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LETTER

OUTREACH

The Voice of the NGO Community at the CSD

So Far, So Good: High Levels Still to Come

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CSD NGO Steering Committee and World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA)

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Stalled MAI: Victory for Civil Society

On Tuesday April 28 1998, the Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) countries decided to follow the advice NGOs gave them at the end of October 1997: Delay the completion of negotiations and assess the potential impact of the MAI.

In an extraordinary statement in Paris today, the OECD countries admitted that the planned Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) cannot be signed this year due to widespread public opposition and Parliamentary concerns with the treaty's conflicts with environmental, social and cultural regulations, and impact on developing countries.

NGOs today claimed victory for the failure of the MAI negotiations, welcoming OECD commitments to carry out an "assessment" of the MAI with interested parts of their societies' and the importance of the public debate on the implications of globalisation. NGOs have been calling for such an assessment since October 1997, and will hold the Ministers to their commitment to a new "transparent negotiating process and active public discussion.

Accepting the broad criticisms of the MAI put forward by NGOs, Trade and Finance Ministers were forced to include a strong statement that this agreement should not inhibit the exercise of regulatory powers, and that it must be consistent with the "sovereign responsibility of governments". NGOs see

this assessment as a chance to fundamentally review the purpose and content of the MAI. The huge number of problems with the current draft argue for a different type of agreement which balances the rights and responsibilities of investors and gives citizens rights to control their own development processes. NGOs will not be satisfied with an assessment that only focuses on the details of the MAI, but instead demand a wide-ranging discussion on the international regulation of globalisation.

NGOs are extremely concerned that OECD countries will also seek the support of other countries for the next steps towards the creation of investment rules in the World Trade Organization. The WTO is inappropriate to deal comprehensively with the links between investment policy and sustainable development. It has a narrow trade focus, imbalances in its structure, bias against developing countries, and a lack of transparency and public accountability. Earlier attempts to introduce a Multilateral Investment Agreement (MIA) at the WTO, with the same thrust and provisions as the OECD MAI were rejected by the majority of countries at the WTO and NGOs from many countries. We therefore reject the OECD proposal to expand and intensify current work on investment at the WTO.

By Friends of the Earth International, Third World Network, and World Wide Fund for Nature.

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MAI in CSD or CSD in MAI?

Yesterday, the CSD saw the politics of sustainable development turned upside down, and assumptions about its institutional home fundamentally challenged. In the morning, news from Paris reached New York about the outcome of the OECD Ministerial on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). The Rio Principles gained a major victory, as progress on the MAI was halted by public pressure. Governments agreed to open this agreement to public dialogue and a wide ranging debate on the social and environmental implications of globalisation. At the same time in the CSD many delegations were trying to banish all mention of the MAI from the industry text, refusing even to repeat OECD pronouncements on the need for the agreement to support sustainable development.

This contrast was heightened in a lunchtime debate on the future of the MAI where speaker after speaker - whether from NGOs or official bodies - reiterated the need for rules on foreign investment to be grounded in the fundamental principles of sustainable development which underlie the sustainable development process.

What are we to make of this phenomena? Should the MAI be scrapped and a new agreement be negotiated in the U.N. – perhaps even under the CSD? Or will the mandate of the CSD be pursued more vigorously in other fora such as the OECD? Where is the true home for negotiations to control globalisation? And how can the CSD achieve its aims if the implications of negotiations such as the MAI cannot even be officially discussed inside the process?

OUTREACH has run a number of articles to highlight global concerns with this system. Despite the recent victory in Paris, pressure on the MAI negotiations must not be relinquished. Therefore we bring two more articles on the MAI. These articles were written before the OECD Ministerial Announcement. However, the issues are just as pertinent after the postponement as they were beforehand.

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Industry And The MAI

Though governments have often protested the fact, there is no real doubt that the MAI has been driven by the needs and interests of OECD multinational companies (MNCs). In fact, the

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) - which represents the interests of MNCs - has had a long running agenda since the 1930s to negotiate an agreement on multilateral investor protection.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the ICC were intimately involved in the OECD's 'research' for the MAI from 1991 to 1995. In fact, the ICC's 1996 'Statement on Multilateral Rules for Investment' was virtually identical in scope and emphasis to the draft MAI from June 1996. It was clear from this statement that ambitions of MNCs through their 'representative' organisations have expanded far beyond protection of investor assets from arbitrary expropriation, and are now focused on wholesale liberalisation outside the OECD. For example:

"The preponderance of restrictions on foreign investment lie outside the OECD area ... Business needs the benefits of an international investment regime to include the fast-growing countries of Asia, central and eastern Europe, and Latin America".

The MAI was seen as the way of achieving corporate ambitions on market access which were only partially realised in the GATS and TRIMS agreements. The use of the OECD as a negotiating forum for a free-standing international agreement - a unique event - was aimed to bypass the 'low standard' forum of the WTO where developing countries have a voice.

This push for broad liberalisation measures at any cost has resulted in many of the most damaging MAI proposals, including: the ban on compulsory performance requirements; the broad definitions of expropriation and rules on profit repatriation all of which have raised serious regulatory and development concerns. The pre-dominance of business voices arguing for the reduction of any risk to investment returns has swamped other constituencies which wish to prevent increased risk to the environment, workers or pro-poor development.

As well as promoting investors rights, the ICC has also nullified any risk that annexing the OECD Guidelines for Trans-National Enterprises to the MAI would give a real mechanism for investor accountability, by demanding that the agreement reiterated their 'non-binding' and 'voluntary' nature [MAI Preamble]. This language of intent is even weaker than that agreed in the Guidelines themselves in 1976, and business representatives have been openly derisory about the worth of the Guidelines in OECD fora.

However, despite their early enthusiasm, the ICC and its members are beginning to have cold feet about the MAI. By coincidence this reluctance has coincided with the growth of NGO involvement and democratic scrutiny of the process. As well as disappointment about the amount of OECD liberalisation - especially from US business over the likely restrictions on audio-visual sector takeovers - there is real fear that the MAI might be a vehicle for international corporate regulation in the future.

In classic style, this perceived risk to their own business interests has been expressed as a high minded concern that placing good environmental and labour standards on OECD investors would drive developing countries away from the MAI, thus retarding their development! An ICC letter to the Financial Times (January 15th, 1998) argued:

"The agreement risks being encumbered by excess baggage that would dilute business enthusiasm and discourage non-OECD members from acceding ... OECD governments should be careful not to discourage developing countries from joining the agreement?"

The use of the phrase 'excess baggage' to describe rights for citizens and workers, coupled with responsibilities on investors, sits at odds with many statements by ICC members on sustainable development. In fact it seems that the ICC's stance inside the MAI negotiations is at odds with many of its more progressive members, and this split has stemmed from a lack of informed internal consultation over ICC tactics.

Many companies, and certainly investment banks and funds, recognise the business case for international business regulation which can reduce investment risk by retaining a firm's 'license to operate' in a community, while eliminating the threat of being under-cut by unscrupulous competitors. However, while businesses have such views privately, and also share many NGO over the current MAI, none have yet raised their voice against the official 'business' position. This attitude merely encourages the lowest common denominator to prevail, and raises serious doubts about the ability of business to act rationally as a major group inside political processes. However, we look forward to being surprised by seeing a more mature and diverse spectrum of business positions emerge over the next year of MAI negotiations.

By Nick Mabey, WWF-UK

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MAI: Erosion of Sovereignty

Just imagine for a moment what it would be like to live in a world where people are governed, not by democratically-elected governments, but by transnational corporations which are unelected, unaccountable and uncontrollable. Science fiction, you say? Not so, with the MAI.

There is good reason the OECD wants this deal; its member nations are the home base for Global Fortune's top 500 corporations. The MAI is based largely on the assumption that capital has little or no social obligation in the new global economy. As currently drafted, virtually all the "rights" are given to foreign-based corporations while the "obligations" are imposed on governments.

Essentially, the MAI forbids "discriminating" between domestic and foreign "investors" in any sector. While investors are generally understood to be businesses, the MAI considers any government regulations, laws or practices that interfere with the commercial interests of foreign corporations in every sector of the economy - natural resources, health, education, pensions, agriculture and culture included - to be discriminatory, and open for challenge.

In particular, three main features of the MAI show it to be a global Bill of Rights for transnational corporations. First, the MAI confers nation-state status on transnational corporations. It grants them preferential treatment for their investments through the "most favoured nation" and "national treatment" clauses that ensure that they can never be treated less favourably, but can still be treated more favourably, than domestic companies. As well, key personnel of transnational corporations are to be given diplomatic immunity to bypass a country's immigration laws. Further, governments agree to put priority on protecting the "sovereignty" of transnational corporations from other countries, including protecting them from "civil strife."

Second, the MAI contains a set of investment rules that are primarily designed to allow transnational corporations to regulate governments. It forbids governments from setting performance requirements on transnational corporations such as job creation, local hiring or restricted access to natural resources and prevents governments from providing subsidies, grants or loans to domestic companies to stimulate the local economy unless they are given equally to foreign companies.

The MAI prevents governments from regulating the flow of global capital making them powerless to curb frantic speculation in financial markets, and ensures that foreign-based companies have a competitive edge over domestic companies in bidding for the sale of public assets.

Third, and most serious, the MAI provides transnational corporations with binding tools to enforce these investment rules in their own interest. It compels governments to roll back any laws, policies or programs that do not conform with MAI rules and prevents the introduction of any new "non-conforming" laws.

The MAI grants foreign-based corporations the right to directly sue governments for alleged violations of MAI rules, claiming monetary damage through either domestic courts or binding international arbitration panels and it applies to the laws and practices of all sub-national levels of government as well.

If the MAI is ratified, it will profoundly alter the global balance of power between the public interests of citizens and the private interests of global capital. Human rights, environmental stewardship, global labour conditions and social security for the world's people will be deeply and permanently affected. We must reject the MAI.

Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke are leading Canadian activists and the authors of MAI and the Threat to Canadian Sovereignty and MAI and the Threat to American Freedom.

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Business and Industry agrees: Dialogues a success.

After the dialogue sessions were over, OUTREACH talked to the major players in the sessions. OUTREACH editor Jan-Gustav Strandenaes talked to Peter Scupholme Manager, External Affairs, Environmental Relations at BP International. Scupholme represents Business and Industry. Here is are his views on the events at CSD.

Business is all about performance and partnerships. The principle of dialogues is not new. I think people in our group all recognize these facts. We are by no means new to this process. Roundtables are used all the time in business. And the purpose of our roundtables is the same as the purpose of these dialogues: exchange of ideas and information, confidence building, defining the problems and looking for a way forward.

If the object of the sessions was to inform each other, and I am really talking about all the players -- governments, the UN secretariat, the NGOs, Trade Unions -- then I think it is fair to say we found the two days of dialoguing very useful. We spent a good deal of time and resources prior to these sessions on fact finding and developing our background papers. Even that was to an extent a learning process for us.

The structure of the dialogue sessions can probably be improved. It was more stylized than we expected, but that may have something to do with the physical setup of the ECOSOC chamber. A less formal structure allowing for more process would be preferable. Any suggestion or input that can help improve the present dialogues would be welcome. However, institutionalizing the dialogues may be counterproductive. That may cause the dialogues to develop into a regular negotiation procedures stifling the very creativity that should help develop and promote ideas and plans on sustainable development and environment.

People at the UN tend to be consumed by process and seem less concerned with what is going on at the country level. You know, you don't really get sustainable development just by carrying out a number of dialogue sessions. Business has regulations and we have carried out many plans and projects and initiated many programs, often on a voluntary basis, on sustainable development than many give us credit for. We felt it was important to say this.

We participate in the CSD to build trust, and feel that we can trust the other stakeholders and players as well. I know business people attending this conference have been positively surprised. The process delivered more than we expected. On the other hand, the discussion could be more focussed on certain topics. The UN must not micromanage everything, but facilitate the ongoing process.

A year ago the process was stilted. Summing up that experience, I would have to say that we experienced a series of monologues usually in parallel sessions to the negotiating process. That has

improved a great deal, even though, as I indicated before, the ECOSOC Chamber is not ideal for a true dialogue.

The discussion that developed over the suggestion to have a multi-stakeholder approach to review voluntary initiatives was interesting. Contrary to what some may have perceived, we never felt threatened by this initiative. How we take this proposal forward is crucial to the outcome of this suggestion. We were very happy with the Norwegian proposal which was backed by Canada, and in some ways I think the language we have in the present text may be strengthened.

These dialogue sessions were not derailed by one single interest group. The Chair kept it on the tracks, and the participants were disciplined and focused. Looking back on this, I would like to say this has been a success story, and delivered more than we expected.

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Key points and observations by Industry Delegation following the Dialogue Session on Industry and Water

There was almost unanimous agreement on the importance of water to the process of Sustainable Development.

Many participants emphasized pollution prevention and cleaner production as effective tools for water management.

There was general recognition that over 1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water; over 2 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation; 3 to 5 billion deaths per year resulted directly from water related diseases.

The issue of 'full cost pricing' was presented as one means for addressing the water issue.

Indigenous peoples, NGOs and several governments expressed concern that the social, spiritual and environmental values of water are not adequately covered by strict economic pricing or valuation of water as a commodity.

There were several recommendations for further discussion for this complex issue on a 'safe-haven' which would facilitate a fuller stakeholder dialogue and possible agreement on definition of key terms.

Business made 3 specific recommendations:

1. CSD needs to define what are social goods, how they should be monetized and social goods should be internalized in market prices.
2. The business community sought two countries as partners in evaluating how to reach full cost pricing and the way water tariffs can be used.
3. The business community sought two countries as partners in a study to examine how watershed management could contribute to water protection and act as a carbon sink for greenhouse gases, under the CDM.

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Peoples Tribunal: Human Rights and the Environment

The International Peoples Tribunal held its second session during the sixth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development which focused on themes of "Sustainable Production and Consumption" and "Industry and Sustainable Development".

The International Peoples Tribunal seeks to provide a forum for communities and peoples who have no other forum or have been unable to obtain justice in the fora that they approached. The tribunal heard nine new cases.

-Unsustainable and destructive practices of production and consumption: of energy (in India), bananas (in Costa Rica) and shrimps (again in India).

-Practices of unacceptably bad governance (in Puerto Rico and in Mexico)

-Refusal to respect the sovereignty and humanity of the First Peoples (in Canada, Mexico and the U.S)

-The plight of 32 million people, around the world, exposed to nuclear radiation which demands an investigation of the nuclear industry worldwide and the mining, processing, use and disposal of nuclear materials. Current practices of international and national setting of standards regarding exposure to nuclear radiation also demand urgent appraisal.

As with the cases presented to the first session of this Tribunal, the new cases presented also raise urgent issues regarding the responsibility and accountability of corporate actors and of State actors. The globalization of lawlessness and the globalization of unsustainability which this Tribunal detailed in its last Statement remain unabated. Moreover, several related concerns and practices emerge from the new cases presented.

On the basis of the cases presented before us, the Tribunal will conduct further inquiry over the next few months and address in its final statement on this second session the following key issues:

-The incidence of the globalization of unsustainable consumption. Consumption which is unsustainable: economically, in terms of destruction of livelihoods; environmentally, since it triggers a race to consume that will end the human race; morally, since it can be achieved only through the infliction of intolerable impoverization; and in planetary terms since it threatens the very survival of the biosphere.

-The incidence of the globalization of unsustainable production premised on the maximization of global profits at any cost -- human or ecological. Production which is unsustainable is evidenced by: the promotion of avaricious, ever-escalating consumer expectations and demands; a world of global mega mergers and global sweatshops; and, the maximization of resource depletion and of pollution with drastic, often irreversible, local, national and global impacts on resources, such as water, key to survival of the community of life.

-The need for business and industry to become socially responsible and ecologically sustainable in their products

and production processes

-Securing the right to effective participation and accountability, and preventing the erosion of the related rights of information, access and transparency by claims advanced by the corporate sector on basis of trade secrets and competition policy or advanced by the state on the basis of "security of the state".

-Monitoring and resisting the creation of a new international legal regime by and for corporations through the increasing commodification of life and the creation of global property rights; and resisting attempts at total insulation from accountability by the creation of such a regime of lawless law.

Serious incidents of genocide were presented to the Tribunal, in several countries in the cases before us, as well as reports in the international press and to the UN.

The Tribunal condemns all acts and practices of genocide, anywhere in the world and calls for an immediate cessation thereof. The Tribunal recognizes the invaluable contributions of civil society worldwide in exposing such genocidal practices as well as in the prevention of and protection from such practices and urges the United Nations system to renew its own efforts to those ends as well.

The Tribunal reiterates its call for global solidarity to ensure a rule of law premised on respect for justice, human rights, the environment and for humane governance.

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Local Agenda 21's: Women Take Action, Take Account

Day of Women Program on Gender Equality in Sustainable Development

The old adage "men may work from sun to sun, but women's work is never done" came to mind late last Thursday evening during the Day of Women workshop program in Conference Room 1. After most delegates and NGOs had left the room, tired from a long day's negotiations that ran late, five women activists and local authorities from Brazil, Peru, Germany, and the Netherlands reported on progress and problems in their implementation of local Agenda 21's while mainstreaming gender equality. Significantly, this workshop is the only scheduled event to date at CSD-6 dealing with local implementation of Agenda 21.

Women Transform the Mainstream

The informative and dynamic presentations belied the late evening hour and were followed by a provocative discussion with some four dozen participants in the audience.

The presenters contributions provided first-hand commentary on local Agenda 21's featured in Women Transform the Mainstream – 18 Case Studies of Women Activists Challenging Industry, Demanding Clean Water and Calling for Gender Equality in Sustainable Development. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) jointly published this 82-page background paper for CSD-6.

Again and again, the presenters made the point that if women participate at the outset in local sustainable development planning, the entire community benefits. Indeed, their involvement prevents the problems that arise when only some of the stakeholders are included in decision-making.

Amsterdam: Women Test the Living Environment

Jacqueline Kuhn of the Institute for Public and Politics of Amsterdam has been developing programs to stimulate women to create local environmental policies to implement Agenda 21. The inspiration for this project that now has almost 30 groups working at the local level in the Netherlands originally came from the 1991 World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet. At the WEDO-sponsored event, 1500 women from 83 countries met in Miami and were urged to return home and involve grassroots women in the Rio process by means of a "local report card" campaign.

A Good Environment Begins with Yourself

Using the slogan "A good environment begins with yourself", Dutch women worked to develop changes in personal practice concerning the environment as well as proposing structural changes to improve the impact by local industries.

After three years, participants concluded that a number of conditions are essential to assure women's concerns and full participation in local Agenda 21 efforts. First, financial support of NGOs is essential. While not always the biggest impediment to women's participation, it often is a problem that mitigates against effective organization and local awareness women's opportunities for involvement.

Secondly, professional assistance is needed to support and train local groups to more effectively influence the political to realize actual changes in environmental policy

Which comes first, policy or participation?

Kuhn concluded by citing the dilemma facing many local organizers. Do you opt to build capacity first, thus increasing women's participation in policy making through developing gender oriented support mechanisms, or do you prioritize implementation of environmental policy change? The latter that may involve women, but not necessarily create a women's constituency for environmental issues or build a mass base for women's leadership on the environment.

Cajamarca Women: "This is What We Need"

Marlene Ortiz and Ninfa Alburuqueque of Cajamarca, Peru presented the challenge posed by rapid urbanization of a rural valley community. For the past five years, as the construction of housing and urban infrastructure has proceeded apace, the political and social mechanisms are still functioning like the former rural village community

For women, this has meant the need to speak up and say, "this is what we, the women, want and need." Women have been calling for access to services such as water and sewage systems, electricity, health care, education and "green zone" preservation. Gender differences in perception of progressive development became apparent as men, in their input to government, called for more sports facilities and street construction.

There also have been those who resist women's participation in the political process --partially coming from older women, who do not have the tradition of women's involvement in public affairs.

In spite of obstacles, women are questioning and making proposals for the way things will work in the new city through organized clubs and committees. According to Alburuqueque and Ortiz, a number of specific measures would increase women's participation in the Local Agenda 21 process initiated by the provincial municipal council. The municipal council should:

1. Facilitate forums for women's voices to be heard at the local political level
2. Consider and value women's views and perspectives at all levels
3. Ensure that women's policy proposals and initiatives are entered into the official political process at all levels of government
4. Infuse a gender perspective into all development plans involving local women, and indeed all

women in Peru.

One of the most interesting examples of local women working at the most fundamental level for sustainable development is the case of the Cajamarca washerwomen. Washerwomen from a number of streams were systematically integrated into the Local Agenda 21 project so that they could contribute to the sustainable use and conservation of water streams. As the urbanization has proceeded, women are now washing clothes in chlorinated water rather than fresh water, and poor quality soaps and detergents are leading to allergies, skin problems and headaches.

Through the need to address water safety, soap quality, working conditions and other issues, committees were formed that have since led to the empowerment of women into leadership. The formerly unorganized washerwomen, who commanded little political clout as women and fundamental laborers, now have developed leaders who are speaking on their behalf. They have created mechanisms for collective buying, evaluating quality of soaps and water conditions, and for training in water sustainability practices.

The creation of grassroots leadership among the organized washerwomen empowered women to represent their constituency at the community committee in what has previously been a male venue. This has served to train women in new skills while heightening self-esteem.

Closing: Bringing it all Together

In the discussion that followed, participants stressed that women working in local Agenda 21 initiatives should not only look at Agenda 21-- Chapter 24 on Women and Sustainable Development,, but also review Chapter K of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Aspasia Carmargo called on women to evaluate and consolidate all the global conference documents – from Rio to Istanbul – for a comprehensive and evolving program of action for women in sustainable development.

Minu Hemmati added that in Germany, the feminist movement is facing some challenges, and environmentalists have been quite sensitive at how far they will go to mainstream women's concerns. However, Hemmati said women are insisting on looking at women's safety and security as a local Agenda 21 issue. For example, a sustainable Heidelberg must include places where women feel physically secure.

Lis Joosten of UNIFEM added that it would be a shame if Chapter K: Women and the Environment of the Beijing Platform for Action were seen only as a feminist document. It should be viewed as a women's agenda for the whole earth.

Including the Women, Saving the Earth

Pam Ransome of WEDO launched a lengthy discussion with a question to Aspasia Camarga on the different challenges faced by rural versus major urban (i.e. New York City) attempts to create Local Agenda 21s and Jacqueline Kuhn reiterated the necessity of developing more cooperation between women's and environmental organizations.

The presentations from both North and South made clear that in practice, the greater the participation of women in sustainable development planning and implementation, the greater the benefit to the community as a whole. Indeed, when women are out front in the process, women's ideas were more generally heard and accepted into government planning. Further, if we are truly to succeed in sustainable development, women and men must work together as full and equal partners to gain commitments from local governments.

Claire Greensfelder is the Executive Director of the Plutonium Free Future Women's Network, an

international NGO based in California, Japan and the Pacific Islands, that campaigns for the abolition of nuclear power and weapons and the implementation of safe, sustainable and peaceful energy systems around the world. She is also a member of the International Policy Action Committee (IPAC) of WEDO.

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The UN – just like baseball?

Members of the Youth Caucus have been astonished with the work at the UN.

Watching a Yankees ballgame can help in developing a new perspective. A baseball game is just like the UN. Why? Well, there are a few players in the middle doing something abstract – following an intricate set of rules established years ago. Some people are watching trying to figure out what and why, some know and keep track in order to be able to make insightful comments. However, the vast majority just hangs out, talks to each other and sees it as a way of meeting their future colleagues - or spouses.

What's wrong with that? Well, from a UN point of view, we could learn a few tricks from baseball organizers on how to get more participation: Sell popcorn and initiate stretch breaks to rock and roll music!

Seriously, procedural questions have a great impact on the quality of work and participation. Interrupting someone speaking for too long is respectful to those waiting to speak. Starting late is not valuing the time of those present on time. Forcing participants to adjust to formal dress codes developed by British business men in the 19th century gives a real head start to those feeling comfortable in those clothes and with that way of speaking.

Freshwater is the focus resource of CSD VI. Starting from the reality of one child a minute dying from lack of water, a procedure randomly placing industry as the focus sector in this same year has led to freshwater being discussed almost exclusively from an industrial perspective. This is despite the fact that agricultural use of water is more important by far. After negotiations and diplomatic concerns, the text is washed clear of any substance that could be used in the following years to evaluate the ACTIONS that supposedly should follow these conferences.

Last night at the Yankees game, after four hours of pitching, outs, balls, strikes, walks and groundouts, one – that is ONE – point was scored. This means that the pitchers were doing really well. Do professional diplomats get patted on the back when they come home with only one point for their governments? To make sure the crowd knows something is going on, the stadium has screens telling us when to clap. The UN has documents...

Baseball is great. The show and the relaxed atmosphere are enjoyable, but in the UN all these factors translate into political power. Those who have it today are setting the agenda – and it's obviously not for change. If we are not satisfied with four fifths of the world's population living on one fifth of the resources, we need to stop playing political baseball and start with real life politics.

by Pernilla Johansson, q2000 and Swedish Ecodemics. Member of the Youth Caucus at CSD VI.

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The Reality of Freshwater

On Monday, April 27th, the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the DSD/DESA presented a panel of women who came to the CSD 6 to speak about the freshwater crisis. These six women put their lives on the line by exposing the extensive role that groups such as

the military, mafia, government and industrial sector, have played in environmental degradation. Without their input, the devastation of their homelands and peoples would otherwise be left understated or, in some cases, unknown.

-5 million people are in crisis due to massive chemical pollution, mafia dumping of radioactive waste and the testing of biological weapons in the Aral Sea. This water takes 200-300 years to recycle because it is a closed system.

-The Dineh people of Black Mesa, Arizona, are being starved off their land by governments in deference to coal deposits that are being accessed and used without consent, to create electricity (for the people of California, not the Dineh people). The only suggested site for re-location is the site of the second greatest nuclear disaster next to Chernobyl.

-In 1996, Congress passed a new law that sanctions the mandatory relocation of most of the Dineh families currently living on the land and forces the few families who sign leases to this land to live without the benefit of civil and religious rights enjoyed by other Americans.

-On the Kelly Airforce Base in San Antonio, Texas, 91% of the Mexican community suffer from Kelly syndrome (a disorder that attacks the central nervous system), and 79% children suffer from chronic disease, believed to be due to the contamination of soil and the local water sources with lead, arsenic, barium and other chemicals.

-For 50 years, the Innu of the Nitassinan region in Quebec, Canada have been the victims of foreign industry invasion. Their land is being proposed for a huge hydro dam and for nickel mining. Inco has adopted the stance that land claims, and aboriginal rights are unrelated to economic pursuits.

-In 1957 in Chelyabinsk, Russia, a nuclear waste storage tank accident released radiation double the amount released by the Chernobyl accident and it was kept secret. Over the past 33 years, there has been a 21% increase in the incidence of cancer, 25% increase in birth defects and 50% of the population of child bearing age is sterile.

-In the Ukraine, 70% of pregnant women have extragenital and obstetrics disorders that is thought to be connected to the poor condition of water sources.

The panel's objective was to raise awareness about the urgency of the freshwater issue by coming to the CSD conference and telling their stories in person. It is by introducing the human element to the discussion of these crucial issues that change will be made possible. Despite the fact that this forum was specifically designed to present recommendations to the industrial sector, unfortunately, no members of Industry attended, with the sole exception of a single WTO representative. Of course, it is only fair to mention that there was a time conflict to involved since an Industry meeting was scheduled at the same time as the presentation on freshwater. There was an embarrassing lack of Industry representation at this forum. It is hoped that this was an honest and unfortunate error in organization, and not a demonstration of the priorities held by the Industrial sector. For those who missed it, this was a glimpse of preventable devastation that is causing the environmental and human suffering which is far beyond these women's stories. They have compiled a document entitled, "Women Transform the Mainstream". These women deserve our attention. Our commitment to including a gender perspective in assessment processes, policy-making, industrial, political and military practices is vital to ensuring the future livelihood of the environment and all people of the world.

By Amy Lister

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NGO ANNOUNCEMENTS

DAILY

8:30 - 9:00 a.m.	Church Center, 2nd Floor	Youth Caucus
9:00 - 9:15 a.m.	Conference Room B	Women's Caucus
9:15 - 10:00 a.m.	Conference Room B	NGO Strategy Meeting

WEDNESDAY'S EVENTS (29 April)

12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Conference Room B	Social Development Caucus
1:30 p.m.	Trusteeship Council Chamber	US Delegation meets ALL NGOs
3:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Conference Room B	Energy and Climate Change Caucus
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Conference Room B	Peace Caucus
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium	Panel, Video and Reception: Solutions to the Aral Sea Crisis
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	location TBA	Northern Co-Chair Election Process

Note: The elections for the Northern Co-Chair of the Steering Committee will be held Wednesday, from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m., (location to be announced). Procedures for the elections were decided at the meeting of the Northern Caucus, Friday 24 April. The elections will be held by secret ballot with one vote per accredited organization. Mark Tollemache was selected as Election Coordinator. The Northern Caucus meeting also recommended the election process to the Northern Regional Caucuses for their elections.

THURSDAY'S EVENTS (30 April)

1:15 p.m.	Vienna Cafe	America's Regional Caucus Meeting: <i>Presentation of the Santiago People's Summit of the Americas and Free Trade Areas of the Americas, * open to all</i>
1:30 p.m.	Trusteeship Council Chamber	US Delegation meets with US NGOs
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Conference Room 1	Panel on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Industries <i>Presented by Food Systems Caucus and US Department of Agriculture</i>

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