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SUMMARY OF THE NINETEENTH UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION TO REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21: 23-27 JUNE 1997

The Nineteenth United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) to Review the Implementation of Agenda 21 was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 23-27 July 1997, five years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. Agenda 21 is the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development agreed at UNCED. 53 Heads of State and Government, along with ministers and other high-level officials, addressed the Assembly during the week-long meeting. Negotiations held in a Committee of the Whole, as well as several Ministerial groups, produced a Statement of Commitment and a Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.

The "Earth Summit +5" proved to be a sobering reminder that little progress has been made over the past five years in implementing key components of Agenda 21 and moving toward sustainable development. When the Special Session came to a close at 1:15 on Saturday morning, delegates, NGOs and other observers left UN Headquarters with mixed feelings. Some felt that the meeting had been a failure because governments had shown a lack of political will to force more than convoluted compromises. Others, including United Nations General Assembly President Razali Ismail (Malaysia), felt that the meeting proved to be an "honest attempt to try and make an appraisal of the results, and of how far we have gone from Rio. There was little attempt to try to sweep things under the carpet or put a gloss over something that's not there."

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNGASS

In 1992, the General Assembly endorsed Agenda 21 and decided to convene a special session to review and appraise Agenda 21 implementation in its resolution 47/190. Negotiations on the text to be adopted at the 19th Special Session of the UN General Assembly began earlier this year during the Commission for Sustainable Development's (CSD) *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Intersessional Working Group and continued at the fifth session of

the CSD (CSD-5). Further progress was made at informal consultations in New York during the week before UNGASS.

CSD AD HOC OPEN-ENDED INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP: The Intersessional Working Group met from 24 February-7 March 1997 in New York and focused on the format and substantive content of the document to be considered at UNGASS. The main output was a draft "Proposed Outcome of the Special Session" prepared by Co-Chairs Derek Osborn (UK) and Amb. Celso Amorim (Brazil) after feedback from delegates on a first draft. The re-draft provided a basis for informal consultations prior to CSD-5. Most delegates highlighted freshwater, energy and transport, forests and oceans as issues of new or priority concern. Delegates also noted the importance of the cross-sectoral issues of poverty and changing consumption and production patterns.

FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-5) convened from 8-25 April 1997 at UN Headquarters in New York to complete formal preparations for UNGASS. It began with a High-Level Segment and a review of reports from the Intersessional Working Group and the CSD Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF).

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Delegations continued to identify and elaborate the emerging priority issues that they had considered at the Intersessional Working Group. Voluminous amendments to the draft "Proposed Outcome of the Special Session" were considered. Intersessional Co-Chairs Osborn and Amorim chaired Drafting Groups I and II, respectively. Drafting Group I considered text on "Sectors and Issues" and "Assessment of Progress Reached after Rio." Drafting Group II considered text on "Integration of Economic, Social and Environmental Objectives" and "Means of Implementation." Informal groups negotiated text on forests, institutional arrangements and the CSD Programme of Work for 1998-2002.

CSD-5 Chair Mostafa Tolba (Egypt) and Vice-Chair Monika Linn-Locher (Switzerland) began consultations on a draft political statement to be adopted by the Heads of State and Government expected to attend the Special Session. Their informal *modus operandi* was questioned by a number of G-77 delegations at the closing Plenary. Tolba and Linn-Locher invited governments to send amendments to a draft distributed at the close of the Session and undertook to circulate a new version by early June.

At the conclusion of CSD-5, numerous brackets remained in the draft documents, including unnegotiated paragraphs dealing with international legal instruments and information tools to measure progress on sustainable development.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: CSD-5 Chair Tolba convened informal consultations at UN Headquarters from 16-21 June 1997. Delegations used the Report of the CSD on Preparations for UNGASS, including the revised draft political statement (A/S-19/CRP.1) and the draft proposed outcome (A/S-19/14) as the basis for their deliberations. The draft political statement attracted extensive amendments, and some noted that delegations were re-negotiating issues covered in greater detail in the draft proposed outcome. The consultations were adjourned until delegations had considered related issues in the draft proposed outcome. A new draft was circulated Sunday, 22 June, immediately prior to UNGASS.

A number of cross-sectoral and sectoral issues in the draft proposed outcome were resolved during the week. The exceptions covered those issues requiring high-level political input at UNGASS and/or related discussions at the 20-21 June G-8 Summit in Denver. Among the outstanding issues sent to UNGASS were: means of implementation (e.g., official development assistance, finance, mobilization of domestic resources); a financial mechanism for the Convention to Combat Desertification; a reference to commitments that should be made at the third Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997; the follow-up to the work of the CSD's Intergovernmental Panel on Forests; and a proposal to introduce an international tax on aviation fuel to fund sustainable development.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SESSION

On Monday, 23 June 1997, UN General Assembly President Razali Ismail (Malaysia) introduced the two speakers for the informal opening ceremony: Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and US Vice-President Al Gore. Cardoso noted the unique opportunity to renew the partnership formed in Rio and urged participants to use it wisely. Gore welcomed participants to New York and noted that private capital flows are skyrocketing, bringing with them the promise of development.

At the commencement of the opening Plenary, delegates to UNGASS were notified that 17 members are 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 was then

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 also drew attention to the recession of political will to catalyze change. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan identified several issues that require attention, including clean water, forests, fish stocks, atmosphere and desertification. He said his programme for reform will usher in renewal at the UN, but more remains to be done.

Dr. 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 was required to deal with outstanding issues.

UNGASS President Razali then presented the organization of the Special Session. 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. The provisional agenda (A/S-19/1) was adopted, and the general debate began.

PLENARY DEBATE

The Plenary held two sessions each day during UNGASS, where approximately 197 statements on review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 were offered by 53 Heads of State and Government or Vice Presidents, 75 Ministers, 6 Vice Ministers, 29 Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, 5 observers, 17 heads of international organizations and 12 representatives of major groups. Twenty representatives of international organizations that were not able to speak in Plenary offered statements in the Committee of the Whole on Monday and Tuesday.

Speakers generally agreed that in the five years since UNCED, the concept of sustainable development has come to inform economic planning worldwide. The principles of Agenda 21 are being codified into national legislation, and major new conventions on climate change and biodiversity are being applied. Nearly all regions of the world are now experiencing lower fertility and lower population growth. Nevertheless, there was apparent consensus that much more needs to be done. Developing countries argued that their efforts to implement Agenda 21 have continued to be hampered by lack of resources. Many countries stressed that implementation of Agenda 21 requires new and additional financial resources and technology sharing. Several speakers pointed out that without alleviating the extreme and increasing poverty that pervades the world, sustainable development is both unrealistic and impossible.

Despite commitments made at Rio, consumption and production patterns remain unsustainably high, official development assistance (ODA) has actually declined, deforestation continues and developing countries lack essential "green technologies." Several speakers pointed out that one third of the world's population did not have access to clean drinking water. Speakers also emphasized the importance of action on forests, climate change, oceans, freshwater management, and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. The need to study the impacts of globalization and trade liberalization on developing countries was emphasized by many speakers. Countries also noted the importance of educating young people, promoting sustainable tourism and encouraging local initiatives and Local Agenda 21s. It was also stressed that peace and political stability were integral components of sustainable development.

Several speakers noted that, worldwide, foreign investment has replaced overseas development assistance in amount and frequency. Yet, foreign investment is not an appropriate replacement for ODA. Based on economic, rather than



developmental, objectives, such investment necessarily yields selective benefits. For example, although several least developed countries are following liberal policies and have open economic systems, business capital flow has not been forthcoming. Innovative ideas are needed to raise funds for environmental protection and sustainable development. Copies of Plenary statements can be found on the Internet at gopher://gopher.un.org:70/11/ga/docs/S-19/statements/gov.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Committee of the Whole (COW), chaired by CSD-5 Chair, Dr. Mostafa Tolba, convened Monday afternoon to oversee negotiations on a draft Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and a draft political statement by Heads of State and Government. The Committee elected Bagher Asadi (Iran), John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), Idunn Eidheim (Norway), and Czeslaw Wieckowski (Poland) as Vice-Chairs. Two working groups, one on cross-sectoral issues chaired by Amb. Celso Amorim (Brazil) and John Ashe, and one on sectoral issues chaired by Derek Osborn (UK), were established. Wieckowski chaired a contact group on the CSD Programme of Work (1998-2002). A number of informal consultations were also convened to resolve particularly contentious issues, including: forests, climate change and radioactive waste. A number of ministerial-level meetings on these issues also took place.

At its final meeting on Friday evening, the COW adopted the draft Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. Having failed to reach agreement on a political statement for the Heads of State and Government, the Committee adopted, in its place, a Statement of Commitment. The following is a summary of these documents, with emphasis on the negotiations that took place during the Special Session.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The Statement of Commitment contains six paragraphs. It notes that, at UNCED, Heads of States and Governments and other Heads of Delegations, together with international institutions and non-governmental organizations launched a new global partnership for sustainable development, a partnership that respects the indivisibility of environmental protection and the development process. It recalls that the focus of UNGASS has been to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21 in a comprehensive manner and not to re-negotiate its provisions or to be selective in its implementation. A number of positive results are acknowledged, but deep concern is expressed that the overall trends for sustainable development are worse today than they were in 1992. Participants commit to ensure that the next comprehensive review of Agenda 21 in the year 2002 demonstrates greater measurable progress in achieving sustainable development.

This section was, until the last day of UNGASS, envisioned to be a longer "political statement." Delegates to the CSD Intersessional Working Group anticipated that they would develop a political statement, and suggested a number of elements that could be included in it. Bilateral consultations were undertaken by Vice-Chair Monika Linn-Locher (Switzerland) and Chair Mostafa Tolba (Egypt) during CSD-5. They issued a preliminary "Draft Political Statement" during the second week. A redraft incorporated comments from governments and was distributed during the final Plenary. An exchange of comments in the intersessional period resulted in a new draft, which was first discussed during the informal consultations prior to UNGASS. Voluminous amendments were offered, and incorporated into the text that was negotiated during UNGASS. Delegates completed their first reading of the twenty-six paragraph draft on Thursday afternoon, and began a second reading during a late night session. Many debates during the week mirrored those taking place on similar

issues in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and progress was slow. Among the issues that generated considerable debate were: the definition of sustainable development; incremental costs; time-bound commitments; commitments regarding ODA; domestic mobilization of resources; listing the sectoral themes for the CSD's focus in the next five years; and an invitation to the Secretary-General to develop strategies for long-term sustainability. The Co-Chairs of the finance ministers' group drafted proposed text on financial resources to be included in the political statement, but the US, India, Brazil, Belarus, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Venezuela and Japan expressed serious difficulty with the text.

On Friday morning, the draft political statement was withdrawn from consideration. UNGASS President Razali Ismail conducted informal consultations on a "Statement of Commitment," which was issued on Friday afternoon as document A/S-19/AC.1/L.1/Add.1. Lebanon noted that he had worked hard on the longer document and registered his concern that the Statement of Commitment did not reflect all issues that had been discussed, but he joined the consensus in adopting the text.

PROGRAMME FOR THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS MADE SINCE UNCED

This fifteen-paragraph section contained no outstanding text coming into UNGASS. It identifies changes and actions that have taken place since Rio. Accelerated globalization and interactions among countries in the areas of world trade, foreign direct investment and capital markets has characterized the five years since UNCED. Globalization presents new opportunities and challenges, but only a limited number of developing countries have been able to take advantage of these trends. Income inequality among and within countries has increased.

The state of the global environment has continued to deteriorate, as noted in the UNEP's *Global Environment Outlook* report. Some progress has been made in terms of institutional development, international consensus-building, public participation and private sector actions and, as a result, a number of countries have succeeded in curbing pollution and slowing the rate of resource degradation. Population growth rates have been declining globally, largely as a result of expanded basic education and health care. Overall, however, trends are worsening. Increasing levels of pollution threaten to exceed the capacity of the global environment to absorb them, increasing the potential obstacles to economic and social development in developing countries.

Implementation of the commitments in the UNCED and post-UNCED agreements, as well as others adopted before 1992, remains to be carried out and, in many cases, further strengthening of their provisions, as well as the mechanisms for putting them into effect, are required. The establishment, restructuring, funding and replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) were major achievements, but its funding levels have not been sufficient to meet its objectives.

Efforts have been made by governments and international organizations to integrate environmental, economic and social objectives into decision-making by elaborating new or adapting existing policies. The major groups have demonstrated what can be achieved by taking committed action, sharing resources, building consensus and reflecting grassroots concern and involvement.

A number of major UN conferences have advanced international commitment for the achievement of the long-term goals and objectives of sustainable development, and organizations and programmes of the UN system have played an important role in making progress in the implementation of Agenda 21.



Much remains to be done, however, to activate the means of implementation set out in Agenda 21, in particular in the areas of finance and technology transfer, technical assistance and capacity-building. There has been a sizeable expansion of private financial flows to a limited number of developing countries, but the debt situation remains a major constraint to achieving sustainable development. Finally, the technology gap between developed countries and, in particular, the least developed countries has widened.

IMPLEMENTATION IN AREAS REQUIRING URGENT ACTION

In the introductory paragraph for this section, delegations agreed that, although progress has been made in some areas, a major new effort will be required to achieve the goals established at UNCED, particularly in areas of cross-sectoral matters where implementation has yet to be achieved.

1. Integration of economic, social and environmental objectives

Text in this section, agreed to during CSD-5, notes that achieving sustainable development is impossible without greater integration at all policy-making and operational levels, including the lowest administrative levels possible. By 2002, the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development should be completed, and efforts by developing countries to effectively implement national strategies should be supported. A broad package of policy instruments should be worked out, in light of country-specific conditions, to ensure that integrated approaches are effective and cost-efficient.

The bracketed text resolved at UNGASS included references to economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development and the need for: broad based growth to benefit all, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, transparent and accountable governance and effective participation by civil society. The G-77/China agreed to a US proposal to introduce language from the UN Agenda for Development.

Additional outstanding text proposed by Switzerland and supported by the EU noted that the implementation of policies aiming at sustainable development may enhance the opportunities for job creation — while protecting basic workers' rights. The G-77/China proposed its deletion. The final text includes a reference to Chapter 29 (strengthening the role of workers and their trade unions), but drops the reference to protecting basic workers' rights.

Enabling international economic framework: At CSD-5, delegates agreed to text noting that, as a result of globalization, external factors have become critical in determining the success or failure of developing countries in their national efforts at sustainable development. During informal consultations prior to UNGASS, the US and EU sought to establish that the Rio principle on common but differentiated responsibilities refers only to environmental issues. The G-77/China wanted to remove “in regard to environmental issues,” but later agreed to Agenda 21 language. The text therefore notes that issues can be approached effectively only through a constructive dialogue and genuine partnership, “taking into account that in view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities.”

Eradicating poverty: This paragraph contained a number of bracketed subparagraphs after CSD-5. It notes that the eradication of poverty is an overriding theme of sustainable development for the coming years and depends on the full integration of people living in poverty into economic, social and political life. Priority actions include: improving access to sustainable livelihoods; providing universal access to basic social services; progressively

developing social protection systems to support those who cannot support themselves; and addressing the disproportionate impact of poverty on women. In addition, interested donors and recipients should work together to allocate increased shares of ODA to poverty eradication. The 20/20 initiative is noted to be an important principle in this regard.

A Bangladesh-proposed paragraph on access to micro-credit for people living in poverty was submitted late at CSD-5. The G-77/China said his Group had not had time to discuss the proposal at UNGASS. The proposal is to be referred to ECOSOC by the General Assembly President Amb. Razali. Text regarding empowering people living in poverty and their organizations was resolved during the informal consultations prior to UNGASS, with the G-77/China's agreement that they should be involved in “evaluation, formulation and implementation” and that programmes should reflect their priorities.

In the subparagraph on the disproportionate impact of poverty on women, delegates debated whether full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action should be “consistent with the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women” (FWCW). During the week prior to UNGASS, the EU and Canada called for full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and deleting “consistent with the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women.” The G-77/China supported the reference to the FWCW report to accommodate those countries who recorded reservations in the report. Syria, supported by Canada, proposed that a footnote accompany all references to UN Conference outcomes, stating that all references to platforms or programmes for action in the UNGASS report should be considered in a manner consistent with their reports. This was agreed.

Changing consumption and production patterns: A number of portions remained bracketed in this section after CSD-5. The agreed text notes that, consistent with Agenda 21, the development and further elaboration of national policies and strategies, particularly in industrialized countries, are needed to encourage changes in unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Actions should focus on:

- identifying best practices through evaluations of policy measures with respect to environmental effectiveness, efficiency and implications for social equity;
- taking into account the linkages between urbanization and the environmental and developmental effects of consumption and production patterns in cities;
- improving the quality of information regarding the environmental impact of products and services;
- encouraging educational programmes to promote sustainable consumption patterns;
- encouraging business and industry to develop and apply environmentally sound technology and promoting the role of business in shaping consumption patterns; and
- developing core indicators.

Brazil and India opposed text noting that to some extent unsustainable patterns are also emerging in higher income groups in some developing countries. Delegates agreed to replace it with language based on Chapter Four of Agenda 21 (4.8 (a) (b) and (c); 4.9) and to insert a footnote referencing the report of a workshop on sustainable consumption and production to CSD-5. At the informal consultations preceding UNGASS, a reference to environmental and social audits was replaced with text on appropriate, voluntary publication of assessments. An EU-proposed initiative on energy and material efficiency targets of achieving a tenfold improvement in productivity in the long term and a possible factor-four increase in the next two or three decades was agreed to after the EU specified that the targets were intended for industrialized countries. On eco-efficiency, the G-77/China agreed



to US language on the need for developed countries to pay special attention to avoiding negative impacts on export and market access opportunities for developing countries.

Making trade and environment mutually supportive:

Various sections in this text remained in brackets following CSD-5. The agreed text addresses the need to establish favorable macroeconomic conditions to enable all countries to benefit from globalization, and greater responsiveness to sustainable development objectives at the UN, WTO and Bretton Woods institutions. It calls for timely and full implementation of the results of the Uruguay Round, promotion of the universality of the WTO, analysis of the environmental effects of international goods transport, and institutional cooperation between UNCTAD, WTO, and UNEP.

At UNGASS, brackets were removed from text introduced by the EU and the US in a subparagraph on the multilateral trading system. This US text was replaced with language noting that decisions on further liberalization of trade should take into account effects on sustainable development. A paragraph proposed by Australia calling for effective dialogue with major groups (including NGOs), particularly in the WTO, UNCTAD and UNEP, is to be referred to ECOSOC by GA President Amb. Razali. An EU-sponsored call for the WTO, UNEP and UNCTAD to consider ways to make trade and environment mutually supportive was accepted.

Population: This paragraph on the relationship between economic growth, poverty, employment, environment and sustainable development calls for recognition of the critical linkages between demographic trends and other factors. After a prolonged debate about the formula to reference the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development it was agreed to insert a standard footnote on UN Conferences (see above).

Health: This paragraph, which was agreed to during the informal consultations prior to UNGASS, states that an overriding goal for the future is to implement the "Health for All" strategy to enable all people to achieve a higher level of health and well-being, and to improve their economic productivity and social potential. Actions such as provision of safe drinking water, and accelerated research and vaccine development, are suggested. Delegates removed brackets from language regarding the effects of lead poisoning, noting that it is important to accelerate the process of eliminating unsafe uses of lead, including the use of lead in gasoline worldwide, in the light of country-specific conditions and with enhanced international support and assistance to developing countries through the timely provision of technical and financial assistance and the promotion of endogenous capacity-building. The G-77/China agreed to remove brackets from a call for strategies to make parents, families and communities aware of the adverse environmental health impacts of tobacco.

Sustainable human settlements: This paragraph, which was resolved at CSD-5, notes that global urbanization is a cross-sectoral phenomenon that has an impact on all aspects of sustainable development. Urgent action is needed to implement the commitments made at the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) consistent with its report, and in Agenda 21. New and additional financial resources are necessary to achieve the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. Global targets could be established by the CSD to promote Local Agenda 21 campaigns and to deal with obstacles to Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

2. Sectors and issues

The opening paragraph to this section was agreed to at CSD-5. It notes that the need for integration is important in all sectors, including the areas of energy and transport, agriculture and water

use, and marine resources. The recommendations made in each sector take into account the need for international cooperation in support of national efforts.

Freshwater: This text was agreed during CSD-5, although Turkey and Ethiopia reserved their positions with respect to a reference to "customary uses of water." The text notes that, in view of growing demands, water will become a major limiting factor in socio-economic development unless early action is taken. It identifies an urgent need to, *inter alia*:

- formulate and implement policies and programmes for integrated watershed management;
- strengthen regional and international cooperation for technology transfer and the financing of integrated water resources programmes and projects;
- provide an environment that encourages investments from public and private sources to improve water supply and sanitation services;
- recognize water as a social and economic good; and
- call for a dialogue under the aegis of the CSD, beginning at its sixth session, aimed at building a consensus on the necessary actions, means of implementation and tangible results in order to consider initiating a strategic approach for the implementation of all aspects of the sustainable use of freshwater for social and economic purposes.

Oceans and seas: This text was agreed at CSD-5. It notes that there is a need to continue to improve decision-making in this area at the national, regional and global levels. It identifies an urgent need for:

- all governments to ratify or accede to the relevant agreements and to effectively implement such agreements as well as relevant voluntary instruments;
- strengthening of institutional links to be established between the relevant intergovernmental mechanisms involved in the development and implementation of integrated coastal zone management;
- better identification of priorities for action at the global level;
- governments to prevent or eliminate overfishing and excess fishing capacity;
- governments to consider the positive and negative impact of subsidies and to consider appropriate action; and
- governments to take actions to improve the quality and quantity of scientific data as a basis for effective decisions.

Forests: Three of the four paragraphs in this section were agreed to at CSD-5, with the critical paragraph outlining follow-up action to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) remaining entirely in brackets. Text agreed to prior to UNGASS notes that the IPF's proposals for action represent significant progress and consensus on a wide range of forest issues. To maintain momentum there is an urgent need for, *inter alia*: countries and international organizations to implement the Panel's proposals; countries to develop national forest programmes; further clarification of all issues arising from the IPF process, in particular international cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer, and trade and environment in relation to forest products and services; and international organizations to undertake further collaboration in the informal, high-level Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests.

The unresolved paragraph on follow-up contained a number of options, including calls for the establishment of an *ad hoc*, open-ended intergovernmental forum on forests, which would consider the need for or build the necessary consensus for a legally-binding instrument, or an inter-governmental negotiating committee (INC) on a legally-binding instrument on all types of forests.

Countries began negotiations on forests by outlining their support for the various options for follow-up. The EU, Canada,



Russia, Romania, Costa Rica on behalf of Central America, and Papua New Guinea supported the immediate establishment of an INC, noting that while the two-year IPF process had been very useful in clarifying key issues, a clear political signal on forests and binding commitments on action were now needed. The G-77/China, the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand opposed the establishment of an INC at this stage, noting that the need for a convention had not yet been established. Instead, they called for an intergovernmental forum on forests to help implement IPF proposals for action, and to continue discussions on issues left pending by the IPF, such as trade and environment in relation to forest products, technology transfer and finance, as well as new and emerging issues. The forum could also examine the need for an INC, without prejudging the outcome, and could report to the CSD by 1999 (the US preferred the year 2000).

The final consensus decision, arrived at after protracted debate, calls for the establishment of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests under the aegis of the CSD, to facilitate implementation of IPF recommendations, review and monitor progress on sustainable forest management, and consider matters left pending by the IPF. The Forum will also “identify possible elements of and work towards a consensus for international arrangements and mechanisms, for example, a legally-binding instrument” and will report to the CSD in 1999. Based on that report, and a decision by the CSD in the year 2000, the Forum will “engage in further action on establishing an intergovernmental negotiation process on new arrangements and mechanisms or a legally binding instrument on all types of forests.”

Debate on this text prior to its adoption centered around the G-77/China’s insistence, supported by India, Brazil, Colombia, the US and New Zealand, on reformulating the last sentence to read “will engage in further action on new arrangements and mechanisms or establishing an intergovernmental negotiation process on a legally binding instrument . . .” instead of the compromise formulation, supported by the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) group. The G-77/China argued that placing the words “an intergovernmental negotiation process” before “new arrangements and mechanisms” seemed to suggest the inevitability of starting negotiations on a legally binding document. Agreement on this was achieved when the G-77/China withdrew their proposal after an explanation from the Chair, supported by Denmark, that many negotiation processes are not linked to legally binding commitments. Agreement also hinged on crucial trade-offs whereby the EU agreed to language calling for the Forum to “work towards consensus for international arrangements and mechanisms, for example, a legally binding document,” instead of “including a legally binding document.” The EU also agreed to postpone the decision on follow-up until CSD-8 (the year 2000) rather than 1999.

It was agreed that the Forum should convene as soon as possible, and would be supported by voluntary extra-budgetary contributions from governments and international organizations.

On the last outstanding issue, delegates decided to remove reference to “traditional forest-related knowledge” (TFRK) as an IPF issue requiring further clarification. Instead, a reference to TFRK was included in the opening paragraph, which highlighted the importance of forests for indigenous people and other forest-dependent people.

Energy: Most of the paragraphs on energy were agreed or agreed *ad referendum* as a result of informal consultations prior to UNGASS. The agreed text covers a number of issues, including: increased need for energy services in developing countries; the need for equity and adequate energy supplies; international cooperation for promoting energy conservation and improvement; and promoting research efforts on renewable energy.

During debate at UNGASS, Saudi Arabia proposed deletion of subparagraphs on energy discussions to be held at CSD-9, cost internalization and coordination on energy issues at the UN, which had been agreed *ad referendum*. Nigeria, supported by Libya, wanted to delete details of preparations for CSD-9. Canada, the US, Australia, Japan, Norway and the EU resisted the call to re-open negotiations on agreed text. These issues were considered again in subsequent sessions. Saudi Arabia said that he and 22 other countries wished to delete all but the first two sentences of the paragraph.

In the final COW, delegates accepted a paragraph on CSD-9 noting that preparations should use an open-ended intergovernmental group of experts, to be held in conjunction with the intersessionals for CSD-8 and CSD-9. Brackets were also removed from a reference to “appropriate national action” in a paragraph on reducing the impacts of fossil fuels. In a paragraph on technology transfer, the EU and US agreed to consider a compromise formulation after prolonged discussion on the inclusion of “time bound” commitments for the transfer of relevant technology to developing countries. Agreed text reads: “evolving commitments for the transfer of relevant technology, including time bound commitments, as appropriate, to developing countries and economies in transition.” A paragraph calling for gradual promotion of cost internalization, minimizing impact on developing countries and encouraging the reduction of subsidies was included. Coordination on energy issues within the UN system, including a coordinating role for ECOSOC, is also mentioned.

Transport: This paragraph contained some brackets following CSD-5, including an EU-proposed initiative to prepare, at the international level, a tax on aviation fuel. The text notes that current patterns of transportation with their dominant patterns of energy use are not sustainable, and present trends may compound the environmental problems the world is facing. It notes a need for: the promotion of integrated transport policies; the integration of land use and urban, peri-urban and rural transport planning; the adoption and promotion, as appropriate, of measures to mitigate the negative impact of transportation on the environment; and partnerships for strengthening transport infrastructures and developing innovative mass transport schemes.

Delegates agreed at UNGASS to: accelerate the phase-out of leaded gasoline as soon as possible; promote voluntary guidelines for environmentally friendly transport; and reduce vehicle emissions of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and volatile organic compounds, as soon as possible. The EU altered its proposal for an aviation fuel tax to call for the continuation of studies on the use of economic instruments, “such as an aviation fuel tax,” which was bracketed by Argentina.

During a Friday afternoon meeting of the COW, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Venezuela, Iran and Morocco called for the deletion of the entire paragraph. The US, Norway and Switzerland opposed deleting the paragraph. The EU expressed disappointment at these proposals but declined to withdraw the reference. Osborn noted that similar language was agreed at CSD-4. Delegates agreed to retain the paragraph without the reference to aviation fuel tax. At the end of the session, the EU delivered a statement to be included in the minutes, noting its assumption that the aviation fuel tax is part of the economic instruments mentioned in the text.

Atmosphere: At CSD-5, delegates agreed to a paragraph noting that political will and effort are required to ensure that the global climate is not further damaged. It also notes that while some first steps have been taken, insufficient progress has been made by many developed countries in meeting their aim to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.



It also notes the importance of adopting a protocol or other legal instrument later this year at the third Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC COP-3) in Kyoto.

A ministerial group on climate change was held on Thursday, 26 June, chaired by ministers from Argentina and Japan. Delegations who had made proposals in the text explained their positions. Brazil and Switzerland noted that the public would measure the success of UNGASS by its statement on climate change. Japan proposed using language from the Denver G-8 Summit: At COP-3, the industrialized countries should commit to meaningful, realistic and equitable targets that will result in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions by 2010. The agreement must ensure transparency and accountability, and flexibility in the manner in which Participants' meet their targets. The EU proposed text calling for: an agreement on a legally-binding commitment for the developed world at FCCC COP-3 for a significant reduction of the emissions of greenhouse gases below the 1990 level by the years 2005 and 2010, as well as mandatory and recommended policies and measures, including harmonized ones. Delegates proposing text met in a contact group to produce a combined text.

The combined text noted that at COP-3 the developed countries should seek legally-binding, meaningful, realistic and equitable targets that will result in significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions within specified timeframes such as 2005, 2010 and 2020. Japan objected to "significant" and Australia disapproved of "legally-binding." The Co-Chairs reported the result back to the COW and delegates agreed to reconvene the ministerial group.

On Friday, 27 June, the Co-Chairs reported to the COW that the ministerial group had held further discussions, but no consensus could be reached. Tolba said that without consensus the paragraph would have to be deleted and delegates would have to be satisfied with the existing text on climate change.

Norway, Brazil, AOSIS, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago and the EU expressed strong regret that the UNGASS could not agree on recommendations and requested an additional session. Saudi Arabia and Venezuela were skeptical about resolving the issues in the time remaining. The Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Australia agreed to try again, but cautioned that the group must be open-ended, noting that the use of a small group had led to problems before. The US also noted that difficulties arose because some positions were "stepped on" during discussions. An open-ended group, chaired by Derek Osborn, was convened for a final attempt to reach consensus, after which Osborn reported on the results. He had polled participants in the meeting for their positions and drafted a new paragraph.

Further consultations resulted in the following agreed text: at UNGASS, the international community confirmed its recognition of the problem of climate change as one of the biggest challenges facing the world in the next century. The leaders of many countries underlined the importance of this in their addresses to the Assembly and outlined the responses they have in hand, both in their own countries and internationally.

The ultimate goal that all countries share is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. This requires efficient and cost-effective policies and measures that will be sufficient to result in a significant reduction in emissions. At this meeting, countries reviewed the state of the preparations for COP-3 and all agreed that it is vital that there should be a satisfactory result.

The positions of many countries for these negotiations are still evolving and it was agreed that it would not be appropriate to seek to predetermine the results, although useful interactions on evolving positions took place.

There is already widespread but not universal agreement that it will be necessary to consider legally-binding, meaningful, realistic and equitable targets for Annex I countries that will result in significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions within specified time frames, such as 2005, 2010 and 2020. In addition to establishing targets, there is also widespread agreement that it will be necessary to consider ways and means for achieving them and to take into account the economic, adverse environmental and other effects of such response measures on all countries, particularly developing countries.

Toxic chemicals: Agreement was reached on this paragraph at CSD-5. It notes that environmentally sound management of chemicals should continue to be an important issue well beyond 2000. Particular attention should be given to cooperation in the development and transfer of technology for safe substitutes and in the development of capacity for the production of such substitutes. UNEP's 19th Governing Council's decision on sound management of chemicals should be implemented in accordance with the agreed timetables for negotiations on the prior informed consent (PIC) and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) conventions. The difference between the roles and behavior of inorganic and organic chemicals is noted.

Hazardous wastes: This paragraph was also agreed at CSD-5. It takes note of the important initiatives aimed at promoting the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes under the Basel Convention and calls for their further development. Land contaminated by the disposal of hazardous wastes needs to be identified and remedial actions put in place, and integrated management solutions are also required to minimize urban and industrial waste generation and to promote recycling and reuse.

Radioactive wastes: Two of three paragraphs on this issue remained bracketed following CSD-5, with the Russian Federation reserving its position on the entire section. Agreed text at UNGASS notes that radioactive wastes can have very serious environmental and human health impacts over long periods of time. Following a G-77/China proposal, the text notes that storage, transportation, transboundary movement and disposal of radioactive wastes should be guided by *all* principles (rather than only principle 2) of the Rio Declaration. It also calls on States not to promote or allow the storage or disposal of radioactive wastes near the marine environment, and for international efforts to prohibit the export of radioactive wastes to those countries that do not have appropriate treatment and storage sites. Following a G-77 proposal, it notes the need to conduct, "as appropriate, health studies around sites affected by nuclear activities with a view to identifying where health treatment may be needed." Following a Russian proposal, references to "nuclear waste" in the text are replaced with "radioactive wastes" and text reading "it is best for radioactive wastes to be disposed of" is replaced by "radioactive wastes *should be* disposed of" in the territory of the State in which they are produced.

Land and sustainable agriculture: The two paragraphs on this issue were largely agreed to at CSD-5, and during informal consultations prior to UNGASS. Final agreement was obtained when a reference to "indigenous people[s]" as replaced by "indigenous people(s)" in text noting the need for involvement of all interested parties in sustainable management of land and soil resources. The agreed text notes that land degradation threatens the livelihoods of millions, and calls on States to combat or reverse the worldwide trend of soil erosion, using an ecosystem approach. It also notes the need for poverty eradication through, *inter alia*, capacity building to reinforce local food systems, and improving food security. It calls on States to continue or increase investment in agricultural research, and to fully implement the WTO decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing



Developing Countries. Finally, the text calls on governments to implement the Rome Declaration and Plan of Action on food security, adopted at the World Food Summit in 1996.

Desertification and drought: Delegates to CSD-5 agreed to urge governments to conclude and implement the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) as soon as possible and to support and participate in the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in September 1997. Text regarding the Global Mechanism and technology transfer remained bracketed for consideration during UNGASS. Informal consultations and negotiations took place throughout the week.

On Friday, 27 June, Derek Osborn, Chair of the informal group on sectoral issues, reported a "stand-off" on the issue of desertification. The G-77/China proposed stating that the international community, in particular developed countries, should provide new and additional financial resources to the Global Mechanism. The G-77/China expressed strong concern that despite their cooperative spirit on other UNGASS issues, developed countries have not been forthcoming on this issue.

Many developed countries preferred to "support the Global Mechanism that would indeed have the capacity to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channeling of substantial resources." The US and the EU pointed out that at CSD-5 there was a formulation that did not prejudice the outcome of discussion on the global mechanism under the CCD. Co-Chair Osborn proposed that the text reflect the position of both groups. The G-77/China insisted that developed countries commit themselves or register their unwillingness and clarify what they are prepared to do at this stage. Tolba reminded the G-77/China spokesperson that he was requesting that the text reflect agreement where there was none. Following considerable discussion, delegates agreed to text reflecting both positions. A reference to the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms was also removed from brackets.

Biodiversity: This paragraph, with twelve subparagraphs, was agreed to at CSD-5. It notes the urgent need to, *inter alia*:

- take decisive action to conserve and maintain genes, species and ecosystems;
- ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity and implement it fully and effectively together with the decisions of the Conference of the Parties;
- undertake concrete actions for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from use of genetic resources;
- respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles;
- complete rapidly the biosafety protocol, on the understanding that the UNEP International Technical Guidelines for Safety in Biotechnology; and
- stress the importance of the establishment of a clearinghouse mechanism by the Parties.

Sustainable tourism: The four paragraphs in this section were agreed to at CSD-5. They note the need to consider further the importance of tourism in the context of Agenda 21. Of particular concern is the degradation of biodiversity and fragile ecosystems, such as coral reefs, mountains, coastal areas and wetlands. The text calls on the CSD to develop an action-oriented international programme of work on sustainable tourism. Finally, it notes that international cooperation is needed to facilitate tourism development in developing countries.

Small island developing States: The two paragraphs in this section were agreed to at CSD-5. They note the international community's reaffirmation of its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The text also notes that the CSD adopted a decision on the modalities for the

full review of the Programme of Action, including the holding of a two-day special session of the General Assembly immediately preceding the fifty-fourth session of the Assembly. Efforts to implement the Programme of Action need to be supplemented by effective financial support from the international community, and the SIDS information network and technical assistance programme should be operationalized.

Natural disasters: This two paragraph section, which was agreed to at CSD-5, states that natural disasters have disproportionate consequences for developing countries, in particular SIDS, and that there is a special need to provide developing countries with assistance in:

- strengthening mechanisms and policies designed to reduce the effects of natural disasters, improve preparedness and integrate natural disaster considerations in development planning;
- improving access to relevant technology and training in hazard and risk assessment and early warning systems; and
- providing and facilitating support in the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

Major technological and other disasters with an adverse impact on the environment: The paragraph in this section remained bracketed following CSD-5, with disagreement centering on the terminology to be used in the title and introductory sentence. Agreed text in the title reads "major technological and other disasters with an adverse impact on the environment" rather than "human-made disasters" or "technological and man-made disasters." The paragraph notes that such disasters can become a substantial obstacle to achieving sustainable development in many countries, and calls on the international community to intensify cooperation in the prevention and reduction of such disasters, and in disaster relief and post-disaster rehabilitation.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

This section contained a number of brackets going into negotiations at UNGASS. It affirms that financial resources and mechanisms play a key role in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Financial resources and mechanisms: These paragraphs:

- call for the urgent fulfillment of all financial commitments of Agenda 21, particularly those contained in Chapter 33, and the provisions on new and additional resources;
- underline the complementary and catalytic role of ODA in promoting economic growth;
- recognize that private capital flows are a major tool of economic growth in a growing number of developing countries;
- call for the enhancement of UN activities through a substantial increase in funding;
- call on the UN Secretariat, the World Bank and IMF to collaborate with UNCTAD to consider the interrelationship between indebtedness and sustainable development;
- reaffirm that, in general, financing for Agenda 21 will come from countries' own public and private sectors;
- call for full consideration of specific conditions and different levels of development in the event of subsidy reductions; and
- call for collection and sharing of information on the use of economic instruments.

At the informal consultations preceding UNGASS, the EU and US resisted a G-77/China attempt to re-open agreed paragraphs, which note that financial resources for the implementation of Agenda 21 will come from countries' own resources. The US refused to negotiate on bracketed text on terms of trade and competitiveness of developing countries and deferred such discussion to trade fora. The G-77/China opposed linking ODA to country-driven policy reform efforts. Norway, New Zealand, the US and Japan supported a proposal for an intergovernmental process on finance to consider, *inter alia*, policy responses to



recommendations from the Expert Group Meeting on Financial Issues in Agenda 21. The G-77/China wanted to delete the paragraph. The proposal is to be referred to ECOSOC by General Assembly President Amb. Razali. In a paragraph on research on phasing out subsidies that have market distorting and socially and environmentally damaging impacts, the G-77/China agreed to the removal of a reference to the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” and its replacement with language noting that subsidy reductions should take full account of different levels of development, specifically those of developing countries.

Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies: This section reaffirms that the availability of scientific and technological information and access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs) are essential requirements for sustainable development. All but two of the ten paragraphs arrived at the Special Session free of brackets.

This section:

- calls for the urgent fulfillment of all the UNCED commitments concerning concrete measures for the transfer of ESTs to developing countries with a regular review as part of the CSD multi-year programme;
- states the importance of identifying barriers and restrictions to the transfer of publicly and privately owned ESTs;
- affirms governments’ role in providing research and development to promote and contribute to the development of institutional and human capacities;
- calls for the creation of an enabling environment to help stimulate private sector investment and transfers of ESTs and public-private partnerships; and
- identifies the need to further explore and enhance the use of information technology and communications.

At the informal consultations preceding UNGASS, delegations debated two sets of bracketed references to “commitments” and “objectives” on ESTs — one in relation to Chapter 34 of Agenda 21 and one in relation to Agenda 21 as a whole. The G-77/China agreed to replace the bracketed text with language from the UN Agenda for Development. They also agreed to replace the second pair of brackets with a call for a regular review of provisions in Chapter 34 of Agenda 21.

Capacity-building: The three paragraphs on this issue were agreed to at CSD-5. The text states that renewed commitment and support from the international community is essential to support national efforts for capacity-building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. UNDP, through its Capacity 21 programme, should give priority to building capacity for the elaboration of sustainable development strategies based on participatory approaches. In addition, attention should be given to the needs of women and indigenous people, to the role of the private sector and to South-South cooperation in capacity-building.

Science: This text was agreed to during CSD-5. It states that public and private investment in science, education and training, and research and development should be increased significantly. Scientific cooperation and improved access to scientific information related to the environment and sustainable development are proposed, as is collaboration to promote innovations in information and communication technologies for the purpose of reducing adverse environmental impacts.

Education and awareness: These two paragraphs were agreed to at CSD-5. The text notes the fundamental prerequisite of an adequately financed and effective educational system at all levels, and states that priority should be given to ensuring women’s and girls’ full and equal access to all levels of education and training. Education for a sustainable future should engage a wide spectrum of institutions and sectors. Finally, cooperation between

universities and other academic centers, especially between developed and developing countries, is necessary.

International legal instruments and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development: All three paragraphs in the section were bracketed at the beginning of UNGASS. One paragraph, the only one considered at CSD-5, called for the codification of international law on sustainable development. Another on implementation and compliance with treaties on sustainable development contained a number of bracketed proposals. The third paragraph, proposed by Norway, called for the development of international law regarding liability and compensation.

On the codification of international law, delegations agreed on a reformulation based on proposals by the EU, Mexico and the G-77/China. The text notes that it is necessary to continue the progressive development and, as appropriate, codification of international law related to sustainable development.

On 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, Saudi Arabia and Colombia noted that implementation and financing must be linked because financial support is essential for successful environmental protection.

The US expressed difficulty with linking implementation with financial support when making a general statement about international treaties, which 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. China said that pressing for compliance obligations without making good on financial commitments is “tragic.”

The reformulated paragraph states that implementation of commitments made under international treaties in the field of environment remains a priority. Implementation can be promoted by secure, sustained and predictable financial support, sufficient institutional capacity, human resources and adequate access to technology cooperation on implementation between States on mutually agreed terms may reduce potential sources of conflict.

Canada underscored the importance of science-based decision making. Switzerland, the US, Canada, the EU and Norway proposed language noting the importance of improving reporting and data collection systems and developing compliance regimes. The final text reads that it is also important to further improve reporting and data-collection systems and to further develop appropriate compliance mechanisms and procedures, on a mutually agreed basis, to help and encourage States to fulfill all their obligations, including means of implementation under multilateral environmental agreements. The bracketed paragraph on liability and compensation was deleted.

Information and tools to measure progress: All six paragraphs on this issue contained bracketed sections, since delegates did not have time to consider them during CSD-5. Agreed text on the first paragraph notes the urgent need for the further development of cost-effective tools to collect and disseminate information for decision-makers at all levels. A Canadian proposal for collection of “gender disaggregated data,” initially opposed by the G-77/China, is retained in the final text, preceded by the words “as appropriate.” A US reference to information that makes the unremunerated work of women visible



is also retained, as is a Peruvian reference to support for national and international scientific and technological data centers, with electronic communication links between them.

The second paragraph of this text, originally a Japanese proposal calling for the need to enhance global awareness of environmental issues through use of high-tech info-communications infrastructure, contains reformulations proposed by the G-77/China, which emphasize the need for a supportive environment to be established to enhance national capabilities for information collection, processing and dissemination, especially in developing countries. It notes the importance of international cooperation in this regard.

The third paragraph notes the importance of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) as a tool for sustainable development. It includes an EU and US reference to Principle 17 of the Rio Declaration, as well as a G-77/China proposal calling for EIAs to be undertaken for "activities likely to have significant adverse impacts on the environment." A Norwegian proposal noting the importance of EIAs where environmental values may be at stake, as well as the need to undertake EIAs for national or international investment programmes, was deleted.

A fourth paragraph notes that the CSD's work on indicators for sustainable development should result in a "practicable and agreed set of indicators" (EU), "suited to country specific conditions" (G-77/China), "to be used on a voluntary basis by the year 2000" (EU). A fifth paragraph referring to the importance of indicators for the greening of national budgets was deleted. The last paragraph in this section notes that national reports on implementation of Agenda 21 have proved valuable to the sharing of information, and calls for their continuation.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL

ARRANGEMENTS: The text on international institutional arrangements was completely agreed to at CSD-5, with one exception: a paragraph regarding replenishment by the donor community of the International Development Association (IDA) and the GEF. The opening paragraph states that the institutional framework outlined in Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 and determined by General Assembly resolution 47/191 and other relevant resolutions, including the specific functions and roles of various organs, organizations and programmes within and outside the UN system, will continue to be fully relevant in the period after UNGASS.

1. Greater coherence in various intergovernmental organizations and processes

A need for better policy coordination at the intergovernmental level is acknowledged, and a strengthened role for ECOSOC in coordinating the activities of the UN system in the economic, social and related field is recommended. This section calls for:

- cooperation between the conferences of the parties to conventions related to sustainable development;
- effective and efficient support arrangements for the convention secretariats;
- strengthening the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and its system of task managers; and
- CSD promotion of increased regional implementation of Agenda 21 in cooperation with relevant regional and subregional organizations.

2. Role of relevant organizations and institutions of the UN system

This section states that all organizations and programmes of the UN system should, within their mandates, strengthen support for national efforts to implement Agenda 21. The role of UNEP, as the principal UN body in the field of environment, should be further enhanced. A revitalized UNEP should be supported by adequate, stable and predictable funding. UNDP and UNCTAD should also continue to play a role in Agenda 21 implementation.

With regard to the bracketed text on IDA and GEF replenishment, delegates at UNGASS agreed that implementation of the commitment of the international financial institutions to sustainable development should continue to be strengthened. The text also notes that the World Bank has a significant role to play, bearing in mind its expertise and the overall volume of resources that it commands.

3. Future role and programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development

This section states that the CSD, within its mandate, will continue to provide a central forum for reviewing progress and for urging further implementation of Agenda 21. The CSD has a role to play in assessing the challenges of globalization as they relate to sustainable development, and should focus on issues that are crucial to achieving the goals of sustainable development. The CSD should carry out its work in such a manner as to avoid unnecessary duplication and repetition of work undertaken by other relevant forums. Finally, it is recommended that the CSD adopt the multi-year programme of work for the period 1998-2002 contained in the annex (see below).

4. Methods of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development

The CSD is called on to, *inter alia*:

- make concerted efforts to attract greater involvement in its work of ministers and high-level national policy makers responsible for specific economic and social sectors;
- continue to provide a forum for the exchange of national experiences and best practices in the area of sustainable development;
- provide a forum for the exchange of experiences on regional and subregional initiatives and regional collaboration for sustainable development;
- establish closer interaction with international financial, development and trade institutions;
- strengthen its interaction with representatives of major groups; and
- organize the implementation of its next multi-year programme of work in the most effective and productive way.

In addition, the Secretary-General is invited to review the functioning of the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development. The work of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources should be more compatible with and supportive of the CSD's programme of work. Finally, the next comprehensive review of progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 by the General Assembly will take place in the year 2002.

ANNEX: CSD WORK PROGRAMME

The CSD work programme identifies the sectoral, cross-sectoral and economic sector/major group themes for the next four sessions of the Commission. During UNGASS, delegates agreed that overriding issues for each year would be poverty, and consumption and production patterns. They also decided that the sectoral theme for the 1998 session would be "strategic approaches to freshwater management." Additional themes and sectors for 1998 are transfer of technology, capacity-building, education, science, awareness-raising and industry. The outstanding chapters of the SIDS Programme of Action will also be reviewed. In 1999, the CSD will consider: oceans and seas; consumption and production patterns; and tourism. In 2000, it will consider: integrated planning and management of land resources; financial resources, trade and investment and economic growth and agriculture. There will also be a "Day of Indigenous People." Delegates at UNGASS decided that atmosphere, energy and transport will be the sectoral themes in



2001, and added international cooperation for an enabling environment, information for decision-making and participation as other cross-sectoral themes. The 2002 session will consist of a comprehensive review.

FINAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Friday, 27 June, began amid considerable confusion as delegates, many bleary-eyed from previous all-night sessions, tried to find out where and when negotiations would resume. Rumors were afoot that delegates had abandoned discussions on the draft political statement. By mid-morning, informal groups were busily trying to resolve outstanding issues related to climate change, desertification and forests. Groups were also discussing sectoral issues, such as a transport and the proposed aviation fuel tax, and a number of cross-sectoral issues, such as consumption and production patterns and trade. The groups were to report their results to Tolba by early afternoon and the COW would resume soon after.

The closing meeting of the COW was called to order at 5:10 pm. It continued, albeit with extensive breaks, until 12:10 am. The COW Chair noted that Idunn Eidheim (Norway) would serve as rapporteur. She presented the proposed UNGASS outcome, as contained in A/S-19/AC.1/L.1 and Add. 1-32. The Addenda reflect changes made to A/S-19/14-E/1997/60 during UNGASS. All documents were adopted, with a few reservations and comments.

Tolba noted that the Statement of Commitment, Add.1, replaced the political statement, for which a large body of outstanding paragraphs remained after extensive negotiations. He said there was no time to dwell on the remaining paragraphs, so the President of UNGASS presented a shorter text informally to various regional representatives, who, as he understood it, did not object.

Following adoption of the second paragraph regarding atmosphere, Japan said that, as host country for the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the FCCC, he appreciated the commitment of all to this issue. Saudi Arabia thanked Derek Osborn for successfully meeting the concerns of all delegations. He noted that his country cares about the impact of climate change, but added that it could also be the victim of the response measures that the Annex I countries will have to take to reduce emissions. He noted his country's willingness to cooperate but unwillingness to be the loser from such a process. The EU expressed appreciation to Japan and thanked Saudi Arabia for its constructive attitude. Norway, Samoa, Russia, the US and Australia spoke in favor of the text and thanked Japan and Chair Osborn for their work on the issue. The COW concluded its work at 12:20 am.

CLOSING PLENARY

The General Assembly was convened at 12:30 am by UN General Assembly President Razali Ismail for adoption of the final documents. COW Chair Mostafa Tolba reported that in the complex and detailed review of Agenda 21 just completed, countries had tried to hold themselves accountable. Ministers were actively involved in politically significant issues and the meeting resulted in the Programme for Action for Further Implementation of Agenda 21. He noted that quite a few points could not be agreed to until the twenty-fourth hour. He noted that developing countries were concerned with the downward trend of ODA and said there is now a strong signal to developed countries to commit to targets. He noted that text on energy should provide the basis for useful international cooperation. Participants have accomplished much in a relatively short time.

Delegations then gave explanations for their reservations. Turkey made a reservation on the initiative on freshwater. He said the text refers to "customary uses of water" as if the term had legal value in the context of water resource use. In international law,

even an "acquired right" has not been accepted as criteria in evaluating and determining the relevant uses of water resources. A number of African countries, including Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan and Kenya, also expressed reservations on the freshwater initiative, noting that "customary use of water," which is not in Agenda 21, could preempt the outcome of any programme to favor certain users and uses. They could not accept it as a basis for the future work of the CSD. Malta took a reservation on a paragraph referring to reproductive health.

The G-77/China said that progress has been made at the national level in implementation of Agenda 21, but the missing element remains the implementation of Rio commitments on finance and technology transfer. He said the Group did not get the significant movement it expected at UNGASS and asked "Where do we go from here?" While globalization is global it is not universal in benefits. The world is crying for answers and this session did not provide them.

The EU said its high ambitions were not fulfilled, noting that progress was not made on desertification or finance. Other discussions, however, revealed progress, such as those on climate change, forests, eco-efficiency, freshwater and poverty eradication. She thanked President Razali for making possible NGO participation in this process.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, noting the late hour, offered a brief statement. He said UNGASS had been successful in some areas, but others, particularly finance and technology transfer, would require more time and political will. He expressed hope that delegates would move beyond fixed negotiating positions to achieve cooperative results.

General Assembly President Razali Ismail thanked delegates for their hard work and noted that for the first time NGOs stood alongside governments in the General Assembly. While agreement was not reached on all items, the exchange had at least been honest and delegates had not "glossed over" the issues for media consumption. The results are "telling" and the UN must learn to deal with hard-core economic issues if it is to be successful. He adjourned the Nineteenth Special Session of the General Assembly at approximately 1:15 am.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL SESSION

Five years ago, thousands gathered in Rio de Janeiro to participate in the creation of an elaborate programming tool that could set the planet on a new course towards sustainable development. After two years of preparations and two weeks of non-stop negotiations at Rio, the UN Conference on Environment and Development adopted Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the Statement on Forest Principles. Two conventions were also opened for signature: the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity. All in all, the Earth Summit was considered to be "a great success." While not everyone was satisfied with the results, Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration have served as a blueprint — "the Bible" — for sustainable development for the last five years.

Since Rio, many of the individual players and the venues have changed, but the problems remain the same. The major outstanding issues upon arrival in Rio were atmosphere, biotechnology, institutions, legal instruments, finance, technology transfer, freshwater resources and forests. Other areas where agreement proved elusive until the sun rose on the last day of the Summit were the need for a desertification convention, the question of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, changing consumption and production patterns, and trade and environment, among others.



The issues that proved most difficult to resolve in 1992 are still problematic today. Questions related to the provision of financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries have haunted conferences from Barbados to Cairo, from desertification negotiations in Paris to climate change negotiations in Berlin and biodiversity negotiations in Buenos Aires. Forests have been the subject of four meetings of the CSD's Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), yet heading into UNGASS there was no agreement on how to proceed. Setting targets and timetables for greenhouse gas emissions reductions proved impossible during the negotiations that resulted in the FCCC and are the subject of current negotiations expected to culminate in Kyoto in December. Regulating biotechnology safety almost derailed the biodiversity negotiations in 1992 and is now the subject of negotiations under the Biodiversity Convention. So is this "déjà vu all over again," or has the international community actually made progress over the past five years?

In some areas, the international community has taken small steps forward. The Convention to Combat Desertification has entered into force. There are now agreements on land-based sources of marine pollution and straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. Negotiations on a prior informed consent mechanism for hazardous chemicals are underway, and negotiations on persistent organic pollutants convention will begin next year. Governments are now actually discussing indicators for sustainable development, reproductive health care and production and consumption patterns — topics that were practically taboo five years ago. And the list goes on. However, there are a number of issues where agreement continues to be elusive and the debates of today bear a striking resemblance to the debates at Rio.

FINANCE: The issue of how to finance sustainable development certainly is as big today as it was five years ago. Yet rather than trying to forge ahead, delegates appear to be falling back on Agenda 21 language. One observer pointed out that Agenda 21 should be the basis for discussion rather than "the Bible," and there should be a readiness to move on, especially since Agenda 21 was written in a different political and economic environment. For example, negotiators in New York did not address the big issue of economic globalization, which is not part of Agenda 21. The private sector has become the major agent of change even as negotiators at UNGASS are still tied down in discussions heavily focused on ODA. Many G-77 participants take the attitude that ODA trends are a benchmark to measure the success or failure of the Special Session — and Agenda 21 implementation. For their part, the Northern delegations did not come to UNGASS prepared to acknowledge concerns relating to private capital flows, including how to harness their potential for good, institutional challenges, and the UN's capacity to monitor and assess the rapid changes occurring in countries with large private sector-led growth. The result is a politically frozen debate while the real world changes daily. Realistically, Agenda 21's approach to finance needs to be expanded to embrace globalization and issues like the relationship between trade and environment, corporate responsibility, monitoring corporate activities, and identifying issues that private sector growth will never solve.

The question of innovative financial mechanisms for sustainable development also appears to be moving slowly. A large number of intergovernmental and non-governmental symposia, workshops and working groups on innovative mechanisms have been held over the past five years and numerous proposals have surfaced. One such proposal that made headlines at UNGASS was the international tax on airline fuel. At the beginning of the Special Session, some NGOs suggested that acceptance of the EU proposal for an international tax on airline fuel would be one of the most important indicators of political will for innovative action on sustainable development. One estimate is that such an initiative could raise

upwards of \$2-3 billion. The EU rationale was primarily to use the tax to help establish a link in the public mind between transport options and sustainable development, notably environmental protection. In the end, governments took a conservative approach and the EU had to settle for a text calling for the continuation of studies in the appropriate fora, including the International Civil Aviation Organization, on the use of economic instruments for the mitigation of the negative environmental impact of aviation. A reference to aviation fuel tax was relegated to a footnote. The EU, however, is studying the possibility of implementing such a tax within its own borders.

CLIMATE CHANGE: The desire to open the Climate Change Convention for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio gave governments the political will to push the negotiations to a bittersweet closure in 1992. Likewise, some governments and NGOs had hoped to use the "Earth Summit +5" to raise the political profile of the current negotiations to strengthen the Convention and push industrialized countries to commit to specific targets and timetables for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. UNGASS was not mandated to determine the outcome of COP-3, but given the level of attention in high-level statements, the fervor of informal discussions and the unmoving positions, delegates appeared keenly aware that the world was watching, closely.

Observers offered a host of comments, ranging from dismay to complacency as no remarkable changes in position emerged. The EU and AOSIS sought specific references to their proposed reduction targets and timetables. The US emphasized emissions budgets, the participation of all countries and, with frequent support from Australia, the need for flexibility in implementation. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Venezuela insisted on taking into account the economic effect of response measures on developing countries.

Some FCCC denizens were surprised that Japan, not the most outspoken of delegations, appeared to be blocking consensus on a strong statement. Others argued that in reality there was no consensus to block and Japan, ever conscious of its host status, seemed determined to ensure that UNGASS did not prejudice the outcome of COP-3 and invite disaster in Kyoto come December.

FORESTS: The consensus reached to establish an intergovernmental forum on forests was described by some participants as the "only positive outcome" of UNGASS. That a concrete decision was taken on forests is the result of the fact that, unlike for other issues such as climate change or desertification, the Special Session constituted the main forum for multilateral decision making in this area.

Forests were the subject of some of the most acrimonious negotiations during the UNCED process. Heading into Rio, some felt that the Statement of Forest Principles was in such a state of disarray with 73 separate pairs of brackets that no agreement would be adopted. After an all-night session in Rio, consensus was achieved, yet all parties involved left the Earth Summit deeply dissatisfied. In spite of agreement on language, the North-South dialogue on forests had suffered a potentially irreparable blow.

The first few years of post-Rio forest discussions were highly fragmented, with governmental, international organization and NGO forest-related initiatives proliferating with little coordination. Establishment of the IPF under the CSD in 1995 served to bring order to the chaos, institutionally as well as conceptually, by concentrating multilateral discussion of a range of forest issues within one forum.

With the conclusion of the IPF, which generated reams of background information and over 100 recommendations for action, the question dominating debate at UNGASS was: where to go from here? While the "convention question" remained as intractable as ever, the forest debate was conducted in a much less hostile environment here than was the case at Rio.



There was, first and foremost, a shared sense of relief when a consensus decision to set up the Forum was reached, although views on the substantive content of this decision, and its consequences for the sustainable management of forests, remained deeply divided. Some in support of initiating a negotiation process right away expressed almost bitter disappointment that an opportunity to send a clear signal to the world, and to commit to legally-binding actions on sustainable management and use of forests, had been missed. Those not ready to discuss legally-binding commitments emphasized that there was no conceptual clarity regarding what a convention might contain, and that even those in support of a convention had different views on the subject. Instead, it was noted that the IPF had only begun to discuss extremely complex issues, and that the learning process needed to continue. The outcome for sustainable forest management hangs in the balance, dependent upon whether the Forum indeed galvanizes implementation of IPF recommendations, or proves to be another three-year talk-shop that rehashes debates older than Rio.

POLITICAL STATEMENT: In the preparatory process for Rio, the “Earth Charter” was supposed to be the main political statement to emerge from the Earth Summit. Negotiations on the Earth Charter fell apart at PrepCom IV when the Chair of Working Group III introduced a draft text too early in the process, before delegates had sufficiently expressed their positions. In the end, PrepCom Chair Tommy Koh salvaged the process with extensive consultations and, occasionally, less than diplomatic behavior. The result was the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

In the preparatory process for UNGASS, however, the political statement was not so fortunate. The statement, in effect, died at UNGASS when a number of Ministers requested GA President Razali Ismail to halt the proceedings chaired by COW Chair Mostafa Tolba. The dilemma created by the preparation of the political statement was captured by one participant close to the Secretariat when he observed that if the statement was to be merely a summary of positions agreed to in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, it would be superfluous. If it was to be a summary of the text that went beyond the language in the main Programme it was always going to be difficult to bring everyone on board. Some agreed that there were other factors that contributed to the demise of the political statement, including the way in which Tolba and Vice-Chair Monika Linn-Locher conducted initial consultations and responded to serious questions of procedure at the end of CSD-5.

Tolba’s role was identified as a contributing factor to the collapse of the negotiations on the political statement — although ultimately the lack of agreement derailed the process. One participant said that many of Tolba’s actions were viewed with mistrust from the outset, especially by some within the G-77. Questions of ownership and timing of the negotiations on the political statement also influenced the collapse. Perhaps had Tolba allowed time for delegates to formally state their initial positions on the political statement at CSD-5, before he and Linn-Locher submitted the first draft, then delegates would have felt a greater sense of ownership of the document. Even though Tolba held consultations on the political statement at CSD-5 and during the intersessional period, delegates did not have the opportunity to formally comment on anything until the negotiations during the week prior to UNGASS. By then it was too late. In contrast, countries who share the French language successfully concluded their own ministerial declaration. Observers praised its focus, content and brevity. There are notable references to the need for conclusive role for women at all levels of decision-making and on the innovative contribution of NGOs and local implementation sustainable development.

ROLE OF MAJOR GROUPS: From the institutional point of view, there is one area where there has been great progress since Rio. During the UNCED preparatory process and in Rio, NGOs had limited access to delegates and the negotiations. UNCED PrepCom IV was characterized by the placement of UN security officers at every conference room door with instructions to keep NGOs out of informal consultations. Through the work of the CSD and the other conferences held since 1992, NGOs have made great strides in achieving access to and influence on the proceedings. UNGASS marked a major milestone. For the first time NGOs and other Major Groups stood side by side with Heads of State and Government to deliver speeches to a Special Session of the General Assembly and were also allowed into ministerial-level consultations.

The extraordinary skills and quaint humor of UNED-UK chief, Derek Osborn, a former civil servant and current NGO representative, spoke volumes about the contribution of NGOs. Delegates paid tribute to Mr. Osborn’s skillful handling of the negotiations on many of the difficult issues in the working group on sectoral issues. The profile and energy behind some of the most practical and salient proposals — on a finance panel and an international tax on air fuel — were also due to NGO activity.

The key role of NGOs was acknowledged in a meeting between NGOs and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Responding to the strength of his commitments on climate change as outlined in a speech Monday, Blair responded, “that was the easy part. Now you guys will have to get in behind us.” This need to bring NGOs on board to keep up the pressure and help mobilize the public in readiness for far-reaching policy on climate change was also echoed in US President Bill Clinton’s speech, with his announcement of a White House Conference and stated belief that “we must first convince the American people and the Congress that the climate change problem is real and immense.”

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? As the 19th Special Session came to a close, many delegates and observers were asking each other if the meeting had been a success. Perhaps General Assembly President Razali Ismail captured the truth of the second “Earth Summit” in his closing speech to the Plenary. He turned the collapse of delegates’ efforts to prepare a media-friendly “Political Statement” for Heads of State into the message itself: this was not a time to paper over the cracks in the celebrated “global partnership” for sustainable development and pretend that things are better than they are. This was a time for sober assessment, honest acknowledgement that “progress to operationalize sustainable development remains insufficient,” and acknowledgement of the enormous difficulties of overcoming short-term and vested interests that would enable concrete commitments to specific targets and global programmes. As Amb. Razali commented, such an honest appraisal was a result in itself and was perhaps the key outcome of the Special Session: the “lofty expectations” launched in Rio collided with the street-wise *realpolitik* of New York diplomacy at UN Headquarters.

Nevertheless, UNGASS did raise the political profile of sustainable development and the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development to levels not seen since 1993. Now the real challenge is for governments and NGOs alike to capitalize on this exposure and try to advance new initiatives at the international, national and local levels. The one area where there was immediate consensus was that much more still needs to be done to make sustainable development the “business as usual.”



THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE CSD-6

FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

The next sessions of the subsidiary bodies are scheduled to take place in Bonn from 28 July to 7 August 1997 at the Hotel Maritim. SBSTA, SBI and AG-13 will meet from 28-30 July and are likely to meet once more during the following week. The AGBM will begin on Thursday, 31 July. The subsidiary bodies are scheduled to meet again from 20-31 October 1997 in Bonn at a conference facility to be determined. At present, all subsidiary bodies except for AG-13 are scheduled to meet in October.

The third Conference of the Parties is scheduled for 1-12 December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. COP-3 will immediately allocate the completion of decisions of the Berlin Mandate process to a sessional Committee of the Whole, open to all delegations. The political negotiations will be finalized in a ministerial segment, which will be convened from 8-10 December and where the final text of a protocol or other legal instrument will be adopted. For all meetings related to the FCCC, contact the secretariat in Bonn, Germany; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.de. Also try the FCCC home page at <http://www.unfccc.de> and UNEP's Information Unit for Conventions at <http://www.unep.ch/iuc.html>.

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:

SBSTTA-3 will be held in Montreal from 1-5 September 1997. The third meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Group on Biosafety (BSWG-3) is scheduled for 13-17 October 1997 in Montreal. Other CBD-related meetings include a Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting on the Clearinghouse Mechanism, tentatively scheduled for July in Colombia, and a workshop on the implementation of Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge), tentatively scheduled from 10-14 November 1997 in a venue to be determined. COP-4 is scheduled for 4-15 May 1998 in Bratislava, Slovakia. For more information contact the CBD Secretariat, World Trade Centre, 413 St. Jacques Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: biodiversity@mtl.net. Also try <http://www.biodiv.org>.

CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: The resumed session of INCD-10 is scheduled from 18-22 August 1997 in Geneva. COP-1 is currently scheduled for 29 September - 1 October 1997 in Rome. For more information, contact the CCD Secretariat, Geneva Executive Center, 11/13 Chemin des Anemones, CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland; tel: +41-22-979-9419; fax: +41-22-979-9030/31; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.ch. Also see the INCD World Wide Web site at <http://www.unep.ch/incd.html>.

MONTREAL PROTOCOL: The preparatory meeting for the Ninth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol is scheduled from 9-12 September 1997 in Montreal, to be followed by the Ninth Meeting of the Parties from 15-17 September. For information contact the Secretariat for the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya; tel: +254-2-62-1234/62-3851; fax: +254-2-52-1930; e-mail:

ozoneinfo@unep.org. Also try

<http://www.unep.org/unep/secretar/ozone/home.htm>.

ELEVENTH WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS: The Congress, with the theme "Forestry for Sustainable Development: Towards the 21st Century," is scheduled for 13-22 October 1997 in Antalya, Turkey. The technical programme has been structured into seven main programme areas, which follow the seven basic criteria of sustainable forest management (SFM) under consideration by the various processes (Montreal, Helsinki, Tarapoto, etc.). For information contact: Mesut Y. Kamiloglu, Ministry of Forestry, Ataturk Bulvari 153, Ankara, Turkey, tel: +90-312-4177724, fax: +90-312-4179160, e-mail: obdi-f@servis.net.tr or Luis Santiago Botero, FAO, Forestry Department; tel: +39 6/5225 5088, fax: +39 6/5225 5137, e-mail: luis.botero@fao.org. Also try <http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/forestry/wforcong/>.

PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT: The fourth session of the INC for the preparation of an international legally-binding instrument for the application of a prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals in international trade (INC-4) will be held in Brussels from 20-24 October 1997. A diplomatic conference with a short preparatory INC session is envisaged for December 1997 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The UNEP Governing Council, at its last meeting, adopted a decision calling for completion of negotiations on a legally-binding agreement by the end of 1997. For more information contact: UNEP Chemicals (IRPTC); tel: +41-22-979-9111; fax: +41-22-797-3460; e-mail: IRTPC@unep.ch.

BASEL CONVENTION: The Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes is expected to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 6 - 10 October 1997. For information contact I. Rummel-Bulska, Basel Secretariat; tel: +41-22-979-9213; fax: +41-22-797-3454, e-mail: sbc@unep.ch. Also try UNEP's Information Unit for Conventions at <http://www.unep.ch/iuc.html>.

UN CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA: The International Seabed Authority (ISBA) will hold its resumed third session from 18-29 August 1997 in Kingston, Jamaica. The resumed first session of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf will be held from 2-12 September 1997. The Eighth Meeting of States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) will be held from 18-22 May 1998. For information contact doalos@un.org or try <http://www.un.org/Depts/los>.

INDEPENDENT WORLD COMMISSION ON THE OCEANS: The Independent Commission on Oceans will hold its fifth session in Cape Town, South Africa from 11-14 November 1997 and its sixth session in Lisbon, Portugal in July 1998, in conjunction with EXPO'98. "The Oceans: A Heritage for the Future." The Commission seeks to draw attention to the issues of ocean development and encourage the further development of the ocean regime evolving from UNCLOS. For information contact the Secretariat in Geneva; tel: +41-22-710-0711; fax: +41-22-710-0722; e-mail: secretariat@world-oceans.org.