

OUTREACH 1997

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speaking for the CSD/NGO Steering Committee

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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...

A STALEMATE: THE IMPORTANCE OF A TIE

On Wednesday, a feeling of frustration, an almost sickening feeling of paralysis that eventually would make the brain numb had started to envelop the NGO community -- and even affected some of the more environmentally-committed

delegates. The veteran delegate stated with soothing diplomatic language, "no stalemate, this is natural, you know, only part of the game, so to speak. There are still two more days to negotiate. We have a number of paragraphs already without brackets. Things will develop into a final document. I have seen this happen a number of times already at the UN."

That's fine for him to say. But with one more issue of Outreach to go before the end of CSD 5, and we face a critical question: How can we cover what is now going on in the CSD in a positive way for our global readership? How can we together push this process forward, when in effect a majority of delegates is moving the process backwards with urgency.

Words, words, words, 10 million of them.

Freedom of expression -- one of our most cherished and well used rights. During one verbal intervention at the UN, a delegate who speaks for an average of, say, 5 minutes uses about 800 words. During one 8-hour day of negotiations, up to 400, 000 words are used. During CSD 5, the delegates have consumed, in their official capacity alone, between 9 and 10 million words -- and that is not counting all the words that are tossed around in other types of consultations. Neither is it taking into account the clamour of NGOs who add a prodigious number of their own. And all this must be condensed into a consensus document which will comprise only around 10,000 words.

This is no easy job for the Chair.

Can we assume that all these words represent the best and most astute thoughts mankind can offer today on environmental thinking? I believe that it was the intention of the Founding Fathers of the UN, and is still the hope of a majority of mankind, that the representatives of each and every country working in the UN should be 'the best and the brightest.' And in these Halls of Global Concern we have been delegated with the trust of our Peoples.

Yet, some of us are environmentally shell shocked today after having been forced to digest the brutal reality of a number of statements like "bracket 'lead-poisoning' -- because I do not know what that is," and "bracket 'environmental impact assessment' -- because I do not know what that is." And just as we are about to move past a paragraph of already agreed and accepted language, a pious person slips into his seat, raises his arm, and with professional practice brackets 'reproductive rights'. The Pope did it again. Ten points for ideology, zero for understanding reality.

So we look to the veteran delegate for soothing comfort. And he says, "this is normal" and he means "in terms of negotiating practice." But not in "terms of environment."

Ah, the environment -- maybe some of these delegates have forgotten that this was actually the subject of this conference. "You know how we play," says the veteran delegate. "State your position, defend your arguments -- then negotiate. That's how we play."

So, this is only a game.

Had we but known ahead of time, we could have brought our toys as well. We would need some paraphernalia to play along: a microphone, a volume control, a headset, an armchair, an amplifier, an ability to speak at length sometimes without making too much sense, a feeling of importance, a nice dress for the female player and a suit and tie for the male. An 'overheated' and tired-looking male delegate loosened his tie and unbuttoned his shirt discretely after arguing intensely over the position of a comma in a document, saying, "It's a pity you're not taken seriously about saving the world, if you don't have a tie."

But an unresolved tie-break at the end of the game is a no-win position. Game score: Mankind, one (won?); Environment, nothing.

That's how the game stands before the last set is played on Friday.

...jgs

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Visit the CSD/NGO Steering Committee
in cyberspace at:

www.igc.apc.org/habitat/csd-97

All Editions of Outreach Are Posted There!

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RIO GRINDS...

The Top Ten Favorite Past Times of Delegates at the CSD

10. Visiting the Jeekyll + Hyde Club (6th Ave and 58th St)

9. Buying new and interesting books on Sustainable Development at the UN book store

8. Introducing brackets all over the text

7. Paying Car Parking Tickets

6. Working in small contact groups

5. Visiting the Vienna Cafe

4. Working nights trying to increase the length of the documents and its unreadability

3. Queuing for speaking slots for their Heads of State - well done Brazil + Canada !!

2. Deleting any commitments + targets in the text

1. Reading Outreach

QUOTES...

United Kingdom

"The rich nations have got to recognize that we have the primary, overwhelming responsibility for the resources necessary to combat the environmental degradation, which has been largely our fault. But we can only do this if the developing countries are part of the process."

"...I do hope we will take a great deal more interest in harnessing the hidden resources of young people, who in both developed and developing countries are so much closer to these issues and whose change of lifestyle could do so much to educate the older ones amongst us."

John Gummer

Secretary of State for the Environment

Philippines

"My delegation wishes to communicate effectively with people at the grass-root level, with the millions who in rural and remote areas are as on what sustainable development means for the present and

future existence...Meaningful dialogue, effective outreach, heart-to-heart consultation based on a common development language is required if Agenda 21 is to move beyond the conference hall to the villages in remote areas."

Leticia R. Shahani, Senator

Thanks to Magnus Bengtsson, Susanna Groth, Terese Nyborg and Staffan Danielsson of q2000.

NGO CORNER...

There are more than 550 accredited NGOs behind the NGO Steering Committee. Together they represent millions of people on all continents. This column introduces a few of these NGOs and their issue caucuses to you.

The Sustainable Societies Caucus

prepared by Pieter-Jeroen van der Gaag, ANPED, The Northern Alliance for Sustainability, and Laura Kallus, Integrative Strategies Forum, and the Sustainable Societies Caucus.

The Sustainable Societies Caucus was born out of meetings, particularly meetings clustered around the United Nations conferences and agency meetings of the past four years: World Summit on Social Development (Social Summit), Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), International Panel on Forests (IPF), and the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat 2). The caucus was established to move beyond the debate between "sustained economic growth" and "sustainable development" to a focus on how best to create and nurture sustainable communities and sustainable societies. Instead of talking about "achieving sustainable development" or about the "right to development", discussions should focus on the "right to sustainable communities and societies".

While the majority of NGO caucuses at CSD tend to focus on particular issues or regions, the Sustainable Societies Caucus focuses on the interdependence of those issues and regions. What we share in common as a community of NGOs, and what kinds of strategies (e.g. working on cross-sectoral issues) could enable us to go beyond the limitations of the official rhetoric and practices, and the exploration of alternative visions and approaches summarizes the approach of the caucus.

What is the Issue?

Each year the question inevitably arises: What is the issue? Perhaps our emphasis on the interdependence of CSD related issues creates the concern that "one overarching framework" is being promoted. However, what is being promoted is the need to continuously ask ourselves: Where are we going? What kind of communities and societies do we want to build? The caucus feels that the holistic approach-- the linking of issues-- is our issue. The interests of the local community should be at the forefront of all discussions. The caucus does not exist to compete with other networks. The participants have felt that there needs to be a follow up to and connection among the UN Summits the meetings, and that the issues should be linked.

Globalization versus the sustainable communities movement

The Sustainable Societies Caucus places a strong emphasis on local initiatives and the need for these efforts to link themselves to the national and international political environment. Globalization versus community is a guiding principle in the discussions of the caucus.

The caucus at this CSD session has come to the conclusion that to ensure that local communities develop sustainably much more emphasis needs to be placed on capacity building. The community needs to engage in a dialogue between government, NGO's, citizens groups, business etc. to work towards sustainability. Local Agenda 21 processes already in place in many countries provide one example on how to start such dialogues; in the majority of cases, however, local authorities have failed to engage the public on these questions, prompting grassroots and community-based initiatives

to build just and sustainable societies from the bottom-up. The caucus will produce a short paper illustrating some of these local initiatives and present this at UNGASS. There is a great deal of knowledge internationally that will need to be highlighted emphasizing the point that a global sustainable communities movement exists and is growing.

We invite people with such experience to contact Laura Kallus, of the Integrative Strategies Forum (address: 1612 K Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006; Phone: 1-202-872-5329, Fax: 1-202-331-8166, e-mail: jbarber@igc.apc.org), with examples of such sustainable community initiatives.

On Friday from 4-5 pm the caucus will meet again in Room E, and you are invited to join us then. þ

CEECAP:

A Regional Network in Eastern Europe
by Ewa Charkiewicz

A year ago 11 environmental organizations from 9 countries in Central and Eastern Europe initiated a network for sustainable consumption and production, CEECAP. When the Rio process started, very few environmental organizations existed in Eastern Europe. The focus was on local and national work. The CEE NGOs had to do several things at the same time: to build capacity, address environmental problems inherited from wasteful communist economies, and face the new environmental problems brought with consumerism, and trade liberalization. All of this in the context of very rapid changes. By now there a lot of experience, expertise, and policy proposals. This is however still dispersed in different countries in the region and mostly focused on environment. The concept of sustainable development has hardly been developed in our regional context. The aim of CEECAP is to pool together local experiences, knowledge, organizational resources, and exchange good practices within the region to have a more effective, and lasting response to confront the social and environmental challenges of transition.

Our work program for this year includes a research on progress and obstacles in achieving sustainable consumption and production patterns in the region, preparation of a regional Policy and Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production in Central and Eastern Europe, and preparation of information packages for lobbying and alliance building for sustainable consumption and production. Last year CEECAP has started to prepare a regional NGO report for the CSD with a focus on changes in consumption and production patterns, and contributed a document with our regional priorities for this session of CSD.

The CEECAP priorities for the CSD include:

-INDUSTRIAL HOT SPOTS. Application of efficiency and clean production instruments to solve the problems of industrial hot-spots, in the South and in countries in transition. This should be done in a partnership by CSD stakeholders, such as governments, international organization, business networks and NGOs.

-RIGHT TO KNOW. Survey of best existing practice and development of a module with tools and instruments for access to information on social, environmental, and health impacts of products and processing methods.

-Survey of best existing practice to address the adverse environmental impacts of COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING.

-Recommendation for changes in the MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENTS so that it includes not only the rights of the investors but also responsibilities.

-Development of a menu of tools and governmental commitments to facilitate new business activities in sustainable consumption and production.

-Integration of the cross-sectoral issues on changing consumption and production patterns, and finance, trade and investments in the 5 year program of work.

Among the 11 organizations which established CEECAP and contributed to the NGO report on changes in consumption and production patterns are Polish Ecological Club, VAK, Latvia, UMANOTERA, Slovenia, ECOSENS, Romania, and Tools for Transition. Prior to the CSD CEECAP members studied the reports from DPCSD, our country profiles, visited their ministries for environment, and through our newsletter disseminated information about the CSD process among the NGOs in the region. Despite all this homework we have done for the CSD, the Secretariat of the NGO Steering Committee for the CSD for the CSD did not share with us the funding available for Eastern European organizations. Both CEECAP representatives have paid their travel costs themselves. For more information on CEECAP you can contact at CSD Vida Ogorelec Wagner, Umanotera Slovenia, and Ewa Charkiewicz, Tools for Transition. We are in particular interested to find partner organizations in the South to lobby together to address the problem of industrial HOT SPOTS. Our countries will not 'leap-frog' to clean production if these problems are not solved.

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.

NGO VIEWPOINT...

Have Development, Keep the Military and Rescue the Environment ?

by Fredrik S. Heffermehl, Vice President, International Peace Bureau, Geneva; The Norwegian NGO Forum for Environment and Development, and the Peace Caucus

Don't forget: Military matters

Before UNCED in 1992, the UN Secretariat computed the annual cost of adequate measures to secure development and rescue the environment to be US \$ 1000 billion, - exactly the same amount as the world then used per year for military defense. It is unthinkable that we shall be able to reach the goals of Agenda 21 without a fundamental redirection of the financial and material resources that, with enormous pollution and danger as inevitable results, are being wasted on the illusion of military security. An illusion because inherently modern weapons and war fighting technologies are a primary threat to all forms of life and life-supporting systems. And because we end up short of means to meet very real threats to human security, and short of health and life-sustaining resources.

Before Rio, the Norwegian NGO campaign, in cooperation with the International Peace Bureau in Geneva contacted over 1000 NGOs worldwide to have UNCED give due attention to the military as a main obstacle to proper care of the environment and development. Unfortunately, no such reference came out of Rio. If we truly wish to see progress this is a situation we have to change.

From a sustainable development point of view, the military is a counter-productive, sector. The dominating part of the costs of humanitarian aid, refugee assistance, goes to repair the disastrous consequences of wars. A humble guess is that aspects of the military affects absolutely almost every theme under Agenda 21, and in more ways than are commonly perceived or even known. Some examples:

-Depletion of non-renewable resources

-Land use made dangerous or impossible by land mines, or land used for military production or exercises (worldwide approximately the same area as the Nordic countries, 750.000-1500.000 sq. km).

-Military planes consume 1/4 of all jet fuel used in the world.

-Pollution of all kinds whether in war or without war, ranging from widespread radioactive contamination from uranium-tipped tanks penetrators (Gulf war) to the dumping or burning of chemical weapons.

Both individual studies and the report of the UN Secretary-General, called "Critical Trends," makes it clear that environmental and resource problems will be a major source of conflict and risk to security in the future. Such factors also play a role in ethnic conflicts and are a type of problem that cannot be resolved with weapons.

I recommend every NGO, organization or single individual, to give due consideration to the above aspects. Whatever your special interest is, financial or water resources, forests, debt, agriculture, aid, climate, oceans, trade, energy, toxic chemicals, mining, desertification, indigenous populations, biodiversity, radioactive waste, atmosphere, rural development, you have every reason to check out the military-industrial complex and its role in the creation and the resolution of the problems. Last but not least - POVERTY.

Certain governments are likely to continue to resist any discussion of such issues in the present context - and almost any other context. They prefer to have the military topics isolated and removed from popular and democratic fora. One method is to say that these are specialized topics that are addressed in other fora. True as it may be that the details in some cases have to be hammered out elsewhere, the lack of political will is often blocking all progress. In order to succeed, the Earth Summit must look at security in a comprehensive perspective - and take the many consequences of principle 25 in Agenda 21, stating that "Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible."

What to do:

Check out military aspects with expertise within your own circles. Contact the Peace Caucus (212-750 5795), which had a solid article in Outreach on Wednesday April 16. The Norwegian NGO Forum has worked on these issues for a year and their Earth Summit position paper contains some detailed proposals. Consult peace organizations, such as the International Peace Bureau in Geneva. Get hold of Ruth Leger Sivard "World Military and Social Expenditure", a rich source of statistics, facts, graphs and analysis of these issues (World Priorities, Washington - (202) 965 1661).

The International Peace Bureau (41 Rue de Zurich, CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland - Phone +41-22-731 6429 (Fax: 738 9419), email: ipb@gn.apc.org) is the world's oldest and most comprehensive peace organization. Founded in 1892, the IPB among its members (1997) counts 141 national organizations in 46 countries and 18 international organizations. The IPB invites you to get involved and take part in the process leading up to a major international event in the Hague, the Netherlands, May 11-18, 1999, to abolish wars as the century ends. Contact IPB for more information. p

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DAILY MEETINGS:

(unless otherwise announced)

Youth Caucus

8:30-9:00 a.m., Church Center

Women's Caucus

8:45-9:15 a.m., Room D

NGO Strategy Session

9:15-10:00 a.m., Room D

Transport Caucus(from 21-25 April)

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Room 9

Press & Communications Committee
12:00-1:00 p.m., Cafeteria

Process Sub-Committee
6:00-7:00 p.m., Room E

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:
Thursday, 24 April, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Room E

Evaluation of Lobbying: 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., room to be announced at morning strategy session

TODAY!
ALL NGOs ARE INVITED TO A MEETING WITH THE G-77, 2:00-2:45, ROOM 2

Other Caucus Meetings Today:

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

Health & Environment Caucus
Thursday, 24 April, 2-3 p.m., Rm E

Health Hazards of Environmental Exploitation
Presenters: Irene Kurowyckyj, World Movement of Mothers; Dr. Sorosh Roshan, International Health Awareness Network

Health & Environment Caucus*Co-convening NGOs for CSD: International Federation of Settlements; International Health Awareness Network; International Union for Health Promotion and Health Education; M.O.A. Foundation; NGO Committee on Sustainable Development; Society for Public Health Education; Federation of Ukrainian Women; Working Group on Women and Environment (NGO Committee on the Status of Women); World Information Transfer [*initiators of Caucus at Habitat II]; World Movement of Mothers.

UNEP LAUNCHES "maESTro"

TODAY, 24 April at 1:15 p.m. in Conference Room D, UNEP will demonstrate a new software package called "maESTro", containing a Searchable Information Directory on Environmentally Sound Technologies (ESTs) . A limited number of copies of the software will be available. For more information, contact J. Sniffen (UNEP) at 963-8094.

For information on the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, contact Esmeralda Brown, Chairperson of the NGO Committee for the Decade at: tel (212) 9682-3633; fax - (212) 682-5354; umcgbgm@undp.org.

Friday 25th April 1997 at 9:00 am

St. Bartholomew's Church
Park Avenue at 51st Street
New York City

The Interfaith Center of New York and the Temple of Understanding request your presence at a Solemn Interfaith Service to honor The Secretary-General of the United Nations and Mrs. Nane Annan and to welcome His Excellency the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations and Mrs. Barbara Richardson and all Permanent Representatives of Member States to the United Nations.

The service will last one hour. Please be seated by 8:45 am. Traditional attire welcome.

NGO CONSULTATION ON INCREASING ACCESS TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ITS MAIN COMMITTEES AND ALL AREAS OF WORK OF THE UN

WHEN: Wednesday., 30 April
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
WHERE: UN Headquarters
(room to be announced)

Representatives of NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC and those Associated with DPI are invited to participate in a day of discussion on specific issues that are likely to be raised at meetings of the Sub-Group on NGOs of the Open-Ended High-Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, which is examining ways to increase NGO participation in the work of the UN General Assembly, its Main Committees and the UN System as a whole. All UN Missions are also invited to send Representatives.

This Consultation is being organized under the auspices of the NGO Committee Chairs of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (CONGO). For further information, call the CONGO office in NY at (212) 986-8557.

ENERGY SPOTLIGHT...

G-77 Stand on Energy is Self-defeating
by Ravi Sharma

Energy is essential to economic and social development and improved quality of life. Much of the world's energy, however, is produced and used in ways that could not be sustained if technology were to remain constant and if overall quantities were to increase substantially. The need to control atmospheric emissions of greenhouse and other gases and substances will increasingly need to be based on efficiency in energy production, transmission, distribution and consumption, and on growing reliance on environmentally sound energy systems, particularly renewable sources of energy.

World commercial energy production and consumption continued to increase and in 1995, the most recent year for which reliable data are available, petroleum consumption world-wide was almost 68 million barrels per day, the majority of which, over 40 million barrels were consumed by OECD countries. Also, increasing consumption of coal reached about 3.3 billion metric tonnes in 1995 up

1.2% from the level of consumption in 1994. On average, developing countries accounted for a third of world commercial energy consumption in 1995.

Globally the carbon intensity of energy (gC/MJ) continues to decline at about 0.3 per cent a year with slight increases in energy intensity (MJ/GNP). The extent to which the world is dependent on energy for economic output has declined by about 1 per cent a year. However, the growth in world economic output has out-paced these effects resulting in increased global emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

The one major obstacle to increasing carbon intensity of carbon, that is making non-fossil fuels competitive is the removal of artificial subsidies to this sector provided for the last several decades. This reduction or elimination of subsidies to the fossil fuel industry will lead to a pricing structure that will better reflect true costs of energy giving for example renewable energy a chance.

Annual world-wide investments in energy supply systems are of the order of US\$150 billion. However, within a period of 50 to 100 years, the entire energy supply system will be replaced at least twice. New investments to replace old plants or to expand capacity are opportunities to adopt technologies that are more environmentally friendly at low incremental costs.

There is increased public and political awareness of local air pollution impacts of fossil fuel burning in many developing country cities. Increased production and use of fossil fuels, especially coal, the most abundant and carbon intensive fossil fuel, can have severe local and regional environmental impacts. Locally, air pollution already takes a significant toll on human health. Acid deposition and other forms of air pollution can also degrade downwind habitats - especially lakes, streams, and forests - and can damage crops, buildings, and other materials. For example, a study by the World Energy Council and the International Institute for Applied Systems Research (IIASA) points out that in the absence of sulphur abatement measures, acid depositions in parts of China and South Asia could eventually exceed the critical load for major agricultural crops by a factor of 10.

In addition shortages of investment capital to build fossil fuel-based energy production and distribution facilities may act to restrain global energy consumption, especially in developing countries. Cost of the energy infrastructure required to meet the development goals of developing countries is estimated in the trillions of dollars over the next two decades - a sum far higher than present investment levels can finance. Therefore how can any developing country really think that without reducing subsidies it can provide energy for all ?

Governments and markets have been unable to incorporate environmental externalities in the energy and transport sector limiting efficient use. Since no major international effort exists to do this, few countries, even those interested in such policies nationally, fear that it will make them internationally uncompetitive. Now CSD offers them that international opportunity and G-77 will, especially the non oil producing countries will only drop this at their own peril.

NGO MATTERS...

On 21 April 1997, Outreach published an article by Mr. R. Sinclair entitled "Earth Council Faces the Music." The article reported on a meeting between The Earth Council and the CSD/NGO Steering Committee. Johannah Bernstein of the Earth Council has asked that her 7 page article be published in full to rectify several mistakes she feels Mr. Sinclair made in his article.

As Outreach tries to cater to the entire NGO/CSD Community, the editors have therefore been forced to abbreviate the article due to its length, but will have the unedited article available for those who want it.

EARTH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO OUTREACH ARTICLE WRITTEN BY ROB SINCLAIR
22 APRIL 1997

by Johannah Bernstein
European and UN Coordinator
for the Earth Council

We are writing to express our profound concerns regarding the tone and substance of the article "Earth Council Faces the Music" by Rob Sinclair, dated 17 April 1997. Many of the comments made by Mr. Sinclair were based on erroneous facts, and in order to set the record straight, we respond with the following remarks:

First, regarding the reference to the Earth Council "assuming a mandate from civil society to organize their collective contribution," it should be clarified at the outset that the Earth Council does not speak for or act on behalf of civil society or any specific constituency for that matter.

The Council has never represented itself in this way. The "mandate" to organize Rio+5 came from our governing body as well as from the Earth Council Institute, our advisory body consisting of over 20 research institutes and NGOs, including the IUCN, IDRC, Stockholm Environment Institute, and IIED, to name but a few.

Second, on the first page of the article, Mr. Sinclair refers to the Rio+5 process's "questionable legitimacy." While there were many individuals who did not agree with the need for the Rio+5 Forum, there were countless more who felt that Rio+5 was indeed providing an important complement to both the official process and the work of the CSD NGOs whose main focus in New York was advocacy and lobbying in response to official positions.

Third, Mr. Sinclair states that "the failure of the Earth Council to effectively address those concerns has come back to haunt them" (sic). For well over a year, the Earth Council has engaged in a continuing dialogue with the CSD NGO Steering Committee to address and respond to the concerns that were raised in advance of Rio+5. However, despite our continuing efforts to dialogue with the CSD Steering Committee leadership and resolve differences, we continually came up against rumors and criticisms that were completely ungrounded in fact and reality, and propagated by individuals who never saw fit to approach us directly.

Fourth, while the comments raised during the Rio+5 briefing last week were indeed critical, we do not appreciate the manner in which Mr. Sinclair has inflamed the situation both by using such language as "attack" on the Earth Council, "initial blast", and "litany of critiques", as well as by stating that "few government delegates dared to attend the meeting". These comments reveal a bias on the part of Mr. Sinclair against the Earth Council regardless of the actual facts, of which he chooses to remain ignorant. The comments are equally inappropriate in attempting to presume the motives of those delegates who, for whatever reason, chose not to attend the briefing.

Fifth, regarding Mr. Sinclair's reference to a comment made by a Dutch Environment Ministry official: let us clarify for the record here that, based on clarification that we sought from this Dutch official, NO accusation of non-transparency was made. Once again, Mr. Sinclair has twisted and distorted a comment in order to support his own personal views. The Dutch official confirmed to us that he does indeed have problems with the Earth Charter process, but that he does not harbor any ill-will towards the Earth Council and certainly did not intend any accusation of non-transparency.

On the last day of Rio+5, our writing team, after staying up the entire night before, produced a rough-draft set of recommendations which were summarized from the substantive work that had been produced by participants in both the plenary and workshop sessions. It is simply false to say that participants left with "no paper." Given the extremely short time period of Rio+5, it was absolutely impossible to prepare final text by the last day. [However, as promised to participants,] within one week, all final recommendations were posted on the Earth Council's web site, with hard copies distributed at the CSD.

Sixth, Mr. Sinclair states that "no other governments chose to respond likely because there were very few government delegates who dared to attend the meeting." This is precisely the sort of inflammatory comment which we find unacceptable. We have been speaking bilaterally with many government officials about Rio+5 during the course of the CSD and we do not find this comment to in any way reflect the views of those many officials with whom we have spoken.

In the body of his article, Mr. Sinclair refers to specific critiques that were raised by various NGOs. We respond below to each[*] of the questions that were raised, in hopes of finally putting many of the misconceptions to rest. [*see full text]

[Re:] inadequate Southern participation at Rio+5: Out of the 422 participants, 231 were from the South and 191 were from the North. Out of the civil society organizations represented, 92 were from the South and 40 were from the North. Out of the 68 local government and NCSD representatives, 56 were from the South and 12 were from the North. Since this NGO in question did not actually attend Rio, perhaps it is best to allow the facts to speak for themselves.

[Re:] "with all this paper and money, what is being done for the South?": One of the main objectives of Rio+5 was to examine the problems that have been experienced in the implementation of Agenda 21 at all levels of governance and specially to articulate new approaches for resolving those problems.

[Re: Just] "another UN document to put on the shelves.": The objective of Rio+5 has been quite the opposite: namely, to move agenda to action. First of all, the final outcome of Rio+5 was not a "UN document," since Rio+5 was not an intergovernmental process. Secondly, the final report, which contains all the main recommendations, reveals a tremendous amount of work in trying to respond to the range of implementation problems with action-oriented solutions that can be specifically tailored to the special needs and considerations of each region.

[Re:] "lack of collaboration between the Earth Council and the CSD NGO Steering Committee, and asked how the Earth Council justified setting up a parallel process to the one being implemented by the Steering Committee, including the Dialogue Sessions": First of all, this comment reflects a lack of understanding of the year-long efforts that have been directed in communicating with the CSD Steering Committee. Furthermore, the Earth Council invited and paid for six CSD NGO Steering Committee NGOs to participate in the Rio+5 Forum, not to mention the outreach that was undertaken on our part to ensure CSD NGO participation in the many national and regional consultations. In terms of the comment regarding the justification of a parallel process, it was precisely the agreement that was reached early on with the CSD NGO Steering Committee that we would create a process that would complement the advocacy work of the CSD NGOs, and respond to that work with concrete implementation strategies.

Mr. Sinclair also states towards the end of the article that "questions should be raised why this organization should be afforded a special status outside the recognized procedure for NGO participation." First of all, the Earth Council is an NGO accredited under the normal UN procedures. It has no special status whatsoever. Like any NGO, we are free to develop initiatives as we see fit in accordance with the mandates given to us by our governing bodies.

And finally, Mr. Sinclair totally misrepresents Mr. Kalaw's reference to the Earth Council's relationship with National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs). The Earth Council is in no way formally affiliated with any of these organizations, and while the Rio+5 process did work closely with many of these bodies, we certainly do not claim to be "qualitatively different from the sectoral structure under which the Steering Committee functions" by virtue of our work with the NCSDs. We do not blindly endorse every NCSD simply by virtue of its mere existence, but rather recognize that there are considerable problems with many NCSDs in all regions, in terms of composition, scope of work, and legitimacy in the eyes of civil society. It is precisely because of

these problems that we are working to ensure that these bodies are more democratic, transparent and fully participatory.

We do not deny that there were numerous problems both with the form and substance of Rio+5. An effort was made to create a space that was not dominated by an intergovernmental process, where civil society actors could come together to respond to the key problems on the sustainable development agenda in a way that had not been done before, namely with a systems-based approach that attempted to respond to these problems across sectors, actors, and levels of governance.

Furthermore, the allegations of bad faith implied by Mr. Sinclair only serve to drive an enormous wedge within the NGO community at a critical time when solidarity and cooperation are most needed, especially after the considerable effort that has been directed in the past few days to address concerns and advance partnership with the CSD Steering Committee.

IN THE NEWS...

Gore Introduces a Greener Foreign Policy

WASHINGTON, April 22 (Reuters) - The United States will open offices in 12 countries to tackle regional environmental problems as part of a new green slant to its foreign policy, the State Department said today.

The announcement came in the department's first annual report on world ecological problems. "Regional environmental hubs" will be opened this year in embassies in Costa Rica, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia, Nepal, Jordan and Thailand, the report said. Six more will open next year in specified capitals.

Vice President Al Gore said the rep