

OUTREACH 1997

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The Voices of the NGO Community at CSD

Countdown to Earth Summit II

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COMMENTARY...

Action and accountability

are fast becoming the "buzz words" of 'UN people' at CSD 5. When pressed for more substance, reluctant delegates muster up all their strength and come up with something like, "I mean real action." Pondering how a word slowly develops into a cliché is a 'pastime' often played out over a cup of coffee in the Vienna Cafe'

Maybe it is possible to conjugate the word 'action'.

Just when frustrations were peaking

out of the blue at the UN came a powerful statement on accountability and action. And it came from one of the founding members, one of the Security Council members - -the United Kingdom.

The UK Ambassador offered a fresh perspective

of the future of the UN. At a speech to the British-American Chamber of Commerce on April 10, Sir John Weston, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, delivered a well founded speech.

OUTREACH would like to share some of the many statements from that speech with NGOs and delegates alike, hoping this will inspire us to work toward strong and effective actions during the Special Session.

On finance:

"Arrears on compulsory payments to the UN currently total \$ 1.2 billion. Two thirds of these legal dues are owed by the United States, the rest by such countries as: Russia, Ukraine, Iraq, Yugoslavia. The total owed by Washington alone is the equivalent of the whole of the UN regular budget for one year. How can the UN put itself to rights in such an ignominious predicament? It's Catch-22: you complain the UN doesn't do the job, but you don't pay the UN the sum you voted to do that job. Personal respect and affection for individual American diplomats and public servants inhibit many in this building from speaking frankly. The truth is, failure to pay legal dues is indefensible. It causes great anger and exasperation, even among friends and allies. It poisons the working environment. American exceptionalism cannot mean being the exception to the laws everyone else has to obey. What a reputation to risk, for a nation of such traditional vision and generosity!"

On environment:

"If I have one message to leave with you tonight, it is that this agenda (of sustainable development) must become the litmus test of the United Nations of tomorrow. Put symbolically, the colour of the United Nations emblem in its first half century has been sky blue, as we sought to raise our eyes above the fog and dust of war. Perhaps for the next 50 years it should now be grass green to mark new imperatives for sustainable development of planet earth; the greening of the United Nations, you might say. The Special Session in June, to mark five years from the Rio Earth Summit, is one small step in this direction: heads of state and government will attend, as they should, since it is the first GA Special Session on a development theme for over a decade."

Anyone better?

...jgs

Thank you UN

for engulfing and, we assume, digesting all the written material of NGOs on Wednesday morning. That morning, a decision was taken to completely cleanse the corridor that leads up to the ECOSOC and Trusteeship chamber of all NGO information material.

The pathways into the halls of rhetorical wisdom should not be littered by the challenging and perhaps dirtying commentaries and background papers of the NGO community. Who made this decision and on what grounds?

Without warning, material was destroyed.

Project reports, policy papers and more than half of that days' production of OUTREACH were lumped together with paper cups and other offending debris and fed into a paper-shredder. No warning was given before this direct action. Maybe this step was taken out of desperation to prove that at least some environmental activity could be carried out at the CSD ? This could pass for an explanation. Maybe the decision was made on purely esthetic grounds. NGOs are willing to agree that the tables provided for us by the UN to hold our material did look ugly. And, yes, our stacks of paper were also rather disorderly stacked. This could also pass as an explanation for this rather strange decision.

Why patronize NGOs, UN?

Such a high-level decision will always provoke reaction. Let us, for the sake of continued and hopefully mutual understanding, explain the following to whomever was responsible for the uncalled-for action:

Because we are accredited to the UN

we understand something about rules of procedure and rules of behaviour, in general and at the UN. Someone mumbled that NGO material "was not and has never been allowed on the General Assembly floor." Wrong. Because precedence over the past 50 years has shown us the opposite. Perhaps if they had taken the time to discuss the problem with us, unnecessary friction could have been avoided.

Because we all work in the UN system,

we have at least one language in common, i.e. English. Therefore we are able to talk to each other and even to the UN Secretariat. Some of us could even be quite versatile in several languages, if that were required.

Because we produce written material, we can also write

and consequently -- or so it may be assumed -- we can also read. Because we have meetings with each other, with other NGOs, and with delegations, we can listen and in most cases -- say 10 out of 9 times -- we understand quite well what is being said when and if someone talks to us.

Because of all of the above,

we would have understood the problem posed by the exhibited material if the UN had made an effort to explain it to us. May be they were afraid of being convinced by us that their decision was wrong, and therefore decided to go ahead without consulting anyone.

Or - is this undemocratic maneuver

just one more attempt from those dark and undemocratic forces, not respecting transparency and accountability, to bar NGOs from participation in any GA- related event -- including the upcoming Special Session?

Explain, please, because this path leads nowhere except away from democracy and participation.

...jgs

ECO COMMENTARY...

5 YEARS AFTER RIO: FLASHBACKS

Coming June it will be exactly five years ago that delegates from 178 countries, 1,500 accredited non-governmental organizations and over 7,000 journalists assembled at the Rio Centre for the 1992 Earth Summit.

Hopes and ambitions were set high. A historical turning point, future generations, fundamentally changing our priorities, our consumption patterns, new and additional financial resources, new alliances and partnerships - talk of all this was plentiful. Judge for yourselves whether it was just talk or whether we have actually managed to realize and fulfill any of the goals and commitments over the last five years.

from "The Earth Summit" (S.P. Johnson):

" In a wider sense the only way to answer the question: "Did we really save the Earth at Rio?" is to look beyond the immediately tangible results, to wait and see what actually happens on the ground and in the air and oceans. Only then can anything like a definitive judgment be hazarded. As Dr Mostafa K. Tolba, Executive Director of UNEP put it in his speech to the Plenary on 3 June 1992: " Contemporaries are very fond of designating "turning points". History is a much harsher judge. Probably, it will take us several years before we ascertain that this meeting in Rio has entered that select pantheon of events which truly marked a turning point in the affairs of mankind."

UNCED's Secretary-General (M. Strong) in addressing the first meeting of PrepCom (1990):

"[UNCED] is expected to take decisions which will lead to fundamental changes in the direction and nature of our economic life and behavior and establish the basis for a more secure, equitable, hopeful and sustainable future for the whole human community."

"The integration of environment and development will require substantial changes in economic policy and management. There will be many cases in which this need not involve extra costs or where the extra costs required may be met by redeployment of existing resources. But overall, it is evident that incorporation of measures for environmental protection into the development policies and programmes of developing countries will require access to external financial resources beyond those available to them. Even when the investment required would produce a desirable rate of return developing countries will still need access to the additional capital required to make the investment (...)"

"[Achieving a viable balance between environment and development factors] will more and more require fundamental changes in the dynamics and content of our economic life and behavior. The most dramatic example of this is the basic changes that will be needed in our current patterns of energy use and transport in order to effect the substantial reductions in fossil use that would be required to reduce risks of climate change. This will require a concerted global effort to improve energy efficiency in all sectors, and a transition to other forms of energy that produce less pollutants, particularly greenhouse gases."

- from a Note by the Secretary-General of the Conference (1992):

"The UNCED Secretariat has estimated that international concessional financing of the order of \$ 125 billion will be required annually, a figure that should not be surprising, given the scale of efforts needed. The expenditures for both developing and developed countries may appear large but they are modest in relation to worldwide military expenditures of some \$ 1 trillion per year and the similar large amounts of tax concessions and subsidies through which governments encourage and support policies and activities that often damage the environment. (...) Financing for sustainable development should not be viewed as 'foreign aid' in traditional terms; it is an essential investment in global environmental security."

- from the speech of UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, opening UNCED (June 3, 1992):

"We are looking at a time-frame that extends far beyond the span of our individual lives. The reflection and, especially the action for which we are to lay the political foundation here will not be undertaken for ourselves, or even for our contemporaries. For we can still waste the planet's resources, at our current pace, for a few decades more. We can still live, for a few years or a few decades more, with the acid rain that is only gradually destroying our forests, lakes, works of architecture and even ourselves; we can stand it if the climate heats up by a few degrees, if the biological diversity of our planet diminishes, if the pollution of our waters continues, if the desertification of the planet accelerates - we will always have enough forests, enough water, enough natural resources. But we must realize that one day, when we as individuals have ceased to exist, it will no longer be possible to let things go on, or let things go, and that, ultimately, the storm will break on the heads of future generations. For them it will be too late. What we do here, then, we do for our grandchildren and, beyond for future generations. Our presence here is proof that we intend to give precedence to time in the political sense - that is, history - over our own personal history."

"We must begin, then, by an act of collective reflection, which is also part of the work of the United Nations, and we must equip ourselves with courage, for reflection entails a risk: the risk that we will be forced to give up myths, comfortable ways of thinking, sacred economic principles."

"Let me say, however, that these [powerful vested] interests, like the others, must show concern for the long-term future and take into account the inherent force of feeling of equality that moves all peoples of the planet, and, quite simply the force of necessity."

There can be no question that the wealthier one is, the more responsibilities one has, and that countries of the North, first and foremost public opinion in those countries - and it is to that public opinion that I am now talking - must realize that their efforts are essential as regards both financing and technology."

From the opening statement of the Secretary-General of UNCED (June 3, 1992):

"The issue of new and additional financial resources to enable developing countries to implement Agenda 21 is crucial and pervasive. This, more than any other issue, will clearly test the degree of political will and commitment of all countries to the fundamental purposes and goals of this earth Summit. (...) The need to begin the process is so urgent, so compelling, that Governments, particularly those of the high-income countries, will have to come, I trust, prepared to make the initial commitments that will be necessary to do this."

NEWS FROM THE CONFERENCE ROOM...

NGO Interventions During Day 3 of the High-Level Segment, 10 April 1997

Statement of the
Global Forest Policy Project
delivered by Bill Mankin (abridged)

Three non-governmental conservation organizations together constitute the Global Forest Policy Project. They are the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth-U.S., and the National Wildlife Federation, representing, collectively, several million members in the United States and Canada.

About seven years ago many of us first got to know each other in the preparatory negotiations leading up to the Earth Summit. I don't know if any of you were fortunate enough to have produced a child in that year, but if you were, your seven-year-old would now be fully capable of asking you if

your negotiations were successful in helping to stem the loss and degradation of the world's forests. I don't know how you would answer, but I think the honest answers are either 'Not yet', or perhaps "We just don't know", or some even would say just plain 'NO'. For those of you who believe the answer to be different, you might wish to have a forum in which to make your case.

The fact is there was no mechanism or forum created at the time of the Earth Summit to engage in focused, active follow-up on the Forest Principles and Chapter 11 of Agenda 21. In fact, many governments wanted in 1992 to take a break from the forest issue and were not ready even to continue the dialogue. Five years after the Earth Summit, fortunately things are different, but perhaps not for long. We have an historic window in which to take action. The means are in your hands, and they are as follows:

1 - The CSD should strongly endorse the establishment of a formal, open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, under the aegis of the CSD, to focus implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), with full and substantive participation of major groups, and complete transparency of information and operation. This Forum should create an action plan for reviewing progress and reporting on the implementation of IPF's recommendations, and additional mechanisms for substantive work on emerging issues and issues the IPF did not have a chance to address. The Forum should be encouraged to set its Terms-of-Reference and begin its work as soon as possible.

2 - The CSD should extend at this session a formal invitation to the new forest forum that the General Assembly will establish to present an annual report to the CSD on IPF follow-up and implementation, and the CSD should identify forests as a key issue for ongoing review and discussion within the CSD annually.

3 - The General Assembly, at its Special Session, should adopt a resolution in which members formally commit themselves to implement the action recommendations of the IPF, at the appropriate level, as soon as possible.

These three steps are essential if the last seven years are to mean anything. And they must be given your undivided attention. It is quite acceptable to keep under review the need for one or more new agreements or other instruments, but this should not be the main focus of the new forum. In particular, because of its likely domination of any debate on forest policy, we believe the question of a forest convention should not be reviewed by the new forest forum until the year 2000. This is because the forum will barely have had a chance to set its own terms-of-reference and begin its initial work and review of progress by then, and countries will have had little opportunity to adequately report on their successes and on the challenges they have encountered. It would be unrealistic and unfair to force the issue of a forest convention onto the new forum's agenda too soon.

I would like to note here, Mr. Chairman, that over 100 of the world's major environmental, conservation, and indigenous peoples' organizations have endorsed international resolutions opposing the negotiation of a forest convention at this time. Most of you have copies of those resolutions.

We would like to commend IPF's distinguished Co-Chairmen for their leadership not only during the IPF, but for their statement to you a few days ago, wherein they strongly urged all of you to avoid side-lining the IPF's recommendations by a protracted debate over the need for a forest convention. Delegates, we share the concern of the IPF's co-chairmen that the hard work of the IPF, and all its recommendations, could be quickly forgotten and drop off the table if a forest convention is put onto that same table. If negotiations on a convention were to begin in the near term, we fear that delegations would shift immediately back into a defensive negotiating mode, and away from a cooperative implementing mode. This would be a shame.

We regret that some delegates have stated that they will not support the establishment of this

essential forum to encourage the implementation of the IPF's agreed recommendations unless other delegations agree to their call for a forest convention. Fortunately, many delegations have noted that the time for a convention is not yet right, and the consensus does not yet exist, for negotiations to begin. We note, for example, the clear words of the distinguished deputy administrator from China.

Will the world's forests and forest-dependent people be better off as a result of the IPF? The only way we will be able to answer this question is to take advantage of this historic opportunity to create an actual implementing forum, mandated to create an implementation plan, to keep the question of a forest convention off the agenda until the year 2000, and to report annually to the CSD on the successes and remaining challenges of all of our efforts. My organizations stand ready, today, to begin with all of you this critical work.

Statement by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of The World Council of Churches
(abridged)

Building a Just and Moral Economy for Sustainable Communities

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches represents 325 Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican churches in over 130 countries around the world with a combined membership of about 400 million people.

In our own work, we are regularly questioning the term "sustainable development." We find it often misused in order to legitimize current economic approaches which are premised on unlimited economic growth and a continuous and unregulated expansion of production and consumption for the world's rich. Thus to measure progress toward sustainable development in this context is to avoid challenging the very dynamics which are increasing the gap between the rich and the poor in the world and causing environmental destruction. We call upon governments, international institutions and people of good will to demonstrate moral courage and political will to confront the excesses of globalization.

The Council understands that all economic systems must be tested from the perspective of their effect on the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. God has created the whole cosmos to be good; it is a common inheritance for all peoples for all times to be enjoyed in just, loving and responsible relationships with one another. This understanding is foundational in our vision of a just and moral economy where:

- a) people are empowered to fully participate in making decisions that affect their lives;
- b) public and private institutions and enterprises are accountable and held responsible for the social and environmental impacts and consequences of their operations; and
- c) the earth and whole created order is nurtured with utmost respect and reverence rather than exploited and degraded.

Our vision of a just and moral economy places on us the responsibility to build and nurture economies that put people and the environment first.

We speak increasingly of "sustainable community" because it implies the nurturing of equitable relationships both within the human family and also between humans and the rest of the ecological community - in other words, justice within the whole of God's creation.

Within the human family, many people lack health, security, hope. The member churches of the WCC around the world are intensely involved in the everyday struggles of people for sustainable community. Thus, our understandings emerge from our real-life experience. Let us share three examples.

Our first example concerns women in Sri Lanka. Structural Adjustment Policy dictated the replacement of hill country forest land with export tobacco cultivation. The trees helped retain the moisture which was the source for mountain streams; now they were gone and the water flow was significantly reduced. This forced the women tea workers of the area to climb extra distances to fetch their daily water. In addition to increasing the workload of these women, insufficient water has added to the health hazards of the entire community. Going beyond their traditional roles, the women, along with children, organized themselves to plant trees on those hills where soil erosion was most evident with the hope that tomorrow these hills will once again be covered with streams.

For Indigenous Peoples, sustainable development is integrally linked to their struggle for recognition of rights to self determination, control over ancestral lands, resources and indigenous knowledge systems. Traditional practices for sustainable production and consumption are under threat from the negative impacts of globalization and trade liberalization. This new face of colonization, perpetuated by the often aggressive policies of governments and TNCs, has seen extensive extraction of resources from Indigenous Peoples lands in deforestation, mining and dam building. Also, Indigenous Peoples are confronted with the increase in bioprospecting and genetic engineering, practices that pose a direct threat to the protection of their intellectual cultural property rights. Thus Indigenous Peoples are continually challenging governments and international institutions to establish meaningful participatory mechanisms in the preservation of sustainable community.

Our churches are actively addressing the issue of climate change. We see it as an ethical issue. Because of the economies and consumption-oriented lifestyles of the industrialized nations, the consequences of climate change will be suffered disproportionately by the poorer developing nations, low-lying states, and future generations. It is not just the human family that will be adversely affected by climate change but all the ecosystems of the planet. The peoples and ecosystems of the Pacific Islands are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change through rising sea levels and tropical storms.

Humanity is threatened. The earth is threatened. We see some common sources of this threat.

A current example which is of great concern to us is the emerging power of the World Trade Organization whose decisions will supersede the authority of national governments and/or international institutions, including the CSD. We question the idolatry which is often bestowed upon the notions of free trade, market access, speculative investment, and competition, seemingly at any cost. The process for making decisions in the WTO and related bodies is highly secretive, non-participatory, and dominated by the interests of transnational corporations. It is not just civil society that is excluded from the table but even many parts of national governments are kept in the dark. This exclusion is most severe for the governments and civil societies in countries of the economic South.

If we are to work toward sustainable community for all, then local, national and global priorities must be based on justice, peace and respect for the integrity of creation.

The World Council of Churches recommends that:

1. National, regional and international policies and programmes in economic, social and environmental areas should be based on criteria of sustainable community with specific principles, indicators and assessment procedures to measure progress. In this context, we endorse the proposal of regular Rio review processes to assess progress and roadblocks for sustainable development e.g. Earth Summit III in 2002.

2. WTO proceedings and decision-making should be transparent and inclusive allowing full participation of all countries and meaningful access for representatives of civil society such as nongovernmental organizations. The WTO should be formally accountable within the UN system.
3. In reference to women, we need to implement the Beijing agreement and go beyond to create new development strategies that would promote both sustainable livelihoods and communities, based on gender and social equity for all sectors of society.
4. The CSD promote:
 - the immediate adoption of the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which provides minimum standards for the continued existence of Indigenous communities;
 - the establishment of a Permanent Forum in the UN for Indigenous Peoples;
 - facilitate greater participation of Indigenous Peoples in the CSD sessions and the related processes.
5. In terms of climate change, governments of industrialized countries should a) fulfil their promise at the Rio Earth Summit to stabilize CO2 emissions by the year 2000 at 1990 levels, b) establish firm policy measures and agree to a binding international agreement which will achieve greater reductions after 2000, and c) engage public discussion on the risks of climate change and increase public participation in finding solutions.
6. The CSD should recommend that a high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council be devoted to the theme of globalization and sustainability.

We pledge to work with peoples of all faiths to pursue these goals.

Statement by Tony Hams
Head of Environment Unit
Local Government
Management Board-UK
9 April 1997

Local government was well represented at the Rio Summit, at subsequent meetings of the CSD and made a significant impact at Habitat II in Istanbul last year. We were privileged also to be chosen as the first major group to participate in the CSD's first interactive session at its third meeting here in New York two years ago.

Against this background, many people and agencies in the international community are saying that one of the more meaningful outcomes since Rio has been action at the local level by all sectors through Local Agenda 21.

The ICLEI/CSD's recent survey of international activity in this area draws attention to some significant progress, namely, that there are now nearly 2000 local authorities in 64 different countries working in concert with their local communities to produce local plans for sustainable development.

The CSD's survey also shows that progress on Local Agenda 21 is more widespread in those countries where national associations of local government have organized national campaigns and significantly where national governments have been supportive of Local Agenda 21 activity.

Of course local authorities have been implementing Agenda 21 in many other key areas. These include:

- The World Health Organization's Healthy Cities programme now involves more than 1000 municipalities and 17 national campaigns.
- ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection Campaign focusing on greenhouse gas emissions includes 164 cities from 34 countries.
- City networks to support anti-pollution of the seas exist around the Baltic, the North and Mediterranean Seas.

I would however be misrepresenting my colleagues in many countries if I provide an over rosy picture of our achievements. Our research highlights how far we have to go. We have therefore made a number of recommendations which will be discussed at the Local Authority Dialogue Session here on Wednesday next week. We hope these will be taken seriously and factored into the final report of the CSD's 5th session. I would like to air two of them today:

Firstly, as I have mentioned, national Local Agenda 21 campaigns exist or are being established in only 20 countries. We believe that those national governments that have not yet done so should support the establishment of new campaigns in discussion with national local authority associations and other major groups. The CSD should set a global target for the spread of Local Agenda 21.

Secondly, some of these existing national campaigns have identified barriers to Agenda 21 implementation at the local level. These barriers deserve the attention of the CSD because it is in the power of national governments to remove some of them, particularly in the fields of transport and energy planning, in subsidies and taxes that favour non-sustainable behaviour, in the enforcement of environmental laws and in over-centralization.

We all know that Agenda 21 stands less chance of being implemented if there is no consistently coordinated action between national and local governments and other major groups. Local sustainable development is less likely to be achieved unless all levels of government mutually integrate their resources and create supportive policies and fiscal arrangements. So we recommend that the CSD commissions a study to fully investigate these barriers between central and local government. We in local government are open to such investigations and are ready and willing to participate. I hope as many delegates as possible will attend the dialogue session on 16 April to discuss these issues further.

Youth Statement
delivered by Cesar Marchesino
Latin American Youth Network
for Sustainable Development
8th April 1997

In Rio 92, delegates had the same conviction: "After this conference, we have to act." This was just a good intention. As Youth organizations, we are worried when some government delegates say that the next five years will be the time for the implementation of Agenda 21.

We are still worried because we have an unanswered question. How long will it take for the Youth to involved in the decision-making process around sustainable development? Participation is the key word for us and we are about real participation.

Gathered as young Latin Americans at the end of the present century, we are convinced that it will not be possible to shift models if we do not create institutions that effectively safeguard popular

participation at the local level in decisions regarding living conditions, access to resources and design of the decision making structures for the population.

When "mega-projects" are developed by national governments and multilateral banks without any consultation process, we are convinced that the implementation of Agenda 21 is still a dream. We will never achieve sustainability if all our education system reforms are done under the approval of IMF or IADB without considering students. We cannot ensure the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local level if the commitment of our governments at WTO implies the exploitation of our resources to satisfy the needs of the "global free trade" instead of the needs of our population.

How can we change these unsustainable trends? In this respect, our actions, together with those of all social actors, should aim to foster the design and discussion of a "Local Agenda 21", and establish mechanisms for its implementation.

Governments must recognize that there already exist a few initiatives where young people play an active and decisive role. The challenge is therefore to generate such new experiences across the whole planet, and have a fair information flow by means of open and horizontally managed communication networks that facilitate the exchange of experiences and coordination of solidarity actions at regional and international levels. To be actualized, the rich potential contained in this proposal needs, on one hand, political will and commitment of the concerned parties. On the other hand, it requires the creation of all the forms of organization that the social groups need to secure all human and financial resources.

RIO GRINDS...

"Now treading the fine line between simple bad taste and outright liable!"

Rumor had it that the word biodiversity was actually used by a delegate in the High-Level segment. Closer examination by DPCSD showed that this was mistaken. What they meant to say was support for Financial Direct Investment.

The Democratic National Committee has offered to organize a training session for how Kofi Annan can acquire new and additional financial resources. The morning session will focus on the asset of White House apartments. Rumor has it that Jessie Helms has already booked a weekend with the Secretary-General.

UN Security Officers worried about protecting the eyes of the government delegates relocated NGO documents to the sub, sub-basement recycling bins.

Czar Strong, in an attempt to bring UN procedures into the 1980s, is looking to reclassify UN Member States. The first proposal which has strong backing is for the UK to be re-classified as a Small Island State and the US as a TNC.

A second group of the Heaven Gate sect members missed the Hale Bopp Comet by only a notch and have been found safe, but sleepy, debating in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

President Clinton is worried about the UN warrant out for his arrest for non-payment of UN dues. Rumor has it that this carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment in North Carolina.

NGO VIEWPOINT...

The EU - the acceptable face of the developed world?

Reflections on a meeting between NGOs
and the EU, 9 April 1997

The EU likes to think of itself as a progressive group of countries working for environmental improvements worldwide and committed unreservedly to the goals of Agenda 21. Its statement on the opening day of CSD5 proposed a series of new environmental initiatives on energy and water. Credit must be given where credit is due. It is true that the EU position on climate change is giving an important lead which other developed countries - notably the US - would do well to follow. The EU also appears to be moving - belatedly towards cutting fishing capacity, and is a strong supporter of international legislation banning toxic chemicals.

But we must not forget that many of the EU's internal policies remain stridently out of tune with the spirit and letter of Agenda 21. Take, for example, the two biggest items in the EU budget: the Common Agricultural Policy and the 'Structural Funds' for regional development. The CAP is still pouring billions of dollars a year into some of the most intensive and environmentally damaging agriculture in the world. Through the Structural Funds and other mechanisms the EU is pursuing one of the world's most ambitious infrastructure programmes - the Trans-European Networks (TENs) that will build high-speed roads (and it is mainly roads, not railways) the length and breadth of Europe. Environmental legislation that obstructs this vision is simply swept aside - as we saw when the EU Commission gave Germany the go-ahead to build a TEN road through an area protected under EU nature conservation legislation. Meanwhile a country that wants to join the EU - Poland - is told that it cannot pass legislation banning imports of environment-unfriendly second-hand cars without catalytic converters because that conflicts with the EU's internal free trade rules.

On the global front, although some EU states do meet the 0.7% of GNP aid target, more do not. But there is no sign of new initiatives on financial resources (aid, foreign investment, technology transfer, debt) that will provide a credible response to the priorities that the South has been expressing at CSD5.

So let's see things in perspective. The EU collectively and its Member States individually are more progressive than some developed countries on both environment and development issues. Progress is being made in the EU's internal environment policy. But both internally and globally much more needs to be done.

The EU's unique position as a grouping of fifteen of the world's richest countries, some of them amongst the most forward-looking of the developed countries on environment and development issues, gives it a responsibility for leadership at UNGASS. Let's hope we see that leadership.

Rob Lake
UNED-UK/BirdLife International

DIALOGUE SESSIONS

"We Have the Answers"
Youth Will Tell Governments
Today at First Dialogue Session
by Mathew Green

Today, 11 April, at 10:00 a.m. in Conf. Room 1, a coalition of youth environmental groups from the

North and South will come face to face with ministers this morning at the first Major Groups-Government Dialogue of this CSD. The youth NGOs will discuss specific issues & demonstrate ways they are turning the visions of the Rio Earth Summit into a reality.

The world's Ministers will stand up at their desks and sing as representatives of young people worldwide lead delegates in a Zimbabwean folk song to bring their meeting to life," proclaimed the coalition in its press release. Singing was described as optional for journalists and the similarly musically impaired.

A variety of youth delegates will report on environmental projects from Bulgaria to the Bronx to prove that young people can offer a new approach - but only if the ministers across the hall are willing to help.

The organizations represent youth in over twenty countries, including the US, Canada, UK, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Netherlands, Turkey, Latvia, Croatia, India, Nepal, Senegal, Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Mexico and Argentina.

Young people will be reaching out across the generation gap. Will ministers be ready?

Trade Unionists to Present Challenge of "Collective Engagement"

Trade unionists from around the world have come to New York to present their views on unsustainable development and to challenge governments to work with them to find solutions.

On Monday, April 14, from 3:00 - 6:00 PM, twelve unionists will make presentations directly to country delegates during a Trade Union Dialogue Session, organized by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). It will include the following:

Workplace Partnerships & Agreements
Brazil and Sweden

Chemical Harmonization and
standard-setting for production
Canada

Environmental Clean-Up & Cleaner Production Measures
Czech Republic & USA

Alleviation of poverty in local, regional and national strategies
Zimbabwe

National Reporting and Implementation
India and ILO

Production & consumption, Eco-labeling & workplace eco-auditing
Sweden & United Kingdom

Codes of Conduct and Unsustainable Production
Bangladesh

Lucien Royer, Health, Safety & Environment Director of the ICFTU, organizer for this Session points out that trade unionist are well aware of the failures of the CSD and its member countries to

reach national and global targets in the first five years.

"As active trade unionists, however, we are not prepared to accept defeat," he said. "We have also seen that Agenda 21 and the CSD were responsible for unprecedented activity by trade unions in thousands of workplaces around the world. We have found out that we are capable of major accomplishments, even with limited resources, deep-seated patterns of unsustainable development, and resistance from governments and social partners."

"We are here, not to criticize country delegates, but to relate our successes, and to challenge them to work with us to make the "quantum leaps" that are necessary. Trade unions possess enormous potential for change. We are organized in more than 2.2 million workplaces around the world, which means that we have access to structures and people in every country and every sector of industry who can work together to find solutions to our problems."

"It is time that our strength and potential for change was harnessed by governments, and put to work locally and in National Implementation Frameworks. We are putting this challenge to the country delegates under the title of "collective engagement", because this concept captures the way we learn and grow through the process of working together for change."

"Collective engagement" describes a cooperative, collaborative and mutually self-directing way of tackling common problems, and as such, is directly opposed to apathy, dependency on governments, authorities, or anyone else. Workers and their trade unions want to be part of the solution, and we will not rule out any targets, partners or our tools in advance. "

"In the process, we will show why workers and workplaces are central to any effort to change production and consumption patterns. This notion underlies ILO Conventions and Labour Standards, which we believe must play a key role in the national consultation and reporting process, which we challenge governments to implement."

"Both in our presentations and in the following Interaction Session, we will focus on these questions:

1. Is your government prepared to work with workers and trade unions to achieve sustainable development?
2. What is the role of workplaces in decision-making and in the implementation of Agenda 21 strategies? Do you agree that putting more emphasis on workplaces would be a positive development?
3. A wide range of partnership models have been created in many countries involving agreements between trade unions and governments, employers, local authorities and NGOs. In what ways could you promote co-operation with workers and trade unions in your country?
4. Would you be prepared to promote joint programs and initiatives with workers and trade unions; e.g., training and education programs to enhance workplace capabilities for positive change? What about special cleanup programs, energy conservation, waste cleanup, pollution control, or consumer education? Do you see any value in international exchanges and training programs?
5. Do you agree that workplace production and consumption targets play an important role in implementing sustainable development strategies in your country? Do you see a need for improved workplace monitoring, record-keeping, reporting and evaluating as a means to achieving Agenda 21 targets?
6. Do you believe that worker participation can make a positive contribution to workplace implementation of Agenda 21 objectives? Are you prepared to accept some ILO Conventions or standards relating to labour practices as a necessary feature of your strategy to achieve sustainable

development?

7. The concept of "collective engagement" refers to a process whereby workers come to care about their workplace and what they do. They become involved in making change happen, and are willing to cooperate with their trade union and employer to plan and educate people. Collective engagement of workers is fundamental to making quantum leaps possible. It encourages workers, their trade unions and their employers to work together to promote sustainable development in the workplace and the community. Is this a concept you are willing to promote?

8. Do you agree that quality employment is a barometer of sustainable development, and that our efforts should focus on employment creation, training, and orderly transition as a way to alleviate poverty and enhance the quality of the life?

NPT NEWS...

An historic first: NGOs to address meeting of the States Parties

On the opening day of the First PrepCom for the 2000 Review Conference of the Nuclear NonProliferation Treaty (NPT), a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention was introduced at an NGO session organized by the Abolition 2000 network. The document, called a "draft of a draft" by noted author Jonathan Schell, was prepared by a working group of lawyers, scientists and disarmament experts. A General Assembly Resolution adopted last December calls for governmental negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention to commence in 1997.

On Wednesday, April 16, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., the PrepCom will be addressed by a panel of NGO experts, organized by the NGO Committee on Disarmament. This will be the first time that NGOs are granted speaking rights in official meetings of the NPT States Parties, and bodes well for a continuing NGO role in the enhanced review process agreed in 1995 when the treaty was extended indefinitely.

Roger Smith
NGO Committee on Disarmament

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DAILY MEETINGS:
(unless otherwise announced)

Women's Caucus
8:30-9:15 a.m., Room D
Youth Caucus
8:30-9:00 a.m., Church Center
NGO Strategy Session
9:15-10:00 a.m., Room D
Press & Communications Committee
12:00-1:00 p.m., Cafeteria
Process Sub-Committee
6:00 p.m., Vienna, Room E

Caucuses meeting today:

Sustainable Agriculture/Food Systems Caucus

10-11 am in Conf. E

Peace Caucus

3-4 pm, Church Center (12th floor)

North American Caucus

10:30 a.m., Delegate's Lounge

US NGO Caucus

2-3.30 pm, Church Center (10H)

NGO Strategy Meeting on Finance

1.30-2.30 pm, Church Center (12th floor)

WEEKEND MEETINGS:

Saturday, 12 April:

Netherlands Committee for IUCN, Roundtable dialogue on "Inter-agency coordination and Sustainable Development", 10am-3.45pm, Church Center (8th floor).

Sunday, 13 April:

Indigenous Peoples Caucus Meeting, 10am-3.45pm, Church Center (8th floor)

Saturday, April 12 and Sunday, April 13th

An "International Sustainable Communities Forum," covering a full range of workshops and activities will be held at the offices of The Learning Alliance, 324 Lafayette, 7th Floor. For more full programme call (212) 226-7171.

CULTURE CORNER

Sustainable Community

Created by Arts Project

by Pauulu Kamarakafego, ecological engineer consultant

A team of seven individuals from Caribbean and Pacific islands countries and the US have successfully demonstrated the feasibility of building a sustainable community through communication arts. They lived and worked together over a two week period last summer at the Bellagio conference center in northern Italy.

Through conversation and performance workshops they overcame their differences in culture and values. Their storytelling, song, dance, theater and video enabled them to develop an intercultural model. They were able to draw upon their respective traditions - Oceanic, Caribbean, African-American and Western - and through cross-fertilization create their new intercultural model. By the end of the residency period, every member of the team reported a deepening in understanding of other cultures.

Out of their work together members of the group acquired the sense of openness, mutual trust and

safety so necessary to permit them to take the kind of personal risks that go with the creative process. Team members displayed a remarkable degree of willingness to take artistic chances, try new techniques as well as share responsibilities for leadership, organization and management.

Accomplishments: The group created a script outline for an interdisciplinary performance piece shaped around themes of environmental and social justice, both key elements in the goal of sustainable development. They devised a template for developing performance art combining theater, storytelling, dance music and video as community-based media. Through this residency the group successfully collaborated on two performances, one original and one devised from an existing script.

Out of the two week residency the group established themselves as an informal network that can serve as a foundation of resource people for a more formal network to be developed as additional resources materialize.

Dr. Caroline Sinavaina, president of the Pacific-Asia Institute for the Arts and Human Sciences Inc., was team leader. The organization INSNI serves as international coordinator of Pacific, Indian Ocean, Caribbean, Atlantic/Mediterranean, Antarctic Region and Diaspora. INSNI is an acronym for Information Network of Small Island Development States, NonGovernment Organizations and Indigenous Peoples. It is located in Hamilton, Bermuda.

OUTREACH `97
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