



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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UNGASS HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 23 JUNE 1997

On the first day of the week-long session, participants at the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) to review the implementation of Agenda 21 heard speeches from 22 Heads of State and Government and 14 other governmental leaders. An *Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole was created. It heard statements from 11 representatives of international organizations during the afternoon. Delegates also continued negotiating the draft outcome of UNGASS.

INFORMAL CEREMONY

UNGA President Razali Ismail introduced the two speakers for the informal opening ceremony: Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and US Vice-President Al Gore. Cardoso noted the opportunity to renew the partnership formed in Rio and urged participants to use it wisely. Gore noted that private capital flows are sky rocketing, bringing with them the promise of development. He said the FCCC Kyoto meeting presents an opportunity to set binding emission limits, which should permit flexibility for implementation and the participation of all. He supported a follow-up mechanism on forests, but no new negotiations.

OPENING PLENARY

Delegates to UNGASS were notified that 17 members were in arrears of payments and, according to the Charter, those whose arrears equal the amount of their assessed contributions for the preceding two years shall not have a vote in the General Assembly.

Amb. RAZALI ISMAIL (Malaysia) was elected President of the 19th Special Session of the General Assembly. He welcomed the representatives of civil society, who were participating for the first time in the GA. He noted the recession of spirit and political will to catalyze change since Rio. Developed countries emphasize environmental protection but have not reduced their consumption and production levels and developing countries emphasize the right to development without the creation of transparent, participatory mechanisms. UN Secretary-General KOFI ANAN noted several issues that require attention, including safe water, forests, fish stocks, atmosphere and desertification. He said his programme for reform will usher in renewal at the UN, but more action is necessary. MOSTAFA TOLBA presented the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development (A/S-19/14) and outlined the preparatory process leading up to UNGASS. He emphasized that genuine political will is required to deal with outstanding

issues, which include financial resources, a financial mechanism for desertification, forests, climate change and the proposal for an aviation fuel tax.

UNGASS President RAZALI then presented the organization of work for the Special Session. MOSTAFA TOLBA, Chair of CSD-5, was elected as Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole. The Plenary also agreed to accord observer status to specialized agencies and, without setting a precedent for other special sessions, to invite major groups, including non-governmental organizations, to participate in the Session. The provisional agenda (A/S-19/1) was then adopted, and debate began on Agenda Item 8, on overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21.

GENERAL DEBATE

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of BRAZIL highlighted the importance of action on forests, climate change, oceans and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. He announced that Brazil was joining with Singapore, South Africa and Germany to help move implementation of Agenda 21 forward. President Robert Gabriel Mugabe of ZIMBABWE informed governments of the world solar programme for 1996-2005 adopted by the UNESCO World Solar Summit, hosted by Zimbabwe. He reiterated the need for developed countries to meet targets for ODA, and described the GEF as a failure. He called for an empirical study of the consequences of globalization and liberalization for developing countries. Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of JAPAN highlighted the importance of combating climate change, and called on countries to commit to reducing GHGs. He informed the Plenary about the Japanese "green technology and green aid" initiative to provide technology and aid to developing countries in the area of climate change. He noted that Japan had surpassed its target for environment-related ODA. President Benjamin William Mhaka of TANZANIA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, pointed out that the decline in ODA since Rio undermined the ability of developing countries to implement Agenda 21. He noted that while foreign direct investment was important for developing countries, it could not be relied upon to fulfill the goals of Agenda 21. Similarly, technology transfer could not be achieved through the market or the private sector alone, but required public funds.

Prime Minister Wim Kok of the NETHERLANDS, on behalf of the EU, called for negotiations on a forest convention, adding that they would provide money for this undertaking, and for support to the global mechanism to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). He insisted on fair burden sharing by

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traditional ODA providers and those newly able to provide assistance. José Maria Aznar, President of SPAIN, noted the need for an international economic environment, including trade policy, that favors sustainable development. He said educating young people was the best tool and stressed sustainable tourism. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the UK, said he would increase development assistance for forestry management and would encourage all local authorities in the UK to adopt Local Agenda 21s.

Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of GERMANY, called for: the industrial countries to adopt the EU-proposed cut of 15% of GHGs by 2010; internationally binding protection for forests; and a global umbrella organization for environmental issues. Jacques Chirac, President of FRANCE, hoped GEF contributors, at their September meeting in Paris, would agree to a fair replenishment. He proposed to host a conference for all actors in water management policy making to contribute to the action plan he said the CSD should adopt at its next session. PERUVIAN Vice-President Ricardo Márquez discussed national initiatives, including the "Peruvian Agenda" and a reforestation project. He expressed concern that the declining ODA trend may become a permanent feature of globalization.

Nursultan Nazarbaev, President of KAZAKHSTAN, called for the rejection of attempts to achieve economic growth at all costs. He proposed an international fund to rehabilitate populations affected by nuclear testing. Prime Minister Romano Prodi of ITALY called on developing countries to follow development paths that did not repeat the mistakes made by the industrialized world. He highlighted the need to agree to realistic, quantifiable, and legally binding targets at Kyoto, as well as the need to set up an INC for forests. President Carlos Saul Menem of ARGENTINA highlighted the critical need for freshwater management and noted the importance of private capital to redress water problems. Preservation of marine biodiversity remained crucial. He also noted that financial mechanisms, which could periodically be reviewed to reassess priorities, were needed.

Speeches continued in the Plenary during the afternoon.

Editor's Note: The Earth Negotiations Bulletin will follow negotiations on the draft outcome. Plenary statements are posted on the Internet at <gopher://gopher.un.org:70/11/ga/docs/S-19/statements/gov.>

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Tolba outlined the procedure for discussions on cross-sectoral issues and the draft Political Statement. Delegates elected the following Bureau: Idunn Eidheim (Norway), John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), Bagher Asadi (Iran) and Czeslaw Wiekowski (Poland), who will serve as Rapporteur. The G-77/CHINA requested time for discussions prior to negotiations. The Chair asked them to begin negotiations with breaks for group consultations when necessary.

An informal group, chaired by John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), considered cross-sectoral issues. On **100** (implementation and compliance), the G-77/CHINA proposed a reformulation noting, *inter alia*, that implementation of commitments under international treaties and other instruments in the field of environment hinge on secure, sustained and predictable financial support, sufficient institutional capacity, human resources and adequate access to technology. CHINA noted the readiness of developing countries to join the North in remedying environmental damage. With SAUDI ARABIA and COLOMBIA, he noted that implementation and finance must be linked because financial support is essential for successful environmental protection.

The US expressed difficulty with linking implementation to financial support when making a general statement about international treaties because it implies financial support is

necessary in all cases. The EU proposed that implementation "can be promoted by" instead of "hinge on" financial support. NORWAY appealed to the G-77/CHINA to view this paragraph as pertaining to strengthening instruments rather than technology transfer. SWITZERLAND questioned whether repeated references to financial obligations lessened their impact. CANADA underscored the importance of science-based decision making.

The EU and NORWAY, supported by SWITZERLAND, the US and CANADA, proposed language noting the importance of improving reporting and data collection systems and developing compliance regimes. The G-77/CHINA stated that its formulation captures the EU/NORWAY proposal. CHINA said that pressing for compliance obligations without making good on financial commitments is "tragic." The Chair will draft a revised paragraph.

The US reformulated NORWAY's proposed **101** (develop law regarding liability and compensation) to call for legal instruments regarding liability for environmental damage. The G-77/CHINA proposed deleting the text. On **102** (strengthened data collection), the WOMEN'S CAUCUS reminded delegates of a recent decision by the Commission on the Status of Women regarding gender disaggregated data. The G-77/CHINA proposed deleting the Canadian-proposed reference to gender disaggregated data. CANADA and NORWAY objected. A US reference to information that makes visible the unremunerated work of women also remains bracketed. A reformulated PERUVIAN reference to support of national and international scientific and technological data centers with appropriate electronic communications links between them was agreed.

IN THE CORRIDORS I

With back benches beckoning in the British House of Commons, former UK Environment Minister, John Gummer MP, has turned star lobbyist. His target Monday was David Hales, USAID. With TV cameras running, Gummer cornered Hales to convey suspicions that the US plans to wait until the last minute to produce minimal proposals for the FCCC COP-3 and force the others to go along. Hales countered by questioning other States' ability to achieve their declared targets. Gummer also "categorically" ruled himself out of the running for the top job at UNEP.

IN THE CORRIDORS II

German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, flagged support for establishing an authoritative world environmental organization Monday. At a four-nation press conference, he invited consideration of a "global environmental umbrella organization of the UN with UNEP as a major pillar." There is some NGO support for a UN environmental superbody to act as a counterweight to the WTO. With US resistance to the idea, given Chancellor Kohl's preference for funding on an assessment basis, some expect that attention will continue to focus on strengthening bodies like UNEP.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Approximately 50 speakers are expected to offer statements regarding implementation of Agenda 21 during morning and afternoon meetings in the General Assembly Hall.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: Statements will be given in Conference Room 3 from 10:30-1:00. Informal consultations on cross-sectoral issues will be held in Conference Room 5 from 11:00-1:00. Informal consultations on the draft Political Statement will be held in Conference Room 3 from 3:00-6:00. Informal consultations on cross-sectoral issues will continue in the evening in Conference Room 5.