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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CSD INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP THURSDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 1998

Delegates to the CSD's *Ad Hoc* Intersessional Working Group on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management met briefly during the morning to hear about the upcoming conference on freshwater and sustainable development in Paris. They offered comments on the Co-Chairs' draft report during the afternoon.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Ambassador Jacques Andreani (France) presented plans for an International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development, including a Ministerial session, to be held in Paris from 19-21 March. He said French President Chirac proposed the Conference at UNGASS to bring together all actors involved in water policy. Eighty-four countries have been invited. He said the initiative reflects France's experience and is in line with priorities tabled by the EU at UNGASS. The goal of the Conference will be to contribute to the preparation of a strategic approach to water for CSD-6 where a programme of priority activities will be adopted. The Ministerial session will provide an opportunity for the expression of political will on water issues and to ensure continuity.

There will be three workshops to prepare guidance for Ministers: improving knowledge of water resources and water uses for sustainable management; promoting human resources and institutional capacity building; and defining strategies for sustainable water management and identifying appropriate financial resources. A number of case studies will be presented. The Conference will facilitate an exchange of experience and the adoption of compatible criteria and indicators. Discussion will be based on papers from the Harare Expert Group meeting and the CSD Intersessional. Participants will also hear conclusions from parallel meetings of the Global Water Partnership and the International Network of Basin Organizations, and from a Bonn Ministerial seminar covering aspects of international water problems.

GENERAL STATEMENTS ON DRAFT

Co-Chair DiSano (Australia) invited general comments on the draft Co-Chairs' report. EGYPT, MEXICO and INDIA, among others, called for a more concise document. The G-77/CHINA called for reference to the social dimension of freshwater and proposed references to the "development" and "use" as well as "management" of freshwater resources. INDIA said references to the economic valua-

tion of water and institutional arrangements for follow-up would best be left to negotiation at CSD-6. The EU said the output should focus on immediate action rather than more meetings, reports and discussions.

In reference to finance, the WBCSD proposed noting that the introduction of enabling financial framework conditions is of paramount importance for mobilizing private sector finance. UGANDA said the draft contains too many sticks and too few carrots. In reference to follow-up, the NGO STEERING COMMITTEE called for a meeting in 1999 to review indicators on freshwater and an intersessional meeting in 2002 to review implementation of existing agreements.

Some speakers proposed additional areas for emphasis, including the WBCSD's call for recognition that agriculture is the biggest user of freshwater. The US agreed with EGYPT's call for reference to agricultural uses of freshwater. The NGO STEERING COMMITTEE called for more emphasis on ecosystems and local participation, including through Local Agenda 21s.

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT REPORT

BACKGROUND: To a paragraph outlining the various functions of water, the US added maintenance and restoration of ecosystems and noted the increasing competition for water between agriculture and other uses. In a paragraph highlighting the challenges of freshwater management, the G-77/CHINA proposed language on: the social dimension of freshwater; food security and agricultural production; and flood and drought control. SYRIA recommended deleting calls for subregional and regional cooperation to support such action. MEXICO proposed deleting that paragraph and the former one. In a paragraph noting the call for a dialogue on freshwater in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, UGANDA, ETHIOPIA and KENYA advocated deleting a specific reference to paragraph 35 (pricing regimes) of the Programme.

KEY ISSUES FOR A PROCESS TO BE LAUNCHED BY CSD-6: In a paragraph outlining gaps, the G-77/CHINA proposed deleting a reference to adopting sound economic policies for equitable and efficient freshwater allocation and use. The US recommended adding the lack of scientific information about ecosystem and watershed approaches. The G-77/CHINA and MEXICO suggested deleting a paragraph emphasizing the predominant importance of local and national action. In a paragraph on ensuring that action at these levels can generate productive and sustainable interactions between human activities and ecological functioning of freshwater systems, the G-77/CHINA, supported by MOROCCO, recommended deleting language on the need to take into account the economic value of ecosystems. The EU suggested implementing the preventive approach and land-use planning. The US, supported by NORWAY, proposed that integrated

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water resources management activities incorporate river basin, catchment, watershed and ecosystem approaches. MEXICO recommended deleting the paragraph.

In a paragraph encouraging riparian states to cooperate on matters related to transboundary water resources, SYRIA, JORDAN, IRAQ, TUNISIA and EGYPT recommended replacing "transboundary" with "international" water resources. The EU suggested adding the need to build on international law. The US proposed encouraging the use of consensus building and conflict management processes. KENYA, ETHIOPIA, UGANDA and INDIA proposed deleting the paragraph. TURKEY and JORDAN preferred its retention.

ACTIONS AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION: In a paragraph on relevant conventions and programmes of action, delegates proposed adding the Sustainable Development of Small Island States (G-77/CHINA) and the World Food Summit and the Habitat II Conference (US). The FAO proposed new text on the outcome of the World Food Summit. POLAND referenced regional arrangements. ETHIOPIA proposed conventions "in force."

In a paragraph on the Harare Expert Group meeting, the G-77/CHINA proposed noting the importance of holding meetings in developing countries. He said recommendations should be based on discussions at CSD-6 and ISWG. Delegates said governments should "promote" (US), regard as integral (EU) and be "invited to apply" (MEXICO) Harare's recommendations. In a paragraph "strongly urging" governments to implement the Noordwijk Action Programme, the G-77/CHINA proposed that governments be "called upon" and deleted language calling for "utmost urgency." The EU proposed references to a number of conferences including Habitat II and the World Social Summit. The EU also proposed stronger references to national and local programmes and public reporting mechanisms.

Information for decision making: In a paragraph on public information, ETHIOPIA, KENYA and UGANDA objected to language encouraging governments to maintain international information and harmonize data collection. NORWAY proposed that all data be gender differentiated. The US, CANADA and the EU included water "quantity" in paragraphs on national water-related indicators and inventories. ETHIOPIA proposed deleting the paragraph on indicators. The G-77/CHINA supported "inviting," rather than "urging" governments to carry out national inventories and establishing regional consultations on drought and flood preparedness and emergency funds. Several delegations proposed moving a paragraph on the UN system to the section on UN action.

Institutions, capacity building and participation: In reference to national coordination mechanisms, the G-77/CHINA called for "consultation" rather than "involvement" of major groups. In reference to legislative and regulatory frameworks, the US called for encouraging a strong scientific basis for decision making and capacity building. The EU added a reference to demand supply and management, called for devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level, educating and training users of water, and noting the pivotal role of women. The G-77/CHINA added references to the least developed countries (LDCs) and the small island developing States (SIDS) in a paragraph calling for capacity building programmes.

Technology transfer and research cooperation: In reference to encouraging governments to stimulate research and development cooperation, the EU called for a definition of soft technologies while the G-77/CHINA proposed deleting the reference. The US added references to technologies to promote sustainable agriculture and food production systems and to transfer on concessional terms, "as mutually agreed" and consistent with intellectual property rights. In a paragraph calling for business and industry to implement best practice, the EU added emphasis on agriculture. The G-77/CHINA deleted a paragraph encouraging governments to use EST centers, while JAPAN added a

reference to UNEP's International Environmental Technology Center. The G-77/CHINA altered the paragraph urging enhanced technical assistance programmes to urge intensified efforts to facilitate EST transfer. Additional proposed text addressed enlarging supplies of usable water (JORDAN) and research and technology transfer for agricultural water use efficiency (US).

Economics and Finance: The G-77/CHINA: changed the title to "Financial Resource Mechanisms;" added a paragraph stressing the importance of ODA; replaced "increased" with "new and additional" financial resources "to developing countries, in particular to the SIDS and LDCs;" deleted text noting that evidence that external resources are used optimally will help mobilize additional finance; deleted a paragraph calling for strengthened consultative mechanisms; and called for cost recovery to be gradually phased in, taking into account specific conditions in each country, rather than for all costs to be covered. The G-77/CHINA, JAPAN and the US deleted the paragraph regarding subsidies. The EU proposed a reformulation calling for transparent subsidies for low-income households. The EU and US deleted the paragraph calling for consideration of a special financial mechanism and added text calling for: donors to continue support for water sector projects and to meet aid targets (EU); and efficient, effective and innovative use of existing funds (US). AUSTRALIA altered the paragraph to call for an enabling environment, efficiency gains, and developing countries to make freshwater a priority during consultations with partner/donor countries. NEW ZEALAND called for using ODA as a leveraging tool for attracting private sector finance.

FOLLOW-UP AND ASSESSMENT: The EU proposed replacing the entire section with paragraphs on: ensuring dialogue and cooperation between governments and the UN and organizing existing activities of UN agencies and other international institutions to promote such dialogue; promoting efforts to develop indicators on freshwater management; and reviewing progress demonstrated by such indicators. The US did not support the paragraph calling for the use of the Committee on Natural Resources to support the CSD dialogue on freshwater and suggested the Global Water Partnership as an alternative.

Regarding a paragraph inviting the UN system, through the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, to elaborate an International Action Programme on freshwater, the US proposed, *inter alia*, that: the ACC instead coordinate activities among UN agencies; UN agencies identify possibilities for joint water missions; and the CSD facilitate information exchange between the national and local levels. The G-77/CHINA suggested deleting the call to elaborate an Action Programme, added enhancement of coordination to accelerate realization of objectives identified in Chapter 18 of Agenda 21, and, supported by NORWAY, called for intensifying technical assistance and cooperation in areas of human health and sanitation, among others. INDIA suggested it is premature to propose an institutional arrangement.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The organizers of the Paris Conference on water and sustainable development are reported to be considering the inclusion of an extra Ministerial session on institutional follow-up, a key theme for political decision-making at CSD-6.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

ISWG: The revised Co-Chairs' draft is expected to be distributed at 10:30 am. The ISWG is expected to meet in the Trusteeship Council Chamber at 11:30 am.