater emphasis on energy efficiency and the benefits of recycling.

EGYPT called for agreed targets, including a 10% increase in investments in alternative energy sources over five years and the elimination of lead in gasoline in ten years. SWITZERLAND and the US said UNGASS should recommend that energy pricing reflect social and environmental costs and call for increased investment in renewable energy. The US said UNGASS should not set targets for such investment. AUSTRIA supported proposals that the CSD adopt a comprehensive approach to energy, including transport, urban issues and redirecting subsidies and, with SWITZERLAND, supported CSD prioritization of transport.

JAPAN said energy pricing should reflect a country's economic and energy situation. BRAZIL questioned the usefulness of a specific uniform target for elimination of subsidies. The US indicated it was not ready to accept such a target. The G-77/CHINA said the impacts of proposed measures, particularly those on subsidies, must be examined closely, and the time frame and targets for elimination of subsidies should account for differences between developed and developing countries. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA advocated deletion of the sub-paragraph on subsidies. The NGO ENERGY CAUCUS called for: internalization of all fuel consumption costs; energy conservation and use reduction in developed countries; a phase-out of subsidies for fossil fuel and nuclear energy; and an increase in renewable energy subsidies.

The G-77/CHINA called for a doubling of financial resources for new and renewable energy sources and for access to technologies and know-how to enable developing countries to use these energy sources. GHANA called for access to emerging solar technologies. MALTA recommended references to increased investment in solar energy and to regional-level research and development (R&D) in renewable energy. NORWAY proposed a reference to renewable energy sources available locally and to comprehensive land-use planning in the section on transport.

SWITZERLAND advocated adding local and transboundary air pollution to the agenda under this issue. BRAZIL recommended mentioning the role of international financial institutions in providing electricity to unserved populations. The EU recommended: providing energy to unserved populations; calling for a coherent strategy for a sustainable energy future; promoting

guidelines for environmentally friendly transport, fuel optimization and lead phase-out in gasoline; and emphasizing regional approaches to transport. The NGO TRANSPORTATION CAUCUS called for examination of land-use planning, car-free areas and internalization of transportation costs.

The revised draft on energy notes that current patterns of production, distribution and use are unsustainable. It stresses the need for:

- international cooperation to provide adequate energy services to unserved populations;
- comprehensive energy policies and promotion of sustainable energy production and consumption patterns;
- increased use of renewable energy sources and cleaner fossil fuel technologies;
- increased investment and R&D in renewable energy technologies;
- movement towards energy pricing that reflects economic and environmental costs and social benefits, including consideration of eliminating environmentally-damaging energy subsidies within ten years; and
- improved coordination of energy-related activities in the UN.

The revised draft on transport notes the damaging impacts of current levels and patterns of fossil energy use and calls for:

- integrated transport policies;
- integration of land-use and transport planning;
- improved energy efficiency and efficiency standards;
- guidelines for environmentally friendly transport and targets for reducing vehicle emissions and phasing out lead in gasoline within ten years; and
- national-level partnerships to strengthen transport infrastructure and develop innovative mass transport schemes.

**Atmosphere:** Most delegates expressed the view that UNGASS should emphasize the importance of further progress by the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) in securing commitments to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Many developing countries called on industrialized countries to fulfill existing FCCC commitments. The EU, CANADA, SWITZERLAND and SWEDEN said the gathering of world leaders at UNGASS could propel climate change discussions forward. IRAN said UNGASS should avoid making recommendations for further commitments. AOSIS recommended prioritization of the Berlin Mandate's completion of a legally-binding instrument at the third Conference of the Parties (COP-3) to the FCCC. SWITZERLAND called for quantified objectives. GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL and the NGO ENERGY CAUCUS called on governments to endorse a legally-binding CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target of 20% of 1990 levels by 2005. The US said UNGASS should not identify a range of targets for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and proposed adding a reference to regional agreements.

AOSIS called on Annex I countries under the FCCC to reduce GHG emissions and to strengthen their commitments. BRAZIL proposed noting that the FCCC commitments have not been met and that there is a need for renewed effort by industrialized countries. The NGO ENERGY CAUCUS emphasized equity and the primary responsibility of industrialized countries in reducing GHGs. The G-77/CHINA stressed the need for technology transfer and financial assistance to developing countries to enable them to meet FCCC commitments. He said the development and management of terrestrial and marine carbon sinks does not give developed countries license to maintain unsustainable practices.

CANADA proposed welcoming the recent conclusion of meetings on replenishment of the Montreal Protocol Fund rather than calling for additional resources for phasing out ozone

depleting substances in developing countries. The INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY ASSOCIATION stressed the need for countries to make well-informed decisions on the optimal mix of energy sources and called for sound technological assessments of the risks involved in all energy sources to facilitate such decisions.

The revised draft notes little progress in reducing GHG emissions and highlights the need for a legally-binding protocol to be adopted at FCCC COP-3. A separate paragraph: welcomes the recent conclusion of replenishment negotiations for the Montreal Protocol Fund; emphasizes the need for adequate future replenishments; calls for effective measures against illegal trade in ozone depleting substances; and recommends further development of regional agreements to counter transboundary air pollution.

**Chemicals and Wastes:** Several developing countries emphasized the need to control transboundary movements of hazardous wastes. Many delegates commented on the emerging agreements on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). AOSIS called for renewed commitment on transport and storage of nuclear waste. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION called for international agreements on transboundary pollutants and chemicals. COLOMBIA called for more effective interventions in illegal transboundary movements. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted the lack of public awareness about the increasing number of accidents and stressed the need to address the handling, transport and disposal of radioactive wastes, including on a regional basis.

The G-77/CHINA stressed the need to ensure the availability of substitutes to POPs that are environmentally sound and accessible to developing countries. He called for further action to: enhance awareness of chemical safety and management; develop accident preparedness plans; complete a protocol on liability and compensation for damages under the Basel Convention; clean up sites contaminated by nuclear weapons testing; establish regional cooperation agreements; and ban legal movement of hazardous and toxic wastes. CANADA said the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety should be endorsed. NORWAY noted the need to intensify cooperation with developing countries to support administrative capacity and aid them in dealing with stocks of obsolete chemicals.

The revised draft notes substantial progress with implementation of several agreements on chemicals and wastes and recent international action towards conclusion of agreements on PIC and POPs. It stresses the need to: develop criteria to identify additional chemicals to be included in a POPs convention; conclude the Protocol on Liability and Compensation under the Basel Convention; increase regional cooperation to improve radioactive waste management; and prevent storage of radioactive wastes in areas lacking safe storage facilities.

**Land and Sustainable Agriculture:** Several delegates emphasized the need for efforts to work toward food security, particularly through the implementation of the World Food Summit agreements. The EU called for prioritization of food security and for references to: access to land; the role of indigenous people; and defining ways to combat soil degradation. NORWAY proposed a reference to sustainable conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. CANADA noted that provision of adequate food and nutrition will require environmentally sound intensification of food production. The NGO CAUCUS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE called on governments to: facilitate and implement a global facility for urban agriculture; prioritize integrated pest management; and support programmes to achieve local, regional and global food security. CHINA noted the importance of the World Food Summit outcomes.

The revised draft emphasizes the need to: define ways to combat soil degradation and to integrate land and watershed management; use integrated approaches to land-use management that involve all stakeholders; eradicate poverty to improve food security and provide adequate nutrition; implement comprehensive rural policies to improve access to land, combat poverty, create employment and reduce rural emigration; and implement the World Food Summit outcomes.

**Desertification and Drought:** In the initial Co-Chairs' draft, desertification and drought were addressed in the paragraph on land and sustainable agriculture, but based on recommendations from a number of delegations, the revised draft contains a separate paragraph on these issues. The EU called for a reference to the upcoming COP-1 of the CCD. EGYPT said the GEF should increase finances to deal with desertification and deforestation on an equal footing with other global environmental issues. IRAN advocated expanding the GEF's mandate to include land degradation and desertification. The US emphasized that the CCD Global Mechanism is not a financial mechanism. AUSTRALIA and SWITZERLAND said the COP's determination on that issue should not be preempted.

The revised draft urges governments to sign, ratify and implement the CCD and to support the Global Mechanism to ensure adequate financial resources to advance its implementation.

**Biodiversity:** Delegates emphasized the need to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and supported the timely conclusion of a protocol on biosafety. INDONESIA noted the need to strengthen capacity-building to fulfill CBD commitments. COLOMBIA and the INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS called for progress on a biosafety protocol. The US noted the difficulty in identifying the value of biodiversity. JAPAN said examination of the equitable sharing of benefits should take place elsewhere, such as in the FAO. AUSTRALIA proposed references to traditional and indigenous knowledge and the equitable sharing of benefits from the utilization of such knowledge.

The G-77/CHINA recommended: operationalizing the clearinghouse mechanism; emphasizing the role of women in sustainable use of biodiversity; implementing incentive measures at all levels; and implementing environmental impact assessments. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS called for the development of a bioethics protocol. CANADA said Parties to the CBD must move the Convention's objectives forward in meaningful and measurable ways. The FAO called for a reference to the 1996 Leipzig Declaration and Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources.

The revised draft calls for: full implementation of CBD commitments; attention to the Leipzig Declaration and Plan of Action; equitable sharing of benefits from the utilization of genetic resources and of traditional knowledge; respect, preservation and maintenance of traditional knowledge; and rapid conclusion of a biosafety protocol.

**Sustainable Tourism:** Delegates emphasized the need to involve local communities and to consider environmental impacts of tourism. The EU said continued discussion should be undertaken under the CBD and, with SWITZERLAND, emphasized the need for local community involvement in tourism development. AOSIS highlighted the relationship between environmental quality and tourism. MALTA recommended including references to eco-tourism and to the need for environmental policies in tourism development. CANADA noted the impacts of tourism on biodiversity. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS proposed adding the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples to those organizations that could elaborate an international programme of work on sustainable tourism.



The revised draft: notes the degradation of biodiversity and fragile ecosystems from tourism; calls on the CSD to develop an international programme of work on sustainable tourism; and stresses the need for international cooperation to facilitate sustainable tourism development in SIDS.

**Small Island Developing States:** Many delegations supported a reaffirmation of commitment to implement the Barbados Programme of Action for SIDS. AOSIS advocated provisions for an adequate review of the Programme in 1999. BARBADOS expressed hope that the review process would renew impetus for implementation of the Programme. MALTA stressed the need for financial resources. CANADA supported inclusion of a statement urging implementation of the Barbados Programme. He called for references to coastal development and to integrating SIDS into regional and global trading structures. AUSTRALIA noted that the draft refers only to action by international actors and should include national-level action by SIDS.

The revised draft reaffirms the international community's commitment to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. It also notes national and regional efforts to implement the Programme and calls for external assistance for building infrastructure and national capacity and for facilitating access to information on sustainable development practices and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs).

**Natural Disasters:** Based on proposals from a number of countries, a paragraph on natural disasters appears in the revised draft. It notes that natural disasters have disproportionate consequences for developing countries, particularly SIDS, and stresses the need to promote and facilitate transfer of early-warning technologies to countries prone to natural disasters.

### C. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

**Financial Resources and Mechanisms:** Discussion on this issue focused on ODA, private sector investment, FDI, innovative financing mechanisms, subsidies and the GEF. Developing countries noted the decrease in ODA levels. EGYPT supported a proposal calling on NGOs to lobby governments for increased ODA. Many developed countries emphasized a role for the private sector in development and identified ways that ODA could be used to attract private sector investment. Several delegates noted that FDI is unevenly distributed, driven by market forces and does not respect development needs or social factors. EGYPT, supported by NORWAY, highlighted the need to better understand how to use development assistance to leverage FDI. The EU said ODA can help the least developed countries build capacity, set environmental policies in place and finance infrastructure that is not attractive to the private sector. They stressed that sound macroeconomic and property rights frameworks are important if a country is to benefit from FDI. The US also noted the importance of regulatory regimes and good governance. JAPAN said self-help efforts are the foundation for effective partnerships.

Among the actions proposed were: studies on the impact of FDI on social and economic development (EGYPT); and policies to strengthen and enforce social and environmental regulations in host countries (UNED-UK); an intergovernmental forum on financing for Agenda 21 (INDIA and NGOs); a global fund for sustainable development financed by subsidies and international taxes (EGYPT); increased emphasis on innovative financial measures (POLAND and GUYANA); credits and guarantees and technical assistance to establish green banks (MEXICO); a convention to regulate the environmental impact of multinational corporations (G-77/CHINA); setting 2002 as a target for achieving 0.7% of GNP for ODA (UNED-UK); and international and regional revolving investment funds (NEW ZEALAND). The US objected to international taxation, saying it would be a violation of sovereignty.

The revised draft notes the urgent need to fulfill all financial commitments of Agenda 21, for developed countries to reaffirm the commitment of 0.7% of GNP for ODA and, at a minimum, to return to 1992 shares of GNP within five years. The role of ODA for capacity-building, supporting policy reforms and leveraging private investment is noted. The text also calls for work on the design of appropriate policies for attracting private foreign capital, reducing its volatility and enhancing its contribution to sustainable development. Domestic actions, such as macroeconomic and structural reforms and environmental taxes and user charges, are proposed to mobilize domestic financial resources. Creditor, debtor and international financial institutions are called on to continue efforts towards finding solutions to the debt problems of the highly indebted poorest countries. Appropriate organizations are invited to conduct forward-looking studies regarding concerted action on innovative financial mechanisms.

A number of delegates, including the EU, discussed the need for adequate replenishment of the GEF. Many developing countries, including THAILAND, GUYANA and the PHILIPPINES, called for increased contributions. The G-77/CHINA said the GEF should address desertification and forestry issues and revise its conditionalities. UNED-UK, CANADA and NORWAY all cautioned against expanding its mandate without additional resources. COLOMBIA called for greater transparency and participation in the project approval process. The revised draft calls for further expansion and development of the GEF.

The need to address and remove subsidies was a concern for many. The EU preferred a reference to "trade-distorting and environmentally-damaging subsidies." JAPAN and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA said environmentally-damaging subsidies should be specified and country-specific conditions taken into account. The revised draft calls for research to assist governments in identifying and reducing subsidies that have trade-distorting and environmentally-damaging impacts.

**Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies:** Discussion on ESTs focused on related Agenda 21 commitments and methods through which transfer could occur. Many developing countries noted that the transfer of ESTs is not taking place and called for transfers on preferential and concessional terms. CANADA and the US stressed the role of the private sector and mutually agreed terms for EST transfer.

A number of approaches to technology transfer were offered. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA offered to fund a feasibility study of publicly-owned ESTs and to host an intergovernmental expert meeting. A role for ODA in technology transfer was identified by several developed country delegates. The UK, for example, suggested that ODA should support pilot projects to demonstrate innovative technologies and subsidize appropriate projects and activities when existing capital markets work against investments in ESTs. BRAZIL called for centers of EST dissemination and green credit lines. The PHILIPPINES, supported by GHANA, proposed a meeting with the private sector and COLOMBIA called for a UN forum to discuss technology transfer.

The revised draft calls for renewed commitment from developed countries to promote, facilitate and finance, as appropriate, access to and transfer of ESTs and corresponding know-how. The creation of an enabling environment, on the part of both developed and developing countries, can help stimulate private sector investment in and transfer of ESTs. Further examination of "green credit lines" and the links between ODA, FDI and technology transfer is proposed. Proposals to study publicly-owned technology are welcomed. A government role in establishing public-private partnerships and in bringing together companies from developed and developing countries and economies in transition is noted. Governments of developing countries are called on to strengthen South-South cooperation for technology transfer and

capacity-building, and donor countries and international organizations should assist in these efforts.

**Capacity-Building:** Many concerns regarding capacity-building were raised in relation to specific sectors in which speakers thought it should occur, but a few recommendations were offered for the specific section on capacity-building as well. Capacity-building and the need to absorb ESTs was a concern for EGYPT, among others. JAPAN and AUSTRALIA highlighted the useful role of South-South cooperation in capacity-building. The revised draft notes the need for renewed commitment from the international community to support capacity-building efforts in developing countries and economies in transition. UNDP's Capacity 21 Programme should be further strengthened, and capacity-building efforts should recognize the needs of women and indigenous peoples. South-South cooperation should be supported through "triangular" arrangements.

**Science:** A few comments were offered on this issue, including CANADA's statement that strengthening of scientific capacity is a priority for all countries. The revised draft calls for increased public and private investment in science, education and training at the national level. Scientific cooperation is called for to verify and strengthen scientific evidence of environmental change. Efforts to build and strengthen scientific and technological capacity in developing countries is an objective of the highest priority.

**Education and Awareness:** NORWAY emphasized investment in education for young girls as a crucial component of sustainable development. The US indicated an interest in the "education for life" idea. EGYPT supported references to training and public awareness. CANADA advocated inclusion of education for sustainable development. MALTA recommended emphasizing educational systems that include environmental programmes. The revised draft notes the fundamental importance of education for sustainable societies and sustainable development and calls for assigning priority to education for women and girls. It also stresses the need to re-orient education in all nations to increase public understanding and support for sustainable development.

**International Legal Instruments and the Rio Declaration:** During discussion on the initial draft, COLOMBIA proposed adding a section on international legal instruments. The G-77/CHINA called for a review of international cooperation and commitments in the post-UNGASS period. The revised draft calls for regular assessment and reporting on the implementation and application of the Rio principles. Wider access to relevant court systems to pursue environmental justice is called for, as is implementation of and compliance with international treaties in the field of sustainable development.

**Information and Tools to Measure Progress:** The need for indicators and their use in national reporting was one of the issues emphasized in the few statements on this issue. The EU and CANADA, for example, emphasized this link. AUSTRALIA supported a core set of indicators. NEW ZEALAND noted the overlap among various bodies dealing with sustainable development and the need for coordination among them, particularly in the use of national reports. GUYANA noted that many developing countries have not been able to complete their national reports. The revised draft notes the need for strengthened data collection, compilation and analysis. The CSD work programme on indicators for sustainable development should result in an adequate set of indicators to be used at the national level by the year 2000. Finally, national reporting should continue. The draft also notes that action regarding the streamlining of national reporting will be added during CSD-5.

## **INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

This section contains recommendations for continuing improvements in the institutional framework outlined in Chapter 38

of Agenda 21 involving bodies inside and outside the UN system. Consideration of these issues took place within the overall context of ongoing UN reform. Delegates reaffirmed the lead coordinating role of the CSD for sustainable development issues within the UN system.

**Greater Coherence in Various Intergovernmental Organizations and Processes:** This section notes the ever growing number of decision-making bodies concerned with sustainable development and the subsequent need for policy coordination at the intergovernmental level and between secretariats.

The EU called for further improvement in system-wide UN coordination mechanisms by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), and CHINA asked how ECOSOC might take full advantage of the expertise of its functioning commissions. AUSTRALIA called for a strengthened and streamlined ECOSOC. The G-77/CHINA called for respect for environmental decisions and mandates of other intergovernmental bodies. URUGUAY suggested creating lines of communication between the CSD and the GEF, and between the GEF and the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment.

The revised draft calls for a strengthening of the ACC's Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and its Task Manager system to enhance inter-sectoral and policy cooperation at all levels. It also calls for arrangements to support regional and subregional organizations, including the UN Regional Economic Commissions.

**Role of Relevant Organizations and Institutions of the United Nations System:** This section invites UN organizations and programmes to place more emphasis on country-level activity and addresses the roles of UNEP, UNDP, UNCTAD, the WTO and the World Bank.

While some delegations, including the EU, stipulated that UNEP should not compete with other operationally-tasks organizations, others supported a strengthening of the organization's role on global environmental issues and/or endorsement of the Nairobi Declaration. These included EGYPT, BRAZIL, INDONESIA, PAKISTAN and SWITZERLAND. NEW ZEALAND said the UN needs to deal with the problem of overlapping and outdated organizations. SWITZERLAND called for greater cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO. JAPAN and the US also supported stronger links with other international organizations and UN convention bodies, the UNDP and multilateral development banks.

The revised draft calls on all UN organizations and programmes to place more emphasis on country-level, community-driven and major group activities in the context of Agenda 21. It also endorses the recently-adopted Nairobi Declaration on enabling UNEP to serve as the leading environmental authority, agenda setter, environmental advocate and lead agency on environmental law. UNDP is invited to strengthen its contribution and UNCTAD is invited to play a key role through integrated examination of linkages among trade, investment, technology, finance and sustainable development. The WTO Committee on Trade and Environment, UNCTAD and UNEP are invited to advance coordination, with recognition of the CSD's role. The significant role of the World Bank, replenishment of IDA12 (International Development Assistance) at a level at least comparable to IDA10, and the importance of GEF replenishment are also addressed.

**Future Role and Programme of Work of the CSD:** This section reaffirms the continuing role of the CSD as the central forum for reviewing further progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, policy debate, consensus-building and catalyzing long-term action and commitment.

Some delegations sought to delimit the role and limit the agenda of the CSD. NORWAY and BRAZIL said it should not duplicate

or intrude on the work conducted by other UN fora. BRAZIL added that it should not set directives for other bodies and suggested a shift towards operational decisions as opposed to conceptual outputs. AUSTRALIA, echoed by SWITZERLAND, characterized its agenda as one of identifying existing gaps in the implementation of Agenda 21 and keeping an eye on the big picture. Similarly, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested that it focus on unfulfilled expectations.

The revised draft invites the CSD to perform its functions in coordination with other subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC that contribute to the achievement of the economic and social goals of sustainable development, addressing the linkages between sectors and between sectoral and cross-sectoral aspects of Agenda 21. It is recommended that ECOSOC decide on a Multi-Year Programme of Work for the CSD for the period 1998-2002.

**CSD's Methods of Work:** This section makes recommendations on participation at CSD sessions, interaction with other UN and non-UN bodies, involvement of major groups and implementation of the Multi-Year Programme of Work, based on weaknesses and gaps highlighted by the Intersessional Working Group.

MEXICO proposed strengthening the high-level segment and developing a mechanism to follow-up on the implementation of its decisions. EGYPT and CANADA were among the supporters of increased participation by sectoral and finance ministers. PAKISTAN, SWITZERLAND, the PHILIPPINES and JAPAN, among others, drew attention to the key role of major groups in implementation. AUSTRALIA supported further development of the task manager system, better links with bodies such as the UN energy committee, and improved interaction with the High-Level Advisory Board. NEW ZEALAND proposed that informal intersessional events be used to identify key outputs anticipated at CSD sessions and to improve the efficiency of the sessions.

The revised draft recommends that the CSD:

- attract ministers and high-level policy-makers responsible for specific economic sectors to the high-level segments;
- consider more effective modalities for reviewing national implementation;
- develop a better regional focus;
- establish closer interaction with international financial institutions, including the GEF and the WTO, and invite these organizations to take CSD deliberations into account;
- enhance major group input, notably the private sector;
- organize the next Multi-Year Programme of Work possibly using an *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group; and
- enhance the contribution of the High Level Advisory Board.

The section calls for closer integration of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources into the work of the CSD. It also recommends a change in arrangements for election to the CSD Bureau to allow "the same Bureau to provide guidance for the preparation for, and lead during, the annual session." The next comprehensive review of Agenda 21 implementation is scheduled for 2002.

## MAJOR GROUPS

Delegates discussed strengthening the role of major groups during the first week. NORWAY emphasized the need to increase the role of civil society in implementing the Rio agreements and to establish working modalities for the Special Session that encourage the active participation of major groups. The US advocated expanding NGO access to include the UN General Assembly. He agreed that UNGASS should recommend action for expanding major group participation at the national level.

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES spoke of the critical importance of providing a space in the UNGASS preparations for youth. GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL called on governments to ensure NGO access and participation at UNGASS. An NGO representative called on the CSD to recognize older people as a major group. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS called for improved information dissemination to indigenous peoples and for a permanent forum for indigenous people at the UN. PAKISTAN said major group participation should be pursued with greater vigor. SWITZERLAND called for intensified dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, particularly the business community, and said discussion with major groups should be integrated into all areas rather than being a separate agenda item. The PHILIPPINES supported active participation of major groups. References to major groups are made throughout the revised draft, but are not contained in a discrete section.

## CLOSING PLENARY

### BRIEFING ON THE SPECIAL SESSION

At 12:00 pm on Friday, 7 March, Co-Chair Osborn welcomed Amb. Razali Ismail, President of the General Assembly, and summarized the work of the Intersessional Working Group. He added that States were far from satisfied with what had been achieved since UNCED given increasing levels of poverty and environmental problems and the need to mobilize new financial resources and international cooperation. He added that there remained a need to strengthen the contribution and participation of all sectors of society.

Amb. Razali congratulated delegates and said the Co-Chairs' revised text would add breadth and depth to the negotiations at CSD-5. With regard to the organization of work for UNGASS, Amb. Razali said the provisional agenda would be based on past agendas of special sessions and would include: the opening of the session by the Chair of the delegation of Malaysia; the appointment of a Credentials Committee; the election of the President; presentation of a report from the CSD; organization of the session; the adoption of the agenda; presentation of the substantive item, being the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21; and the adoption of the final document or documents. He proposed that the Special Session establish an *Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole to consider all proposals submitted to UNGASS and to prepare the final document(s) for consideration by the UNGA. It would also hear some statements not presented at Plenary.

The UNGASS Plenary will begin general debate at its first meeting, on Monday, 23 June, following the election of officers and adoption of the organization of work. The debate will continue until Friday morning or afternoon. The list of speakers will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis. A note verbale on procedures is to be distributed, informing participants that the list of speakers will open one week from the date the note is sent out. The list of speakers will close on Monday, 23 June, at the earliest. Delegations will have to inscribe in person.

More than 240 speakers may be involved in the debate, representing Member States, States Members of specialized agencies which are not members of the UN, intergovernmental and other organizations and entities with observer status, UN programmes, UN agencies and major groups including NGOs. Each speaker is expected to be limited to seven minutes.

Amb. Razali said the participation of major groups would necessitate arrangements to alter the formal nature of the proceedings. He recalled that paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 51/181 (16 December 1996) requires him to consult with Member States in order to propose appropriate modalities for the effective involvement of major groups, including NGOs, at

UNGASS. He added that, given the importance of past contributions made by the NGOs on the issue of environment and development, he hoped that States could expeditiously agree on modalities during consultations that he intended to initiate soon. They should ensure that such participation, as in the case of past major conferences, would benefit and add value to the outcome of UNGASS.

### **ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND CLOSING REMARKS**

Co-Chair Amorim left New York on 5 March due to a prior commitment, so Co-Chair Osborn presided over the closing Plenary. Delegates received the revised Co-Chairs' draft of the "Proposed Outcome of the Special Session." Co-Chair Osborn noted that it was not a negotiated text, but that it would provide a basis for consultations prior to CSD-5 and would serve as the starting point for discussion at the CSD's High-Level Segment.

The EU asked how many working groups would be used at CSD-5. Joke Waller-Hunter, Director of the Division for Sustainable Development, responded that the Bureau had not yet decided, but it could be appropriate to have three working groups, with never more than two meetings at once. Delegates adopted the report of the Working Group, as contained in E/CN.17/1997/WG/L.1, with some changes to the list of documentation available at the session. The EU read a statement noting that the EU countries had transferred powers in agriculture, fisheries and trade to the European Community (EC) and proposed that the EC be allowed to participate at UNGASS as an observer and to subscribe to the obligations and commitments adopted there.

Co-Chair Osborn then offered some concluding remarks. He noted that delegates have to face the fact that progress on the ground is limited and on many matters trends are moving in the wrong direction. He said the review process should be used to "galvanize the world and ourselves into more vigorous action" at all levels. Osborn reminded delegates of the Co-Chairs' appeal that they consider the possibilities for action rather than note reasons not to take action. He underlined a number of areas where additional creativity is necessary. On poverty, he suggested that the text is not yet strong or clear enough and may need some new initiatives and resources. On freshwater, oceans and energy, an integrated policy approach could be used, but national and international activity will be needed to develop policies and programmes to reinforce real action on the ground. Both increased ODA and private sector financial flows are needed. Developed and developing countries need to cooperate in a renewed effort to create the conditions in which resources and technology can be mobilized to a greater extent. The work of major groups should be fostered and sustained at all levels. Finally, the Statement of Commitment should be a resonant statement of political commitment that will revitalize the Rio enterprise and show a clear path towards fuller implementation. Osborn said his Co-Chair wished to be associated with his remarks.

In its closing statement, the EU looked forward to CSD-5 with a sense of the need to focus on concrete implementation of existing objectives and to reinforce international, regional and national actions. He said the EU would respond to the Co-Chairs' exhortations for creativity during the preparations for UNGASS.

The G-77/CHINA acknowledged the Co-Chairs' recognition of the most pressing issue of financial resources. He said the structure of the Co-Chairs' text did not reflect the seriousness of the issue and discussion would continue at CSD-5 and even at UNGASS. He signalled his intention to cooperate with all delegations to develop concrete suggestions for a mechanism to transfer ESTs to developing countries. Poverty eradication had received a great deal of support at the Intersessional Working Group, even from many Northern partners. On trade and sustainable development he called

for greater international cooperation to create a conducive economic climate to mobilize resources. Finally, he insisted that a revised draft provide for a review of international cooperation and commitments in the post-UNGASS period.

Co-Chair Osborn closed the session at 5:20 pm, after describing the Co-Chairs' role as that of a sometimes "distorting" mirror of delegations' ideas, but sometimes "magic" mirror capable of reflecting their ideas more beautifully than before.

### **A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP**

Much of the political momentum and energy produced by the UNCED process, one notable for its success as a global media event that helped to stimulate an unprecedented level of public awareness, has since been channeled into a proliferation of institutional responses. Success must therefore be measured along a number of axes: the appropriateness, authority, resourcing and effectiveness of the new institutions, conventions and accompanying intergovernmental and interagency activity UNCED has helped to engender; secondly, in a somewhat paradoxical fashion, there must be an "outsider" perspective that constantly guards against the easy assumption that the institutional array is equal to the task in hand. The outsider perspective, perhaps best captured in the views of the most able NGOs, recognizes the absolute limits of intergovernmental-sponsored processes, limits all too obvious given the bleak reading in UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook report (1997), which announces that "internationally and nationally, the funds and the political will remain insufficient to halt further global environmental degradation and to address the most pressing issues." The dilemma was underlined by a senior delegate from the G-77 who was prepared to concede that intergovernmental processes are, by virtue of their reliance on consensus-building, always less efficient than those at the national level. The same rigorous standards cannot be applied to both.

So we have the somewhat curious situation of potentially more efficient governments gathering at the UN to draw on the outcomes of intergovernmental processes that by their very nature fail to deliver on their promises. These limitations have become all the more stark in the five years since UNCED as processes of "globalization" and international trade liberalization accelerate and erode the traditional scope of governmental action. One delegate observed that the CSD has done a great job in identifying and bringing on board sustainable development task managers throughout the UN system — the time has now come to do the same in the "real world." That will mean governments acknowledging that, when it comes to the sustainability agenda, they are one of a large number of partners in the implementation process, along with the private sector, research institutions, local government bodies, regional organizations, the advertising industry and the full spectrum of major groups. The following brief analysis examines how these forces and realities played out during the meeting of the Intersessional Working Group and are guiding the preparations for the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session for the review of Agenda 21 implementation.

**ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS ?:** The Intersessional Working Group was the first step in a process that continues through CSD-5 in April and culminates in "Earth Summit+5" — the Special Session of the UN General Assembly. Inevitably there will be demands along the way to declare the process — or elements thereof — a success or failure. General Assembly President Razali Ismail provided a few of the benchmarks for measuring this success in a speech delivered at the High-Level Segment of the 19th Session of the UNEP Governing Council. He said the Special Session must become the centripetal force to move

the preliminary process of strategizing and consensus-building into a fully operational and action-oriented phase. This is critical. While we are overloaded with the facts and figures of environmental degradation and concepts of sustainability, actions to realize “a common future” are not evident. He said the Special Session would be an opportunity for the UN to identify itself clearly as the organization that will not only enhance political commitment, but can translate it into tangible terms. In the very optimism of the declaration there is, of course, an admission that the UN has fallen far short of such competence until now.

Nevertheless, Amb. Razali outlined a few key areas where progress would have to be made and a number of those have been in the fore of the Working Group's debates over the past two weeks. For example, delegates from both developing and developed countries acknowledged that poverty eradication must be taken seriously, that more attention is needed to the quality and modalities of implementation, and that the requirement for ODA will not disappear and demands innovation. In debates on finance, investment, trade and technology-transfer, many delegations expressed determination to pursue new and innovative methods of engaging private sector funds, actors and responsibility for a role in building sustainability. There was hopeful talk of moving “beyond the sterile debates,” notably those defined by the persistent North-South divide over striking the balance between the development and the environmental protection agendas.

**WHOSE DOCUMENT?:** The mandate of the CSD Working Group was to produce a 10-15 page outline paper on the proposed outcome of the Special Session. A first draft prepared by the Co-Chairs gave rise to considerable differences of opinion. Some delegations attributed the debates to questions about important distinctions between work in progress, work in need of a political kick and work yet to be undertaken. A G-77 delegate explained that, once again, the debate came down to key differences between developing and developed countries. Specifically, the views on how the draft paper should be structured reflected differing opinions on the weight to be given to sectoral and cross-sectoral issues. Developing countries were not suffering from “conference fatigue,” one delegate explained. The problem was “rhetoric fatigue” caused by a perceived unwillingness on the part of industrialized countries to fully implement the developmental elements of the Rio agreements. One of the important pre-requisites for a successful Special Session would be an assurance to developing countries that the North is not only seeking an environmental protection agenda but is also serious about the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. The developed world appeared to be more interested in sectoral issues such as climate change, biodiversity and environmental agreements.

The significance of such debates does not only stem from their content — they raise genuine questions about the possibility of making progress under the strains of persistent and fatal global inequities — but from their dogged familiarity. While the challenges posed by accelerating environmental degradation accompanied by unprecedented globalization demand more governmental innovation than ever, it can be argued that the wheels of the much vaunted intergovernmental machine are spinning idly. The requirement for a “critical analysis,” also identified as a benchmark by Amb. Razali, will probably demand unprecedented vision and participation from those who spend most of their time enjoying the spectacle from afar: civil society, major groups, NGOs, the most innovative elements in the private sector, and others who, as one delegate observed, “are ready and willing to play a part.” Some will not even wait to be tasked.

**NGO ACCESS TO UNGASS — THE LATEST ASSESSMENT:** Others must wait, of course. The question of NGO access to the UNGASS has been complicated by the fact that

it has coincided with high-level discussions on the issue at the Sub-Group on NGOs of the Open-Ended High-Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the UN System. While access to the Special Session seems all but assured, some States are thought to be resisting NGO demands for an enhanced participatory role that might one day usher NGOs to the doors of the Security Council.

The CSD is a Commission of the ECOSOC, one of the six primary bodies of the UN, which enjoys the authority to provide for consultative relations with NGOs. NGO participation in the functioning commissions and world conferences has generally exceeded the formally agreed provisions. Problems have arisen partly because the review of Agenda 21 implementation is being held as a Special Session of the General Assembly, which has maintained a formal silence on questions of participation but, in practice, has developed unwritten rules that provide for NGO access to its meetings and those of its committees. Holding the review as a Special Session has changed the political climate of the debate. At the General Assembly last year, the US blocked a proposal to allow NGO access to the Special Session on a par with ECOSOC practices, and in November the Second Committee failed to agree a resolution on NGO participation. NGOs believe that the US and others fear the consequences of breaking their silence and setting a dangerous precedent.

The General Assembly resolved the problem by handing responsibility for the modalities of NGO participation at the UNGASS to Amb. Razali who, crucially, is very supportive of NGO participation and has indicated that he will treat the Special Session like any other UN conference and soon begin consultations with delegations on the modalities. Fears remain that Amb. Razali's efforts may yet be ambushed due to politically charged debates on NGO access that are taking place under the aegis of a Sub-Group of the Working Group on Strengthening the UN System.

**BEYOND UNCED:** Moving beyond UNCED will probably entail moving beyond traditional expectations of what governments and intergovernmental organizations can do on their own. One of the Co-Chairs of the Intersessional Working Group was an NGO representative from the UK. The draft text to go forward to CSD-5 for negotiation reflects the ground-breaking record of the UNCED process and the CSD in its willingness and ability to engage NGO activity and take their solutions on board. A member of the Secretariat pointed out that a number of elements in the draft probably would not survive without NGOs lobbying their home governments between now and CSD-5. The “insiders” too have come to recognize the absolute limits of traditional models of government as crisis management.

The Intersessional Working Group was punctuated by poetic interventions from the Co-Chairs. Here is one more gem on our contemporary dilemma to send delegations on their way to CSD-5: “Whether we recognize it or not, we inhabit the shoreline between discourse and silence, between decorum and howls, between the ‘business’ and the ‘madness.’ A chief consequence of this unrecognized madness is the otherwise baffling inability of societies to tackle problems on which they have strong publicly declared commitments and an abundance of relevant information.” (John Maguire, Ireland)

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE COMING MONTHS

**RIO+5 FORUM:** The Earth Council is hosting the Rio+5 Forum in Rio de Janeiro from 13-19 March 1997. The Forum will bring together over 700 individuals, including representatives from NGOs, major groups, business and industry and governments, to develop recommendations for operationalizing sustainable development at all levels of governance. For more information, contact: Johannah Bernstein, UN and European Coordinator, Earth

Council, tel: +1-212-682-5998, fax: +1-212-682-6040, e-mail: earthc@undp.org. Also visit the Earth Council's web site at: <http://www.ecouncil@terra.ac.ca>.

**FAO COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES:** The 22nd Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) will meet from 17-20 March 1997 in Rome, Italy. The agenda will address: the state of world fisheries and aquaculture; implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; strengthening the role of regional fishery bodies in the conservation and management of fish stocks; the essential role of fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance in fisheries management; and activities and programmes of the Fisheries Department. For information, contact: David Doulman at FAO; fax: +39-6-52255188; e-mail: David.Doulman@fao.org.

**UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL:** Executive Director Elizabeth Dowdeswell invited the Governing Council to resume its suspended 19th Session on 1 April 1997, in Nairobi. For more information, contact Jim Sniffen, UNEP Information Officer, New York; tel: +1-212-963-8094; fax: +1-212-963-7341; e-mail: sniffenj@un.org.

**GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM:** A meeting of the Global Biodiversity Forum will convene from 3-4 April 1997 at UN Headquarters in New York. The Forum will explore options for Biodiversity Indicators and Implementation Targets to help measure and expedite tangible progress in implementing the CBD. For more information, contact: Sheldon Cohen, Biodiversity Action Network (BIONET), 1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 502, Washington, DC 20036, USA, tel: +1-202-547-8902, fax: +1-202-265-0222, e-mail: bionet@igc.apc.org.

**COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will meet from 8-25 April 1997. The High-Level segment will take place from 8-11 April. For more information on the CSD, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, UN Division for Sustainable Development, tel: +1-212-963-5949, fax: +1-212-963-4260, e-mail: vasilyev@un.org. Also visit the UN Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) Home Page at <http://www.un.org/DPCSD>.

**INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FORUM:** This forum, co-sponsored by the Citizens Network for Sustainable Development, ANPED, ELICI and the Stanley Foundation, will meet from 12-13 April 1997, at the Learning Alliance in New York. The meeting will engage international dialogue and action strategies among civil society activists working to create sustainable communities around the world. For more information, contact: Michael McCoy, Center for Citizen Advocacy, tel: +1-212-431-3922, e-mail: mmccoy@undp.org.

**SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE WORLD INFORMATION TRANSFER:** A conference on "Environmental Degradation: Its Effects on Children," co-sponsored by the Government of Chile and World Information

Transfer, will take place on 17-18 April 1997 in New York. For information, contact: World Information Transfer, 444 Park Avenue South, Suite 1202, New York, NY 10022, USA, tel: +1-212-686-1996, fax: +1-212-686-2172, e-mail: wit@igc.apc.org.

**FIRST EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE ISLAND DEVELOPMENT:** This conference will be held in Minorca, Spain from 23-26 April 1997. The Conference is a cooperative endeavor by UNESCO, the International Scientific Council for Island Development (INSULA), the Spanish Ministry for Environment, the Minorca Island Council and the Government of the Balearic Islands. The major goal of the Conference is to design a permanent forum to reach agreements and shape initiatives, which will result in effective inter-island cooperation in favor of sustainable development. For more information contact: Consell Insular de Menorca, Camí des Castell no. 28 07702, MAÓ, Minorca, Balearic Islands, SPAIN, tel: +34 71 35.31.00, fax: +34 71 36.61.99; or contact: INSULA, UNESCO, 1 rue de Miollis, 75015 Paris-France, tel: +33 1 45684056, fax: +33 1 45685804, e-mail: eurisland@insula.org. Also visit their Web site at <http://www.insula.org/conf.htm>.

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRIES WITH ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION:** This meeting, scheduled from 23-26 April 1997 in Minsk, Belarus, is intended to increase national, subregional and regional efforts on the realization of UNCED decisions for countries with economies in transition to achieve sustainable development as one of the main conditions of integration into European and world economic systems. For information contact the Conference Secretariat at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of Belarus, 10 Kollektor'naya St., 220048 Minsk, Belarus, tel: +(0375-172) 204771.

**PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY:** This international conference on local initiatives for cities and towns will take place from 1-5 June 1997 in Newcastle, Australia. The conference objectives are to: showcase exemplary Local Agenda 21 case studies; provide opportunity for debate; and engage local communities in progress towards local and therefore global sustainability. For further information, contact the Conference Secretariat at Capital Conferences Pty Ltd, PO Box N399, Grosvenor Place, Sydney NSW 2000, Australia, tel: +61 2 9252 3388, fax: +61 2 9241 5282, e-mail: capcon@ozemail.com.au. Also visit the World Wide Web site at <http://bicentenary.ncc.nsw.gov.au>.

**SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY:** The Special Session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled for 23-27 June 1997. The session will conduct an overall review and appraisal of progress in implementing the UNCED agreements since the 1992 Earth Summit. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, UN Division for Sustainable Development, tel: +1-212-963-5949, fax: +1-212-963-4260, e-mail: vasilyev@un.org. Also visit the Home Page for the Special Session at <http://www.un.org/DPCSD/earthsummit/>.