

OUTREACH 1997

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The Voices of the NGO Community at CSD

Countdown to Earth Summit II

CSD 5 SPECIAL EDITION

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COMMENTARY...

One small step for G-77: A giant leap backward for mankind!

The hum of the plenary on Monday was as it had been for the past 50 years of UN history: reflecting hard work -- but rather monotonous. Themes and people change over the years, but the hum has been the same. Yet this Monday, there were perhaps more expectations in the air -- at least among NGOs. Were we about to see the inclusion in the Co-Chair's report of what is in fact known by all about energy and transportation: The use of fossil fuels results in carbon dioxide emissions, and if those are not checked and reduced, it may cause disaster in the long run for our entire planet.

Already fossil-fuel emissions

are the cause of soaring respiratory and allergy-related health disorders among millions of children and youngsters living in sordid conditions in cities in the developing countries. We all know the dedication of the delegations from the developing world. We have heard their plea for help to eradicate poverty, to obliterate health disorders -- in short, to create livable conditions for their millions of people. And NGOs all over the world have responded to this time and again.

Many of us sitting in on the plenary on Monday were dumbfounded when we heard the statements made by the Group of 77: " Delete anything that gives the faintest impression that use of fossil fuels have even the slightest relationship to environmental or health problems."

What's going on? Group of 77 -- "Wake up!" This is 1997, soon to be the next century. Maybe you have missed out on a few basic facts over the past few years. Let us remind you of a few --

Fact: The world's average mean temperature stands today at 15.3 degrees Centigrade. This temperature is pretty close to the optimal temperature for the planet. The stability of our present climate provides us with livable conditions and is maintained by an equilibrium in the greenhouse effect.

Fact: Global warming,

i.e. an abrupt increase in the atmospheric temperature, may disrupt this stability and jeopardize the future of our lives on earth. We will see stronger and more frequent storms that will cause havoc everywhere. We will see rising ocean levels that will make small islands uninhabitable and render maritime areas unproductive. And we may then see an estimated 300 to 500 million people uprooted, primarily in the developing world, and start the most massive migration in human history - just to mention a few examples.

Fact: The climate is presently showing signs of global warming, and this is due to an unprecedented increase in the volume of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide.

Fact: The increase in carbon dioxide is caused by an ever-increasing production and consumption of fossil fuels.

Fact: Science knows no way

to reduce or remove totally the carbon dioxide which is emitted through the burning of fossil fuels. The only way to reduce these emissions, to reduce the fossil fuel consumption.

Fact: Fossil fuels may easily be substituted

by renewable energy sources everywhere in the world -- energy sources that are in great abundance in developing countries.

Fact: This is common knowledge

among peoples all over the earth - - except perhaps among a privileged few delegates participating in the CSD negotiations these days at the UN.

These delegates seem to be staunch people

who obviously will not let their minds be corrupted by scientific facts. These delegates must be the

principled few who believe that short-sighted gains are far more important than long term goals. They must be the valiant guardians of fossil fuel consumption at any cost. These are the professionals who on Monday deleted significant scientific references to environmental damage caused by fossil-fuel emissions from energy production and transportation, and set the document we are working on back 30 years.

How can a group of internationally aware politicians be completely out of touch with their own constituency, their own scientists and with accepted facts?

How can a group of almost 140 countries which over the past years have heralded so many just causes, be so totally in the wrong? A vast number of NGOs rallied to the support of countries in the Group of 77 when they fought Apartheid, when they wanted to introduce fair rules in world trade, when they desperately tried to develop a new economic world order, when they wanted to bring health and welfare to their nations and fight poverty. But now these countries are all backing proposals that obfuscate about the dangerous nature of fossil fuels. They have suddenly joined the forces that in earlier times, at least, they were so critical of.

Listen, Group of 77, these negotiations are not just about safeguarding your positions in your government. Nor are they about assuring the privileges of being allowed to go to New York so very often. They are about planning for the future of the world of our children and grandchildren: Yours. Mine. Everybody's.

Show some courage.

Break loose and isolate those who for shortsighted financial reasons want to turn the environmental clock back. We have a unique opportunity to bring this world forward together through the Special Session this June.

A few polite delegates have pointed to the fact that several countries from the Group of 77 are very unhappy with the energy and transportation suggestions they made. However, due to formalities they are unable to open up and renegotiate their own suggestions. Do not expect any sensibly thinking person outside of the Plenary Session in Conference Room 2 at UN headquarters to understand or support that kind of reasoning. Others have pointed to the fact that the Group of 77 are unwilling to compromise because the North has not delivered on its promises on Poverty, Finance and Trade, and they want to pressure the North into acceptance of their demands on ODA.

Okay. Let's all ruin our world by stubbornly following our principles.

That's great. And when we all go down the drain, at least some of us can say that we go down the drain more principled than others.

Never before in human history have we possessed more well-researched environmental information or had greater financial ability to solve our problems. Accepting the present suggestions by the Group of 77 for deletions and new text on the paragraphs on energy and transportation is an incomprehensible way of refuting scientific facts. The good thing about this is that it is feeding the global cynics in each and every country of the world with enough ammunition to keep them going for years with their stereotypes - "You know, you can't trust these people. They're only in this for themselves. I told you so, didn't I?"

Why not surprise everybody and disappoint the cynics?

Why not write a document that is in tune with scientific fact and the opinions of the People of all our countries, and do it in an environmentally democratic way.

...jgs

DIALOGUE DIARY...

Summaries of NGO/Government Dialogues

Developing Dialogues and
Maximizing NGO Input
A review of the NGO Dialogue Session
15 April

Over the past four years the extent of debate between governments and NGOs in the CSD has developed enormously. In 1993 we held a few evening dialogue sessions attended by a hard core of sympathetic governments and NGO representatives with the stamina to last through a very long day. Since then a succession of theme days have been held to focus on the activities of specific major groups; and now the dialogue between governments and NGOs is an integral part of the CSD meeting. To consider ways in which this can be developed still further in future years is a challenge to both governments and major groups.

Discussion in the session fell broadly into two groupings - issues before the CSD on which NGO representatives put forward views and proposals; and the modalities for enhancing the role of NGOs in decision-making and policy formulation at every level. Presentations were made on the grassroots level; the national and regional levels; and on the future role of the CSD.

Government delegates were invited to respond to general questions but did not jump at the chance to put forward new initiatives for strengthening the role of NGOs. Perhaps they are keeping their dynamic suggestions up their sleeves for the time being ...

NGO positions

Issues raised included:

- * the need for greater co-operation with local communities on technology transfer
- * the Education 21 proposal as a means by which education for sustainability can be promoted in all countries as an essential element to national sustainable development programmes
- * the lack of availability of Agenda 21 and other key documents in many countries
- * the relevance of the proposed Convention on Forests in the light of existing commitments, most notably those in the Biodiversity Convention
- * corporate accountability is implicit in Agenda 21 - steps should be taken to make this explicit. The social and environmental problems caused through pursuit of multilateral investment are increasingly apparent - not just in developing countries, but in regions of countries such as the UK

NGO access

Ways in which NGO reports could have some formal status and parallel government documents were considered, and the precedent of reports to the Commission on the Rights of the Child was cited by the Australian representative. Bolivian and Philippine delegates stressed the collaborative ways in which their national reports had been produced with the active participation of major group organizations. The Philippine representative questioned the rationale behind duplicating cost and effort in compiling two separate documents.

Governments were asked how they had reported back to relevant constituent groups on what had happened at previous CSD sessions. A number of governments gave glowing accounts of their efforts to consult with NGOs and to take their perspectives into account in preparation of their

positions in advance, but there seemed to be little priority placed on feedback and discussion after the event.

Even so, the emphasis placed on the importance of NGO input to national reports was widespread. This was voiced most forcefully by the US delegate, who said that the US places 'the highest priority on consulting with civil society' in the formulation of their national report.

NGO Dialogue Session

HIGHLIGHTS

The NGO Dialogue session, which took place yesterday afternoon, had a gratifyingly high attendance by both government delegates and NGOs. The session was divided in three main parts: Agenda 21 in the South at the local level, Agenda 21 implementation at the national and regional levels, and the Role of the CSD in the next five years.

During the first part, the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI) presented its report "Grassroots Reflections on Agenda 21." Its conclusions were critical. First, government performance in implementing Agenda 21 and the Rio agreements was felt to be low, and focusing primarily on symptoms of environmental problems instead of their underlying causes. Moreover, opportunities for NGOs to participate in decision-making processes are inadequate.

Several recommendations from the report to address these problems were highlighted. These included the establishment of new methods for community participation, and enhancing consultation processes between governments and NGOs. Other recommendations referred to the need for capacity building for NGOs and governments, raising public awareness through information exchange and communication, and promoting eco-action through community initiatives.

A grassroots perspective was provided by Miguel Soto Cruz, who spoke on behalf of a small farmers community in Costa Rica. He expressed his concern about the enormous gap between the reality of his community and the CSD process. He confirmed the urgent need to improve consultations and dialogues between governments and NGOs.

Chief Bisi Ogunleye from Nigeria said that, although in the CSD process talk of local communities is plentiful, the reality for local groups to participate in the implementation of Agenda 21 leave much to be desired. Clearly, the high hopes set in 1992 in this regard have been poorly realized. Among other things, she stressed the importance of building upon the experiences, knowledge and skills of local communities and the need for training courses which take a bottom-up approach.

Besides several NGOs, governments that entered the dialogue session included Australia, Philippines, China, France, Finland, Sweden, Canada and Norway. The main theme was the consultation process between NGOs and governments. Ways and means mentioned to enhance the participation of civil society and NGOs included pre-consultations, debriefing sessions, Local Agenda 21's and the establishment of national committees on sustainable development. Several participants raised the idea of granting official status to NGO reports to the CSD - a mechanism already in place, for instance, under the Commission on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Indigenous Peoples:

A Call for Action

Summary of Dialogue - 15 April

The Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue Session yesterday consisted of six presentations by the following

representatives of Indigenous Nations and organizations: Marcial Arias Garcia, Kuna, Panama (Asociacion Napguana); Aqqaluk Lyngge, Nuuk, Greenland (Inuit Circumpolar Conference); Tara Taurtari, Maori, New Zealand (Maori Congress); Goodluck Diingbo, Ogoni, Nigeria (National Youth Council of Ogoni People); Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Kankay, the Philippines (Asian Indigenous Women's Network) and Carol Kalafatic, Quechua, Bolivia (IITC).

Issues included Arctic Peoples' Sustainable Development Agenda; Forests, IPRs and Biodiversity; Social Development and Conflict; Globalization and Trade and Human Rights concerns. The caucus urged concrete support for the immediate adoption of the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples and the establishment of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the UN system.

The caucus:

-called for a loan on bioprospecting activities;

-urged that the TRIPS clause of the WTO Agreements incorporate Indigenous Peoples' concerns;

-called for coordination between CSD, CBD, WTO, the Centre for Human Rights and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations to ensure that Indigenous proposals related to intellectual property rights are considered.

State delegates from Peru and Denmark gave strong endorsements to the caucus positions, and Canada indicated some support. The United States and Nigeria offered comments and criticism, respectively.

Trade Unions Issue Challenge of "Collective Engagement" to CSD Delegates

A brief on Monday afternoon's Dialogue

Trade unionists emerged from their major group Dialogue Session Monday afternoon convinced that they achieved major gains in their effort to communicate with country delegates to the CSD.

During their 3-hour Session, they made an elaborate presentation which employed colorful computer-generated visuals, as well as a selection of songs by the New York quartet, Whatever 4, to make the point that workers and their trade unions should be seen as a vital component of any strategy to achieve Agenda 21 objectives.

In all, thirteen separate presentations were made by representatives from: Sweden, Brazil, Canada, the Czech Republic, the U.S.A., Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, and Bangladesh, as well as the Trade Union Advisory Committee of OECD and the Worker Education and Environment Project of the ILO.

The quality of the discussion which followed made it clear that the presentation had made its point, according to Lucien Royer, who represents the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions that had organized the Session.

"It was the first time in the history of the CSD that delegates to a formal Session actually addressed workplaces and trade unions directly," said Royer. "Furthermore, because of the questions that were asked, we were able to isolate and analyze some of the key features which distinguish trade union approaches from some of the others which are being promoted."

Workplaces are central to patterns of production and consumption

The core argument was that workplaces and workers are key to changing not only patterns of

production, but also unsustainable forms of consumption. Presenters illustrated this point by presenting example after example in which involvement of unions proved to be the crucial ingredient to achieving tangible progress, not just in the workplace, but in the community, as well as regionally and nationally.

A clear and pointed invitation was extended to country delegates to work with workers and their representatives to make possible the kind of "quantum leaps" that are necessary to overcome the deficit of years of unsustainable patterns - especially to arrest such alarming crises as the global warming and climate change that are now universally recognized as posing the most immediate threats.

The message was that trade unions have an inherent strength and advantage to achieve this level of change, because they exist on more than 2.2 million workplaces around the world. As such, they have access to structures and people in every country and every sector of industry. All they require to achieve their potential is the cooperation and access to the resources of their employers and governments.

The trade union case was organized around the concept of "collective engagement", which describes the process through which workers learn and grow by working together to recognize problems, and fashion solutions in a cooperative, collaborative and mutually self-directing way - the essence of progressive trade unionism.

Several presentations also emphasized the importance of ILO Conventions and Labor Standards, and challenged governments to integrate them into the national consultation and reporting processes which they have all agreed to implement.

Immediately before the CSD Dialogue Session, a highly-moving candlelight session was held in the Dag Hammarskjold Lounge at the UN to initiate the Second International Day of Mourning. Candles were lit by representatives of national trade union organizations, women and the NGO's to commemorate victims of unsustainable development, including workers who are often amongst the first to suffer.

At the ceremony, CSD Chair Mustafa Tolba emphasized the importance for Trade Unions to translate the message of the Day of Mourning into positive courses of Action for the future.

RIO GRINDS...

The NGO Oceans Caucus spent most of its time yesterday discussing travel arrangements and fishing gear for a December 31st 1999 retreat in Kiribati. NGLS are administrating the travel fund.

Rumor has it that the energy deal brokered by Saudi Arabia involves shipping several billions tonnes of sand to small island states weekly.

A head count during the Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue of Government representation found more in the Vienna Cafe than Room 1. A UK NGO representative is quoted as saying "if they keep spending all their time in the Vienna Cafe even I might have to go to a formal session eventually"

Reform Czar Maurice Strong has working closely with NGOs on how to strengthen the UN NGO Unit. An announcement is expected next week.

What NGOs and others did before they became involved with the CSD:

* Which leading Ocean NGO had a previous job turning by-catch into CAT food?

* Which head of a daily journal at UN negotiations used to wear a red ball on his nose as a profession?

* Which head of an international oceans institute had a more interesting occupation in the past training dogs to play the piano. Recently quoted as saying "training dogs has prepared me to work well in the CSD."

Still waiting for miracles: the Polish co-chair tried to turn water into wine during the afternoon Dialogue session with major groups---and failed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS...

IN OBSERVANCE OF EID AL-ADHA, THE UN HEADQUARTERS WILL BE CLOSED ON 17 APRIL.

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

Sustainable Agriculture/Food Systems Caucus

16 + 18 April, 10-11 am in Room E

Human Settlements Caucus

Wednesday, 16 April, 11-12:00 p.m., Room E

Regional Caucuses

Wednesday, 16 April, 1:00-2:00 p.m., Room E

US NGO Caucus

Wednesday, 2-3:30 p.m., Church Center, 10th Fl.

Peace Caucus (w/Human Rights Caucus)

Wed., 16 April, 3:00-3:30, Church Ctr., 11th Fl.

Energy Caucus

Wednesday, 16 April, 3:00-4:00 p.m., Room E

Friday, 18 April, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Vienna Café

Monday, 21 April, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Room E

Tuesday, 22 April, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Vienna Café

Wednesday, 23 April, 8:30 a.m., Vienna Café

Thursday, 24 April, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Vienna Café

Human Rights Caucus

Wed., 16 April, 1-3:30 p.m., Church Ctr., 11th Fl.

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

SOUTHERN DIASPORA REGIONAL NETWORK MEETING: Wednesday, 16 April, 12:00-12:30 p.m., staff cafeteria

ANPED MEETING: Wednesday, 16 April

6:30-7:30 p.m., Church Center, 2nd Floor

JOINT MEETING: OF MULTI-NATIONAL, MULTI-REGIONAL NETWORKS (NORTH AND SOUTH)

Thursday, 17 April

2:00-4:00 p.m., Church Center, 2nd Fl.

SCHEDULE OF DIALOGUE SESSIONS

Wednesday, 16 April

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

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

Partnership, Decentralization, Local Agenda 21 plus other discussions

FARMERS

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

management techniques, policy & role of farmers organizations

Friday, 18 April

BUSINESS 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

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.

The Role of Corporate Accountability in Sustainable Development

When: Wednesday, 16 April

6:15-8:00 p.m.

Where: Conference Room 2

In the past five years, self-regulation and voluntary responsibility have been a major theme as to

business and industry's role in sustainable development. Corporate accountability, on the other hand, has received much less attention. This panel will examine some of the ideas and cases presented in the report "Minding Our Business" by the NGO Taskforce on Business & Industry (ToBI) - from the controversial case of Royal Dutch Shell and the Ogonis in Nigeria to the proposal for establishing a Subcommittee on Corporate Accountability as part of the CSD programme of work. Several prominent panelists are featured.

Conference on Reform of the Security Council

When: Monday, 21 April

12:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Where: Church Center, 8th Fl.

The NGO Working Group on the Security Council is organizing a conference on Reform of the Security Council. Confirmed speakers are: Amb. Razali, President of the GA, Amb. Powles of New Zealand, Amb. Fulci of Italy, Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies, and Catherine Dumait-Harper of Doctors without Borders.

Other invited speakers are: Amb. Richardson of the US, Amb. Garcia of Colombia, and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz of Third World Network. The Conference is open to all NGOs, to the public and to the press. The current intense negotiations on Council reform make this conference especially timely. Amb. Razali will speak about his March 20 proposal. Contact the GLOBAL POLICY FORUM: phone: +1 (212) 501-7435, Fax: +1 (212) 595-8134; Web Site: www.globalpolicy.org

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.

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.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS... TODAY'S DIALOGUE SESSIONS

Farmers Speak Up

by Thomas Forster, Sustainable Agriculture Caucus

On Wednesday, April 16 from 3 to 6 p.m., farmers as a major group will address governments. From around the world farmers using a variety of agricultural practices from diverse regions will address the role of farmers in sustainable development.

The rights of small scale farmers and peasants to have access to land and to produce food and fibre are not only key to food security but also to long term environmental sustainability. With over one third of the earth's land surface devoted to agriculture, farmers are at the ecological frontline.

Chapter 32 of Agenda 21 calls for specific objectives:

- *decentralized decision-making
- *legal rights to land
- *promoting sustainable farming practices
- *sound agriculture technologies and pricing mechanisms
- *incentives to farmers
- *full participation of farmers organizations

Eight farmers from Nicaragua, Zambia, India, Russia, Canada, Sweden, and Denmark, have been invited to present briefly on their experiences implementing sustainable agriculture practices and on larger policy environments suitable to sustainable food production and food security.

Major recommendations and strategies for the next five years will conclude the dialogue session. In addition to the invited formal talks and questions from government representatives, other farmers from around the world will also speak from the floor.

The experiences of farmers include new production and marketing efforts addressing issues of sustainability. In many farming regions there are expanding dialogues and partnerships as a result of the international debate over sustainable agriculture.

At a larger policy level there is much debate over what the trade agreements mean for sustainability in agriculture. In a rapidly changing world this dialogue between farmers and governments in an international forum will help guide the necessary reshaping of agricultural policies and programs in the interest of revitalizing dynamic rural economies.

Local Authorities and Local Agenda 21: Overcoming the obstacles

by Tony Hamms
 Head of Environment Unit
 Local Government Management Board, UK

The morning dialogue session with Local Authorities on Wednesday, 16 April offers an opportunity to review the massive input by local authorities and communities to the implementation of Agenda 21 since Rio. Local Agenda 21 has proved itself to be an effective mechanism to mobilize local actors to implement effective local action.

The session will emphasize some of the key obstacles faced by local authorities in implementing their local Agenda 21 strategies, including:

- unhelpful subsidies and taxes which lead to unsustainable behaviour;
- deregulation;
- downloading of duties without appropriate legislation, powers and revenues.

We look forward to a fruitful interchange.

BACKGROUND...

In light of Friday's dialogue session with Business and Industry, we highlight the work of The NGO Task Force on Business and Industry (ToBI):

"Corporate responsibility is a choice of business; corporate accountability is an obligation of government and civil society" - from *Minding Our Business: The Role of Corporate Accountability in Sustainable Development* (ToBI - March 1997).

ToBI SEVEN STEPS toward corporate accountability

1. Acknowledge the importance of corporate accountability.
2. Establish mechanisms to monitor & assess corporate practices.
3. Strengthen public access to information.
4. Send the right message: reform unsustainable subsidies and tax-breaks; make wrongdoers liable.
5. Empower local communities (not TNCs).
6. Make clean production a required standard.
7. Reduce political influence of corporations on government.

For more information, contact Jeffrey Barber, Integrative Strategies Forum, tel. (202) 872-5339.

NGO VIEWPOINT...

NGO Position Paper on Desertification
submitted by the
Desertification Caucus on 15/4
- FINAL VERSION -

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 Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) 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 promote the implementation of the Convention and the facilitation of NGO participation in this process. It is

essential that the Commission monitors the progress of the Convention in its first critical years of implementation. Specific ODA resources should be earmarked for the Convention's "Global Mechanism".

Rationale: Desertification is the degradation, through human and natural factors, of the world's arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid 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. Every year, 24 billion tons of top soil is lost due to erosion, which costs the world \$ 42 billion. An estimated amount of \$ 1022 billion per year is required to combat desertification for the next 20 years. Desertification has a devastating effect on human populations and the physical environment. It threatens the livelihood of over one billion people, including 35 million who are 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. Some 35 million "Environmental refugees" fleeing the effects of desertification will likely become a major problem of the next century.

The Forgotten Priority of UNCED

by Ros Wade (Education Caucus)

NGOs have been pushing for another Major Group: The Education Community. Here are some reasons why it should be included.

Education: Everyone's Priority - No-One's Responsibility

It is impossible to find anyone, whether government delegate or NGO representative, to disagree that education is of the highest priority in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the necessary action or commitment to take this forward, it is not easy to find eager volunteers.

UNESCO last year described education as "the forgotten priority of UNCED" and there is little evidence forthcoming so far to contradict this, despite a number of impressive initiatives in certain countries. These need to be co-ordinated, however, and given shape to enable best practice to be shared across countries, regions and localities. An overarching movement, like that of Local Agenda 21, is needed to motivate and galvanize all involved in education for sustainable development.

Basic education for all is a prerequisite for this but it is not enough on its own. All education programmes need to take account of the need to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for global citizenship into the 21st century. Participatory processes, critical analysis and media literacy are important components of this as are opportunities for educators to learn from each others experiences. Further networks need to be developed, especially North-South. The Education Caucus proposes an overarching Education 21 programme to bring together all education for sustainable development.

As lifelong learners, we all have a role to play in this, both in educating ourselves and in supporting educational initiatives within both formal and nonformal sectors.

We hope that Education 21 will provide a focus to take forward the education component of Agenda 21, whether at a national, international or local level. Let us make education everyone's responsibility as well as everyone's priority.

NEWS FROM THE CONFERENCE ROOM...

NGOs CALL FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL
PANEL ON FINANCE

Statement delivered by Barbara Bramble,
National Wildlife Federation, US
on behalf of CSD NGOs

The statement made in paragraph 40 of the Co-Chairs' paper that financial resources and mechanisms play a key role in the implementation of Agenda 21 is clearly incontrovertible. Indeed one could go further and say that unless it produces a credible outcome on financial issues, the Special Session will not fulfil the hopes and expectations that NGOs - and, we hope, governments - have of it.

Implementation of the 0.7% GNP target for ODA restated in paragraph 41 is important. But it is also important to set and meet interim targets linked specifically to Agenda 21. We would therefore urge all donors to commit themselves to allocating at least 0.1% of their GNP to ODA for the environment by Earth Summit III in 2002.

While aid quantity is important, paragraphs 42 and 43 as currently drafted do not give sufficient attention to the vital issue of aid quality. ODA should be targeted to the poorest countries and communities, and to those activities, like environmental protection and capacity-building, that present little or no commercial attraction. All countries should implement the Social Summit's 20/20 target. ODA should be delivered in ways that maximise local participation and are attuned to local needs, for example through sustainability funds and micro credit schemes - as recently endorsed by the Micro credit Summit. Tying aid to donor country supplies, and aid for large-scale infrastructure should be reduced.

Foreign direct investment is a powerful and growing force in the world. Though potentially an important component of sustainable development, FDI continues to cause widespread environmental and social damage, especially in natural resource extraction and infrastructure.

A binding system of investment regulation must be created, so that governments are able to ensure FDI supports, rather than undermines, sustainable development. We are concerned at the lack of transparency, adequate democratic consultations or research in the current negotiations on the OECD Multilateral Agreement on Investment. To amend this we propose comprehensive, participatory, negotiations to fully integrate economic, social and environmental factors into its provisions. At a minimum, regulation of FDI must tackle the following issues:

-Preventing the relaxation of environmental and social standards in order to attract investment;

-Comprehensive rules encouraging responsible corporate behaviour, such as: independent reporting of environmental and social performance; international cooperation to prevent corruption and transfer pricing; define and address wasteful and harmful investment; common corporate operating practices in all countries; access to courts in a company's home country for citizens affected by its operations abroad;

-International support must be available for national regulatory regimes in developing countries and countries in transition, including resources and appropriate capacity building. Structural Adjustment Programmes must not undermine regulation by forcing public expenditure cuts in vital areas, and where appropriate, regulatory bodies should be funded via a direct statutory levy on the industry concerned, so as to make them free from central budgetary crises; countries should be assisted in applying appropriate resource taxation measures, for example on land transactions, to ensure that rents accrue to the public purse;

-Governments must retain strategic control of investment, especially when they are currently dependent on natural resource exports. Investment must be subject to a sustainability assessment which includes full public participation. Restrictions on foreign investment must allow nurturing of infant industries. Footloose companies must be prevented from carrying out unsustainable practices in areas such as toxic waste, logging, fishing and mining, and then running away from their responsibilities to clean up the damage. It should be noted that the terms of the current OECD MAI would remove such powers from governments, under pain of financial sanctions.

We share the strong support for a substantially increased GEF, and the caution over expanding the GEF's mandate until this is accomplished, expressed in paragraph 45. We would also urge countries to ensure that the GEF continues its efforts to increase NGO involvement in GEF projects, streamline GEF procedures, and put high-quality monitoring and evaluation systems in place. Special efforts are needed to ensure that the mainstream activities of the GEF's Implementing Agencies are fully consistent with the GEF's environmental mandate: this is still not always the case.

Paragraph 47 refers to the need for continuing efforts to relieve debt burdens. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative needs renewed commitment from creditor countries and the international financial institutions if it is to be successful. Given documented problems with existing structural adjustment programmes, the type, extent and length of conditionalities imposed on HIPC recipients should be reviewed to ensure that they do not cause increased poverty and environmental destruction, and thus increase long-term debt problems.

Paragraph 49 should note in particular that when socially and environmentally damaging subsidies are removed, positive and active policies must be enacted to remove any regressive and negative transition effects on vulnerable groups. Such remedial policies must be gender-sensitive and take full account of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Finally, we believe the current text provides no mechanism by which the CSD can develop an ongoing constructive dialogue on the range of financial issues of interest to all countries. We therefore propose the establishment under the CSD of an Intergovernmental Panel on Finance. Such a body would: develop consensus and concrete proposals on issues such as the appropriate roles of ODA and FDI; the regulatory and other frameworks needed to ensure that FDI contributes to sustainable development; the best way to mobilise domestic resources; possible new forms of international taxation to generate revenue for sustainable development; and the development of new institutional relationships allowing the CSD to exercise greater scrutiny over international financial institutions and the WTO. Finance should also be a standing item on the CSD work programme each year.

What is at stake in June is the credibility of the international community's commitment to finding solutions to problems that will affect everyone alive today and generations to come. Commitment and creativity on finance would go a long way to unlocking these solutions.

NPT NEWS...

Just a reminder that TODAY, 16 APRIL, FROM 10 A.M. TO 1 P.M., the PrepCom for the 2000 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will be addressed by a panel of NGO experts, organized by the NGO Committee on Disarmament - marking the first time in that NGOs will be granted speaking rights in an official meeting of the NPT States Parties.

Following is an article by the NGO Peace Caucus linking the Special Session with the NPT Review Conference.

WHAT ARE THEY AFRAID OF?

by Pauline Cantwell

Peace Caucus

The Peace Caucus, made up of over 100 organizations, many of which are themselves umbrella organizations, is appalled at the arrogance of official government delegations in refusing to deal with the issue of militarism in the five-year follow-up to the Earth Summit.

The governments made a concerted effort in the preparatory meetings for the Earth Summit and were successful in Rio in blocking any mention of the military in the final document, Agenda 21. They are still intent on keeping military issues off the table as go through the motions of the five-year review.

However, now that the Cold War is over, it is imperative that the citizens of the earth demand that this review session make an honest evaluation of the impact of military spending and production along with the impact of preparation and execution of war on the environment and health of people.

We are sacrificing our children on the altar of militarism. The Graca Machel report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children released in 1996 concluded that "armed conflict, more than any other force, has transformed the lives of millions of children and women." Children are not just getting caught in the crossfire but are actually being targeted. The report found that in the past decade alone, an estimated 2 million children have been killed in armed conflict and three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Countless others have been forced to witness or even to take part in horrifying acts of violence. One of the most alarming trends relating to children and armed conflicts is their participation as active soldiers. Children as young as 8 years of age are being forcibly recruited, coerced and induced to become combatants.

The Peace Caucus recommends that Special Session acknowledge the need to reduce military production, spending and arms trafficking in order to provide funds for development. According to Ruth Leger Sivard's book *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996* "global military spending in 1994 continued a downward trend begun in 1987. Despite this good news, governments of the world still devoted over \$700 billion (current dollars) to their militaries in 1994... A 56 percent decline in military spending by Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics accounts for much of the overall reduction since 1987.... At the same time, members of NATO, established to deter or combat the Warsaw Pact, spent \$369 billion, about 10 times the level of their erstwhile enemy.... North America (Canada and, principally, the United States) accounted for \$239 billion of the NATO total and represented almost half of world-wide military spending....". The proposed expansion of NATO threatens to perpetuate these high levels of spending and also to fuel tensions in the region because "many Russians see continued maintenance of NATO, and particularly its planned expansion into Eastern Europe, as a direct threat." (p.11)

"Military spending in the developing world remained quite mixed.....African and Mideast military expenditures fell by 20 percent during this period, accounting for much of the decline, and offsetting increases in the Far East.... Military spending is in the Far East, with budgets growing nearly 30 percent in constant dollars in the past eight years." (p.11)

Antipersonnel land mines pose a problems that can no longer be ignored by the world community. Unexploded ordnance (UXO) --bombs, shells and grenades that failed to detonate, like land mines, are indiscriminate weapons that are triggered by innocent and unsuspecting passers-by. Children are particularly at risk because of their naturally curious nature and type of jobs they must do in agrarian societies. This review conference must address environmental problems caused by land mines and UXO, such as desertification resulting from farming marginal land because the good land is mined.

This Special Session should acknowledge the need to allocate and technology for removal of the 110 million antipersonnel land mines already planted in at least 68 countries. An immediate ban on the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of these mines is necessary.

This Special Session must address the need to abolish nuclear weapons. In May 1995 the NPT was

extended indefinitely; in July 1996 the Int'l Court of Justice ruled that the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegal; in August 1996 the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear weapons released a report proposing a series of practical steps toward a nuclear free world; in December the General Assembly passed the Malaysian Resolution calling for implementation of World Court decision; on December 10 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Joseph Rotblatt for his lifelong work in abolishing nuclear weapons; in early December over 60 ex-military leaders from 16 nations, including General Lee Butler (US) former head of the Strategic Air Command, General Andrew Goodpaster, former Supreme NATO Commander, and several prominent former members of the Soviet and Russian high command, called for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

We call on this body to recognize the need to embark immediately and conclude by the year 2000 negotiations on a nuclear weapons abolition convention that requires the phased elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time bound framework with provisions for effective verification and enforcement. According to Ruth Leger Sivard's World Military and Social Expenditure 1996 an estimated \$8 trillion dollars (\$8,000,000,000,000) has been spent on nuclear weapons since 1945.... (p.21)" The explosive yield of the world's nuclear arsenals has been reduced from 18,000 to 8,000 megatons.... It may be of little comfort to know that the reduced stockpile represents 727 times the 11 megatons of explosive power used in this century's three major wars which killed 44,000,000 people.

Further, the military must be held accountable for its actions. They must clean up and dispose of all toxic military waste in an environmentally sound manner. Production of fissile material must be suspended immediately and effective storage solutions implemented to avoid further contamination of the environment.

It is time for countries to move from a culture of violence and war to a culture of peace by structuring their economies so that they are not dependent on the military. Military expenditures should be reduced significantly and a portion of those funds redirected to sustainable development. Research and development should be shifted from defense-based industries to equitable development and socially responsible production to rectify environmental degradation and human rights violations.

We recommended that non-violent conflict prevention and resolution training and human rights education be made a part of all formal and informal curricula in all sectors of society as mandated in the Plan of Action of the UN Decade for Human Rights.

Further, recognizing the role that arms trafficking has played in fueling armed conflict throughout the world, this session must address the need to stop the flow of weapons. Countries should report responsibly to the UN Register of Conventional Weapons and move to adopt a Code of Conduct for Arms Transfers.

This session should require that compensation be paid by the military for past environmental degradation and human rights violations including harm to human health. Countries should enter into a moratorium to cease all military activities that could cause environmental degradation.

The international community should develop a new science of "Public Peace" based on the model of "Public Health." This would involve keeping track throughout the world of where manmade violence was breaking out. Analysis of the data would show how it might be controlled. Early intervention would alleviate the need for military solutions and resulting environmental degradation.

In keeping with the UN Agenda for Development, we believe that peace and development are indivisible and development cannot proceed easily in societies where military concerns are at or near the center of life. Societies whose economic effort in substantial part is devoted to military production inevitably diminish the prospect of their people for development. The NGO community was outraged five years ago when the governments blocked language concerning the military. It is

even more critical today that these issues be put on the table. If they are not, this review must be viewed as a failure.

CSD 5 Mantra: (Repeat)...Urgent Situation; Far Too Little Being Done; Bold Actions Needed; Measurable Steps Required; (Repeat)....

OUTREACH `97
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