

OUTREACH 1997

Vol. 1 No. 19

Monday, 14 APRIL 1997

speaking for the CSD/NGO Steering Committee

in collaboration with ECO 1997

ECO has been published by Non-Governmental Environmental Groups at major international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972

The Voices of the NGO Community at CSD

Countdown to Earth Summit II

CSD 5 SPECIAL EDITION

IT'S TRADE UNIONS' AND WOMEN'S TURN

AT A GLANCE

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COMMENTARY...

THE DIALOGUE SESSIONS - A WELL INTENTIONED EFFORT NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY?

Dialogue, n.,v. -logued, -loguing.-- n Conversation between two or more persons, -an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue esp. with a view to reaching an amicable agreement.

v.i. to carry on a dialogue; converse., to discuss areas of disagreement frankly in order to resolve them, to put into the form of a dialogue (from: Random House, Webster's College Dictionary c1995.)

The youth were in one room, the scientists in another. But where were the delegates? The presentations made by youth NGOs were energetic, colourful, untraditional and, yes, youthlike. The scientists delivered theirs with the necessary academic decorum, and insight befitting scholars. Meanwhile, somewhere else in the building, 'plenary delegates' were in abundance --for least the first half of Friday.

All through the post World War era, NGOs have been pushing hard to be recognized and to be accepted as competent organizations. The environment agenda that evolved out of the Brundtland Commission provided the opportunity, and the Rio process in '92 provided the vehicle to bring environment NGOs into the political spotlight. There, for the first time, NGOs and government representatives met to discuss and exchange views on environment and sustainable development at a policy level. These were some of the first tentative attempts at dialogue sessions.

Many have high expectations of these dialogue sessions.

But do they really work the way it was hoped and anticipated? Or is this a collision of two very different cultures? "I would not label this first day an expression of true dialogue. The delegates - that is those who were there, and they were not many seemed defensive at best. Maybe the official delegates at the UN are just uncomfortable with having to deal directly and seriously with civil society" mused one of the facilitators at a session after it had ended Friday.

Are all the professional bureaucrats highly uncomfortable with the presence of NGOs? Do the delegates suffer from too much transparency? Are some of them afraid of being stripped of their privileges by being too close to the grass roots? Maybe some might feel that democracy is contagious and it may affect them? Do we see silhouette of the same forces that are at work throwing away NGO materials from the General Assembly floor and trying to hinder NGOs from participating in the Special Session? The Friday dialogue sessions seem to leave us with more questions than answers.

The dialogue sessions are a two way street.

Are the participating NGOs up to their present task? If the dialogue sessions are deemed a success - it will mean increased respect and higher standing for NGOs and the grass-roots which they presumably represent. Failure among NGOs to capitalize on this opportunity will obviously backfire on them for years to come.

Governments have a similar responsibility. Successful dialogues will prove that governments are open and serious about engaging civil society. Failure will reveal governments as rigid and closed as ever.

The first day of dialogues were apparently no smashing success.

Many delegates failed to show up, and most of the NGOs were descriptive and perhaps overly interested in telling the rest of the world what they themselves had accomplished. It is obviously a great temptation to use the rostrum of the UN as a global public relations forum. The stories told on Friday contained actually few, if any new approaches. Surprisingly few statements contained specific

demands for commitments from governments. The statements and the attempts to dialogue were almost overtly cautious and conservative in nature. Did anyone at all talk about the future of sustainable development? Did anyone have any bold visions as to where we might be heading during, say, the next five to ten years -- let alone during the next generation?

The physical structure of the UN is not conducive to dialogues. The UN was organized and developed-- conceptually, physically and ideologically -- 50 years ago, at a time when the predominant model of formal communication was monologue: speech-making. Dialogue was just vaguely understood as being of intrinsic value to any form of communication. Perhaps the very structure of the UN has cemented this institution into a format that today seems more archaic than ever. UN Sessions consist of a series of short -or not-so-short -- statements by one government, followed by another. Often few of these comments have little to do with the statements before them. It is only the insistence of a strong and focused Chair that pushes delegates to -- finally -- addresses each others issues.

Obviously it is hard to convert this into something resembling a democratic means of communications worthy of the 21st Century. Is it possible to propel this institution into cyberspace with its grass-roots character? There is no modem capable such a task.

What are some of the obstacles? The further away from the lobby and up in the air you are, the more prestigious the power and influence seems to be. Any dialogues up there?

A dialogue is an exchange of ideas and thoughts. The big conferences and the rooms in which they are conducted are riddled with formalities of speech and of conduct. The semicircles of the many conference rooms do not allow for Roundtables, and direct eye contact between the discussants is difficult.

Maybe we are experiencing something of global historical significance through the dialogue sessions. The 50 year old structure of the UN is being challenged. The Secretary General himself, recently launched a courageous reform programme to decentralize the UN. Dialogue sessions thrive on decentralized systems. And maybe the dialogue sessions suggests a reform of a totally different kind. The faltering start on Friday may be nothing less than the uncomfortable beginning of something new and unprecedented in communication at the UN.

That may explain why so few of the privileged delegates showed up for the Friday morning session with the Youth, and why even fewer showed up for the afternoon session with Scientists. I mean, the scarce participation could have nothing to do with the fact that the week-end has an inclination to start early on Friday when apparently nothing important is going on? Could it? I mean, it was raining anyway on Friday and Saturday. So why leave work early?

Delegates rise to the challenge. Don't leave the dialogue sessions too soon, or you might miss out on an important historical event.
....jgs

ECO COMMENTARY...

The Race for the 1997 Golden Awards has Started
by Gobelapa Woodychips

Last year at COP-3 of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), Brazil, Canada, the US and Malaysia deserved a "Golden Bulldozer", a "Golden Chainsaw", an honorary "Wooden Toothpick" and a "Golden Axe", respectively, as awards for their grinding role on the world's forests. This year's race

for the "Golden Awards" has started with serious competition.

At CSD-5, several developed and developing countries are positioning themselves in the race for the second place. The EU is undoubtedly trying hard. So hard that they have practically assured themselves of the "Golden Chainsaw". Their main strategy consists of a non-committal approach to Finance. In this way, they think, developing countries will be seduced in the idea of supporting a Forest Convention. An FC whose proposed content is kept secret. All that is known about this Convention is that it will contain elements from the CBD, CCD, ITTO, FCCC, and who knows where else. Some EU members, like Germany, attempted to put forward a unified voice for the Union, with the glaring exception of the Netherlands. In very eloquent words, they outlined their belief that cash is not necessary to implement the ideal FC, increasing the suspense in awaiting for the revelation of its mighty powers.

Canada, an all-time favorite, didn't do enough. They emulated the EU's strategy but came in second. The originality factor will influence the judge's decision, and they may not gain enough points to win.

The US is now in position to win a "Golden", since here they are full members, not simple observers like in Buenos Aires.

Malaysia scored a substantial number of points, according to unofficial reports from the "Golden Awards" selection committee. They impressed everybody with the sustainable forest management [SFM] panacea. Insiders say that they have developed a magic SFM formula, which is absolutely environmentally friendly. It increases the lignification potential of plant species of all types of forests. With this formula, loggers will be able to saw all the trees and not only those woody ones.

Russia, which did poorly in past competitions, made the necessary transition to merit a nomination by emphasizing that they actually don't care what kind of convention is negotiated, as long as there is one. It will be difficult for other second place competitors to catch up with such a bold and decisive attitude.

But the "Golden Awards" are so desirable that contestants will try anything. For instance, Papua New Guinea gained some consideration from the judges by bravely accepting the challenge of negotiating an FC. They certainly have faith that David's strategy against Goliath can be repeated in the negotiations arena.

Many of the favorite candidates just simply didn't do enough this time. Brazil, through timid statements, limited its chances. But anyway, it is good to see that, for a change, new comers are doing well.

NEWS FROM THE CONFERENCE ROOM...

NGO Interventions During the HighLevel Segment, 8-10 April 1997

The Women's Caucus: Growing in numbers and clarity from Rio to Rome
Statement by Tara Tautarui, World Council of Churches, on behalf of the Women's Caucus
10 April

The Women's Caucus speaks, proud of its tradition built on the First World Women's Congress held in Miami in 1991, where 1500 women from 84 countries worked to formulate the Women's Action Agenda 21. This caucus methodology has guided us through the UNCED discussions and the recent cycle of UN conferences. Women's views and aspirations moved the initial drafts of the Rio

Declarations from a few references to women to those of Agenda 21 - Principle 20 and an entire Chapter 24 "Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable and Equitable Development."

The Women's Caucus did not end with this victory of inserting our reality into the products of Rio. We continued to grow in numbers and in clarity from Rio to Rome. Through this process we have struggled to ensure that our urgent needs as women be central to all sustainable development policies and strategies.

We have succeeded in direct measure to our involvement in the conceptualization, implementation and monitoring of all economic and development planning. Women bear the brunt of bad policies everywhere we are the main caretakers of the family obliged to provide food, water, health and family care as well as education. This unrecognized, unvalued reproductive work that we do makes the issues surrounding land, forests, water (clean or dirty, free or taxed) critical daily issues for us.

But these are only some of the factors that determine our lives. The larger macro-economic framework increasingly affects our daily lives as well. In addition to some of these traditional, gender-scripted tasks is our contribution to sustaining nature and the economy undermines the formulation of policies for sustainable development and keeps us as the majority of the poor.

Sustainable development must be premised on equitable gender relations, social and economic justice derived from transparent and accountable decision-making as well as the co-existence with all of nature. None of these speak to dominance of nature or people.

Women in reviewing our stewardship of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 have sought to bring this understanding to our lives and to that of our communities and nations. We have networked and advocated globally to ensure that the Beijing Platform for Action serves to advance our understanding of sustainable development and the role of women. We have drawn strength from our diverse experiences and we have resolutely defended each other against the adverse impacts of globalization that is ravaging our communities and our very lives. We have documented, ad nauseam, the evidence of negative impacts of World Bank/IMF structural adjustment programmes (SAPS), especially on women, and export-led market policies that drain all resources, human and natural, from communities. Women are now organizing around WTO trade issues which dwarf all the others.

Women can claim some success, at last, of influencing the thinking of the World Bank. But it has taken over twenty years of evidence to do this. We cannot afford the same time on matters that are central to this meeting.

Women have the clarity, the expertise and the growing organizational strength to insist on the following:

1. Full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels in all the social, political and economic arenas.
2. The recognition and counting of women's contribution, reproductive and productive, into national accounts and in the calculation of national wealth and economic growth. All data collected at the national and international level must be disaggregated by gender for impact and for policy formulation.
3. The development and integration of gender indicators in the systems of monitoring sustainable development especially in environmental indicators.
4. A review of UN policies, those of member states and commercial activities as to the impact of genetic research programmes, Bio-prospecting Biotrade and Biotechnology on women's bodies and women's livelihoods.

5. The urgent revitalization and strengthening of the UN Center on TNCs to ensure and enforce accountability of corporations within the context of sustainable development.
6. The immediate establishment of a mechanism within the CSD to monitor and guide the actions of the WTO.
7. We call on the representatives of governments to ensure that the currently negotiated multilateral agreement on investment (MAI) will address not only the rights of corporations but equally their responsibilities to and for sustainable development.

Finally, we call on governments to commit the necessary resources and to establish time-bound targets for integrating women fully into the development of policies, institutions, mechanisms, implementation and evaluation of all future plans for sustainable development.

We wish to remind all of us here that the goal of sustainable development is not to generate profit for the few, but to assure the well-being of all people and the health of the planet.

The Role of Business and Industry as a Major Group Statement on 10 April by the International Chamber of Commerce

The International Chamber of Commerce has been a proponent and supporter of sustainable development since it developed and launched the Business Charter for Sustainable Development in 1992, shortly before the Rio Conference. It recognizes that economic development and growth, environmental protection and social development are all interrelated aspects of the concept and that business has a role to play with respect to all three of them. On the fifth anniversary of UNCED, the ICC reaffirms its commitment to sustainable development. We consider ourselves your partners in the pursuit of the objectives established at Rio and have moved over the past five years to give effect to this partnership and commitment.

Business has taken substantial action to implement the recommendations in Agenda 21. Today, over 2500 companies worldwide have pledged to make the 16 principles of the Business Charter an integral part of their day-to-day operations and to strive for continuous improvement in their environmental policy and practice. Many other individual companies and sectoral groups have launched voluntary efforts that go beyond legal requirements.

On April 18, chief executives of member companies of the ICC and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development will describe some of these initiatives in the Business and Industry Dialogue Session. We encourage you to attend this event, which will set out specific recommendations for the UNGASS and the CSD's future work.

We appreciate that much remains to be done to achieve the ambitious and far-reaching objectives set forth in Agenda 21. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the many positive accomplishments set out in your National Reports, and in the reports of inter-governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations provided to this session. We should not dismiss these achievements, even while we recognize that they are but first steps on a long road.

In short, five years after the world's leaders converged on Rio for the Earth Summit, a new industrial revolution is stirring. The nature of this revolution is best understood by looking at how business attitudes towards the environment have evolved. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, companies

focussed essentially on cleaning up the pollution caused by their activities or preventing it through costly end-of-pipe measures. Today, business thinking is directed at a more integrated approach, at creating new products and processes that are intrinsically friendly to the environment, while satisfying consumer needs and desires--even if this means radical changes in technologies or the way things are done. The new emphasis is on product stewardship--the exercise of responsibility throughout a product's life cycle--and on building a flourishing world economy that the planet can support without forfeiting its natural capital.

Obviously, the world of business is not a monolith and the "green" revolution is at a comparatively early stage, but the trend among the world's leading companies is clear, even though many, particularly the great mass of small and medium-sized enterprises, have still to embrace these new concepts.

All business and industry--not just large multinationals--must be engaged in this shift in thinking and acting, behaving responsibly and respecting the laws of the countries in which they operate and the international agreements which apply in those countries.

Although much has been done, we all must pledge to do more. At the same time, business looks to government to provide the necessary framework in which it can most effectively play its essential role in society: to generate wealth, provide employment and develop technologies and offer products and services which are more environmentally friendly.

To conclude, we anticipate that the Commission for Sustainable Development will continue to be the central forum in the UN for the consideration of policy and actions to achieve the goals of Agenda 21. The ICC will have a number of proposals to submit with a view to making the Commission a more effective body for this purpose.

In closing, we have been pleased to note that governments have called for a greater involvement of the business community in the CSD's consideration of sustainable development issues. We would welcome an opportunity explore possible arrangements for a more systematic exchange of views between business and governments on matters of mutual concern.

IPF Proposals for Action: An Indicator of Political Will

Statement by Dr. Andrei Laletin, Friends of Siberian Forests on behalf of the NGO Forest Working Group, 10 April

As you know, Siberian forests are the largest and more expanse of the world. More than 70% of them are still old-growth forests. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Forests contributed greatly towards reaching consensus on a number of critical issues for the conservation and sustainable use of the world's forests. Although issues remain unresolved more than 130 Proposals for Action were negotiated and agreed upon. The IPF process helped advance, at the intergovernmental level, our understanding of the world's forests, their value and importance.

Of paramount importance now, in the post IPF phase, is the implementation and oversight of the IPF's negotiated and agreed upon Proposals for Action. IPF related discussions at CSD 5 and at UNGASS must not be dominated by questions concerning whether or not to proceed with legally binding instruments. The IPF Proposals for Actions represent the current state of political consensus on forests. If implementation is not taken seriously, conducted in an open and transparent manner under the auspices of the CSD, than any discussion concerning convention negotiations would be disingenuous. In short, implementation of the Proposals for Action will be seen as an indicator as to the seriousness and political will of governments to truly address the global forest crisis. In June, world leaders must call for the immediate implementation of the IPF's Proposals for Action.

As highlighted by several delegations over the past few days, to assure adequate and efficient implementation of the Proposals for Action, the issues of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building must also be addressed and resolved.

Sustainable Energy is Essential for Sustainable Development
Statement By Deling Wang
Metropolitan Solar Energy Society
9 April

We, NGOs present at the Fifth Session of the CSD and UNGASS, call upon governments to declare their endorsement of legally binding commitments by industrialized countries in order to reduce their greenhouse to pursue sustainable energy policies that reflect the true costs - the direct and indirect economic costs, the health, social, and environmental costs- of fossil fuels. We call upon governments to eliminate the public subsidies for fossil fuels as soon as possible, preferably by the year 2000, and certainly by 2005. We call upon governments to substantially increase programs for energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. We call upon governments to phase out nuclear power.

Sustainable energy is essential for sustainable development. An estimate of 2 billion people on earth still lack electricity and half the world's households are cooking with wood, vegetation, or coal scraps, all with the negative health consequences. Renewable energies like solar would be the most cost-effective energy sources in these remote areas, powering water-pumping, mini-water purification plants, hot water heaters, refrigerators for medicines, as well as household and commercial uses like cooking, lighting, and general electrical uses.

Renewable energies like solar energy are high tech. This is true of some of the advanced solar technologies now being developed. But most solar technologies are definitely low tech, with the potential for creating multitudes of new industries and hundreds of millions of new jobs in both rural and urban areas. Good examples are solar cookers, hot water heaters, purificators, and assembly of photovoltaic panels.

In turn, these new small commercial establishments and industries would fuel growth that would create a base of support for funding further expansion of renewable energy sources. It is, of course, like the chicken and egg. But governments must provide some initial support, so that subsidies that have gone to support fossil fuel development are hundreds of times that supporting renewable like solar and wind. The playing field should also be leveled a little. The Economist, in its March 15th issue, cited that, currently, the world spends 600 billion US dollars a year to subsidize fossil fuels. NGOs would be overjoyed to see only 10% of the amount, or 60 billion dollars a year to support renewables like wind, solar fuel cells.

Some estimate that fossil fuels will last through the next century, although oil and gas production will probably peak before the year 2040. These estimates assume certain wholly inconsistent levels of growth, with achieving goals essential to truly sustainable development. These include the goals of eliminating or dramatically reducing poverty, unemployment, and underemployment, substantially increasing health, education, and social services; and cleaning up as well as preventing pollution of our air, water, and land. To achieve these aims, rates of growth may very well be much higher, which in turn means that fossil fuels will not last much beyond the years 2030 or 2040.

Finally, whether fossil fuels end in 40 years or 100 years, you, countries that are major oil, gas and coal producers should be at the forefront in supporting development of renewable energy sources. Because you have the capacity now, unlike fossil fuel deficient countries, you have a greater

responsibility to assume a leadership role in developing sustainable energy policies and promoting technologies like solar, wind, and fuel cells. Future generations in your countries, your children and grandchildren, who will no longer have the oil or gas that we enjoy today, will owe their lives to you.

BACKGROUND...

Thoughts for the Monday session on Trade Unions and Friday's session on Industry

Free investment rules!!

by Sander van Bennekom

Tools for Transition, NL

After decades of successive rounds of trade liberalization, attention of governments and corporations is now shifting towards facilitating foreign direct investment (FDI). Investment is increasingly replacing trade as the prime means to enter foreign markets and countries, particularly developing countries and the economies in transition, regard a massive inflow of investment as essential in their development process. In order to develop uniform and stringent procedures to liberalize FDI and protect existing investment, the countries of the OECD have started the negotiations towards a Multilateral Agreement on Investment, to be completed in 1997. Striking aspect of this enterprise is that although the OECD Member States are developing a global treaty, non OECD countries are left out of the negotiations.

Analysis of the first set of consolidated texts of the agreement which appeared in January explains why, the MAI aims to secure the current global imbalance in the ownership and use of the Earth's resources. Furthermore, the MAI will increase the pressure on a wide variety of social, environmental, health and other standards which are already way too low to secure a sustainable development.

Crucial factor in the MAI is the extensive list of prohibited performance requirements which governments now use to incorporate FDI in their own national development. Newly industrialized countries such Taiwan and South Korea have put severe limitations on the freedom of foreign investors. Corporations which have invested in these countries have had to cope with regulations of export, mandatory levels of manufacturing, domestic content, local sales, employment etc. Such conditions on foreign investors have proved to be essential in their industrializing process. The MAI puts a straight and absolute limit to this process. All such performance requirements are prohibited for countries that accede to the Agreement. Developing countries which aim to copy the model of countries such as South Korea should realize that they voluntarily give up the chance to come to development if they accede to the MAI.

The provisions on technology transfer are simply alarming. Under the MAI, countries will not be able to demand corporations to transfer technology to persons in their country. It is explicitly mentioned that health, safety and environmental regulations must be changed if they violate this principle. Since the conclusion of the Uruguay Round trade agreement, NGOs have expressed deep concerns about the fact that many widely available technologies as well as plant and seed varieties can now be patented by foreign investors. This meaning of ownership, and hence also of transfer, of technology has changed completely because of this change in trade rules. The MAI, if it remains as it is, will deeply worsen this situation. Any possible escape route to uphold environmental rules or protection of local farmers and indigenous peoples which is allowed under the trade rules of the Uruguay Round will be cut off for those countries which accede to the MAI.

There is also good news. Prior to the fifth session of the CSD, the OECD Member States announced

that the completion of the MAI will be postponed, most likely until 1998. More and more countries start have second thoughts about the MAI enterprise. It requires a global initiative to use this time to make sure that a global agreement on investment is fully democratically negotiated and equally addresses rights and obligations of corporations.

NGO CORNER...

There are more than 550 accredited NGOs behind the NGO Steering Committee. Together they represent millions of people on all continents. We will be using this column in the next few days to introduce a few of these NGOs to you.

ANPED: The Northern Alliance for Sustainability

ANPED The Northern Alliance for Sustainability (formerly known as the Alliance of Northern Peoples for Environment and Development) is a network of 77 NGOs based in the Northern Hemisphere. ANPED strives to change unsustainable consumption and production (CAP) patterns in the North. This is the core theme that runs through all ANPED activities. Three of our key projects are "Sustainable Menus," "Local Agenda 21," and "Clean Production." This is why the CSD process is so key to ANPED's activities.

Like CSD, ANPED celebrates its 5th anniversary. The impetus for the network was the preparatory process for UNCED.

ANPED is open to any NGO working on environment, and development. Its aims are to link activities, exchange information and skills, and enhance mutual learning on issues of environment, sustainable development and participatory democracy.

By working on cross-cutting issues which fit into various political processes, ANPED endeavors to build the capacity of individual NGOs. This is particularly important for smaller, newly established groups who are not part of other regional/international networks. Hence ANPED attracts many groups from CEE and CIS.

ANPED has brought representatives from 12 of its member NGOs to this CSD meeting: from Russia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Romania, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK. Another 7 ANPED members are here representing their own organizations.

ANPED's role at the CSD is to strengthen the CEE caucus and to co-organize the Consumption and Production caucus (now called Sustainable Societies" caucus which meets daily at 4 pm in room E, but which will be separate this week). ANPED is also co-organizer of the International Sustainable Communities Forum" held at the learning alliance on Saturday and Sunday 12/13 April. Look for ANPED statements on Consumption and Production on the table by room E. or contacts: Iza Kuszewska, ANPED Coordinator, Pieter van der Gaag, assistant Coordinator at email: anped@antenna.nl.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

International Day of Mourning

Monday 14 April, 13.30 - 14.30

Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium

NGO & Major Group
Candlelight Ceremony
Renew Your Fight for the Living

A special and solemn event to commemorate last year's dead and injured victims and to promote sustainable production and consumption. Renew our Fight for the Living with "Whatever 4" Vocal Quartet and more. Candle light Ceremony: A symbol commitment to the future. For more information, contact International Confederation of Free Trade Unions at email 100631.2231@Compuserve.com.

DAILY MEETINGS:

(unless otherwise announced)

Women's Caucus
8:45-9:15 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

Other Caucus Meetings

Monday, 14 April
2:00-3:00 pm Room E
"Linking the Actors: Youth and Aging" presentation by the Health and Environment Caucus
(organized by WIT)

Monday, April 14
10:00 am. in the Vienna Cafe' Transport Caucus Election Meeting, Call Deike (629-8001).
Sustainable Agriculture/Food Systems Caucus
14-18 April, 10-11 am in Room E
Freshwater Caucus
Monday, 2:00 p.m., Room TBA
(consult "CSD Today")
Human Rights Caucus
Monday, 14 April, 3-4 pm, Room E
(joint program w/ Peace Caucus)
Tuesday, 15 April, 1-2 p.m., Rm. E
Tuesday, 15 April, 2:30-5:00 p.m., Church Center
(Human Rights & Environmental Justice Workshop)
Monday, 21 April, 10-11 a.m., Room E
Tuesday, 22 April, 10-11 a.m., Room E
Wednesday, 23 April, 10-11 a.m., Room E

SCHEDULE OF DIALOGUE SESSIONS

Monday, 14 April

WOMEN

10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Conf. Room 1

Women Light the Path to Sustainability

WORKERS

& TRADE UNIONS

2:55-6:00 p.m., Conf. Room 1

programme begins with songs by "Whatever 4 Quartet"

Tuesday, 15 April

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Conf. Room 1

covering forests, biodiversity, human rights and more

NGOs

3:00-6:00 p.m., Conf. Room 1

grassroots reflections, nat'l & int'l implementation of Agenda 21 and the Future Role of the CSD

Friday, 18 April

AND INDUSTRY

10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Conf. Room 1

Signals of change and the Road Ahead

SYNTHESIS SESSION

3:00-6:00 p.m., Conf. Room 1

Summary Overviews of the Dialogue Sessions

Change in Schedule! Conference on "Environmental Degradation: It's Effect on Children's Health" will take place on Friday, April 18 from 10:00 am to 1:00 p.m., and from 3:00 to 6:00 pm in Conference Room 3. Lunch 1:15 p.m. (separate registration required by fax.) Organized by WIT and the Government of Chile. tel: 686-1996, fax: 686-2172.

Panel discussion on: "Agenda 21 and the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" Friday, April 18 at 1:15 - 2:45 pm in Conference Room 2.

The Ad Hoc Desertification Caucus will meet on Tuesday, April 15 at 10:00 am in the Vienna Cafe' to discuss the inclusion of a new category of recommendations for desertification in the "recommendations for actions and

at Earth Summit 2 -- NGO Revised Background Paper". For more information please meet Penda Marcilly, ELCI, at 4:00 p.m. in the Vienna Cafe' Monday April 14.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMO...

The Process Committee

meets every evening from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in Conference Room E. IT IS AN OPEN MEETING AND ALL ARE URGED TO ATTEND. The Committee handles, including other issues, consensus of NGO representatives for the speakers list the following day.

Re: NGO speakers at official meetings,

Caucuses should designate speakers and give names to Pauulu Kamarakafego on Monday, 14 April or Tuesday, 15 April at the morning strategy session (Rm. D @ 9:15 a.m.) or at the 6:00 Process Committee meeting. Speakers may be called at anytime from various caucuses - so be ready!

Re: Criteria for Major Groups status

A discussion of criteria for Major Groups status will take place on Tuesday, 15 April at the morning NGO strategy session (Rm. D, @ 9:15 a.m.). Concise, written submissions on this issue must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, 14 April. Submit to Richard Jordan, Global Education Associates, 963-5029; fax: 963-7341; or e-mail to gea475@igc.apc.org.

Desertification:

People who would like to work on desertification issues should contact Michael Faucon, Pickwick Arms Hotel, rm. 726.

The Desertification Caucus will meet on Tuesday, 15 April. For time and place, see "CSD Today."

DIALOGUE SESSIONS...

Women call for the precautionary principle

by Sascha Gabizon/ANPED

Women in Europe for a Common Future

The section on health in the co-chairs document makes reference to basic health care facilities only, not a word about preventing health deteriorating from unsustainable development.

At the Beijing Women Conference in Rio thousands of women had come to testify that the policies of putting the interest of economic growth before the health of the

is starting to show its devastating effects: breast cancer is taking on epidemic dimensions, sperm counts have come down dramatically. A main cause of this is environmental pollution. Primary suspects are nuclear activities and use of endocrine disrupting chemicals such as are found in some commonly used pesticides.

Why is a pharmaceutical product which has been shown to have even the slightest carcinogenic or birth defects effects taken off the market, but are pesticides and nuclear activities suspected of having the same effects, not subject to the same regime?

In badly polluted areas in this world such as Karakalpakstan on the Aral Sea (Uzbekistan) and Chelyabinsk's radioactive polluted region along the Techa river (Russia) the general health situation has dramatically deteriorated. The women in these areas suffer from severe reproductive health problems. From these examples and many more in the world, it is clear that a linkage between health and environmental pollution does not need more prove before action is taken (point 22 Health).

The women who are part of the NGO Health and Environment caucus demand that the CSD include in its statement that Lack of full scientific data should not be a reason for postponing measures which can prevent harm to human health". This should not be very difficult as 43 governments have

already adopted this language during the March 1997 meeting of the CSW (UN Commission on the Status of Women).

In the 5-6 April issue of OUTREACH, we printed a "gender pledge" that was accepted during the discussions at the 41st Session of CSW. However, the official language of the pledge is somewhat weaker than what the NGOs themselves suggested.

Today, in light of the dialogue sessions on women, we reprint the original text as it was presented by WEDO:

WOMEN'S LINKAGE CAUCUS

Recommendations to Link the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to Other Conference Follow-up Commissions and Particularly to the UN General Assembly Special Session for the Fifth Year Review of the Earth Summit
11 March 1997

Recognizing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as the strongest consensus on gender equality, empowerment and justice ever agreed to by the world's governments, the Women's Linkage Caucus celebrates the critical role played by women at recent UN conferences, infusing both the process and outcomes with a feminist analysis.

We call on members of the Commission on the Status of Women to act as a strong "women's lobby" to influence the process and substance of every conference follow-up process at the local, national and international levels, so that gender mainstreaming and gender balance become a reality. This coordination between Commissions is vital if we are to address the issues critical to women.

The CSW should begin by requesting that Heads of State and member states of the UN make the following commitments at the UN General Assembly Special Session for the Fifth Year Review in June 1997:

We pledge to enhance all governance structures, global and national, by adhering to the fundamental principles of equal representation and accountability.

We pledge to achieve gender balance in governance, and expand and improve affirmative action programs and/or other incentives that encourage and support the leadership and involvement of women in political and economic decision-making.

We commit to evaluate the activities of existing local, regional and national Councils on Sustainable Development for gender balance and evidence of concern about gender issues and ensure that these councils are established where they have not yet been.

We agree to strengthen the reporting requirements by governments to the Commission on Sustainable Development, improve links to corollary Commissions and widen public dissemination of information on environmental degradation and government compliance in achieving UN conference goals.

We commit to expand NGO access to and participation in the UN General Assembly and related committees.

We commit ourselves to recognize women not only as a "major group" of the Rio Agenda but also as

significant agents for local and global change, so that compartmentalized approaches give way to genuine integration of gender in sustainable development.

We pledge to apply a gender perspective in all aspects of the implementation of Agenda 21.

We pledge to create effective new processes and mechanisms to strengthen links between the World Bank, IMF, WTO and post-Rio plans of action that include examination of sovereignty and foreign investment issues.

We commit to expand efforts to eliminate negative effects on developing countries by reconciling WTO rule-making and global trade practices with the post-Rio agenda.

We commit to ensure that the appropriate bodies such as UNCTAD and UNIFEM examine national policies related to international and regional trade agreements to ensure that they do not have an adverse impact on women's new and traditional economic activities, as agreed to at the World Food Summit.

We pledge to raise \$21.7 billion to ensure that 100 million of the world's poorest women and their families receive credit for self-employment by 2005, and remove legislative, policy, administrative, and customary barriers for women's equal right to natural resources, access and control of land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, information and appropriate new technology.

As part of the shift from unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, we commit to enforce the new ILO convention to protect home-based workers and implement Beijing commitment to construct satellite accounts to the gross national product to measure unwaged work.

We pledge to work for international codes of conduct for corporations, especially to enforce compliance with ILO agreements, protect the rights of workers in developing countries and prevent gender-based and economic exploitation of labour by transnational corporations.

We re-commit ourselves to implement the HABITAT II agenda which calls for governments to create "regulatory and legal frameworks...to promote socially and environmentally responsible corporate investment and reinvestment in partnership with local communities."

We pledge to support an international negotiation process on new financial instruments such as tax on speculative capital transactions to reduce market instability and generate resources for social sectors.

We pledge to give greater priority to environmental health and to use the precautionary principle in policy.

We commit to evaluate efforts of handling hazardous wastes such as nuclear waste and plutonium and support the goal to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We pledge to address the impact of globalization and privatization on achieving the goal of universal access to water by the year 2000 and initiate an intergovernmental plan to overcome the obstacles to reach this important goal in the Beijing PFA and other UN conference agreements.

We commit to make major debt cancellation announcements at the Special Session, as it is a critical centerpiece of the Rio formula, and we will explain to the public the relationship of debt cancellation to stemming environmental degradation and ending the cycle of poverty.

NGO VIEWPOINT...

NGO Position Paper on Desertification

Following is the position paper of a few of the groups that support the inclusion of a new category of recommendations for desertification in the "Recommendations for Actions and Commitments at Earth Summit II--NGO Revised Background Paper". We suggest it be attached under Chapter 2 of the document, in the "Sectoral Issues" section.

DESERTIFICATION:

We call for: The promotion of continued implementation and global ratification -- particularly by developed/OECD countries -- of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. The promotion of NGO participation in these mechanisms, as well as in the operation of the "Global Mechanism" now being negotiated under the Convention.

Implementation: The Desertification Convention emerged as a mandate from UNCED 1992. Several chapters of Agenda 21 are devoted to the problems affecting drylands and related desertification issues. It should be a high priority issue under discussion at the Rio +5 special session of the General Assembly. The CSD has devoted much attention to the process surrounding the ratification and implementation of the Convention. Most recently, the Report of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Inter-Sessional Working Group of the Commission on Sustainable Development identified desertification and drought as an issue for urgent action. The Commission should be encouraged to continue its consideration of the combat against desertification. In particular, it is essential to promote the ratification and implementation of the Global Convention, and the facilitation of NGO participation. Specific ODA resources should be earmarked for the Convention's implementation.

Rationale: Desertification is the degradation, through human and environmental factors, of the world's arid and semi-arid lands to the point where they can no longer sustain crops or other vegetation. Each year, desertification claims nearly 10 million acres of the world's arable drylands, in countries as diverse as Burkina Faso, India, and the United States. Desertification has a devastating effect on human populations and the physical environment. It threatens the livelihood of over one billion people, including 135 million who will be forced to abandon their homelands as farming becomes unsustainable and regional conflicts spread. International migration results from environmental degradation and unsustainable development practices.

The process of desertification dramatically alters plant and animal habitat, contributes to vegetation loss and soil erosion, and degrades fresh water supplies. Desertification is a growing problem in the Americas, affecting much of the Peruvian coastal areas, 20% of Argentina's territory, and all of Northeast Brazil. Haiti has experienced a 2/5 decline in productive lands over the last several decades. and only 2% of its territory is currently forested. Mexico, which shares a 2,000 mile border with the U.S., is one of the most affected countries in the region: 60% of lands are severely degraded and drought is a persistent phenomenon. "Environmental refugees" fleeing the effects of desertification will likely become a major problem of the next century.

Position paper supported by:

Environment Liaison Centre International,
CRID/Coordination S.U.D., France
The Natural Heritage Institute, U.S.
Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE), Pakistan
People's Decade of Human Rights Education, U.S.

Please address comments, questions and suggestions concerning this working draft to the ad hoc Desertification Caucus, c/o Penda Marcilly, Environment Liaison Centre International, and/or

Michelle Leighton Schwartz, Natural Heritage Institute,

The production of OUTREACH is made possible through the generous financial support from the Danish and Norwegian Governments as well as additional assistance from WFUNA.

OUTREACH and ECO

The quick and clear eyed observer will have noticed a change on the front page of the NGO newsletter. OUTREACH has been joined by ECO. We have fused our energy and forces for the CSD 5 to become more electric, up-dated and enlightened.

ECO has been in production albeit intermittently, since the first UN Environment conference in Stockholm in 1972. OUTREACH speaks for the NGO/CSD Steering Committee at CSD.

OUTREACH `97
CSD NGO Steering Committee

World Federation of
UN Associations (WFUNA)

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