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LETTER	
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WAITING FOR CSD 5

AT A GLANCE

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COMMENTARY

How strong is the strongest link?

One hundred and fifty nations at work for two weeks on environmental policies; result: a working document that somehow will be translated into a global guide for environmental policies for the next five years. Is this document strong enough to keep the hopes of mankind alive in such a way that we realistically will believe in an ever improving future? Ten years ago, the Brundtland Commission placed "environment and sustainable development" on the political agenda, and thus changed this agenda - forever.

Countries may dislike what this entails; countries may dislike the concept of sustainability; many countries obviously dislike the concrete and practical consequences of what was decided in Rio in 1992. Some countries even had the audacity during the plenary discussions to feign lack of comprehension about the implications of "sound environmental policies". Thus they thought perhaps they could escape their political obligations and responsibilities. But we all have to live with this - let us be brave and call it - this new political reality.

And what is more - an ever growing part of the population expects that politicians, who take pride in referring to themselves as serious persons, really do something positive about the environment. The global environment movement grew out of a grass root concern for a more just world where the Human Rights actually mattered, where the right to food, to shelter, to security, to health, to freedom from fear - all should be a lot more than mere theory. This concern represented a new political

awareness born out of more than three decades of developmental efforts fighting poverty, trying to give the concept of solidarity a meaningful content, where learning about, understanding and respecting other cultures should be part of the educational process.

Twenty five years of UN Conferences, starting in 1972 with the UN Conference on Environment in Stockholm, have shed light on the complexities of our world, taught us something about the interdependence of nature and man. Above all it has given us, the peoples of this globe, enough knowledge not to be fooled by empty, political promises. Instead it has instilled in us an impatience about results and raised expectations about quality action-oriented programmes.

How strong is this document which the Intersessional negotiations produced? Does it live up to our expectations? Nothing less will do. And should this document not suffice, we have still two more opportunities to improve on the present document - the CSD 5 in April and the Earth Summit in June.

After all - we are only planning our own future.

...jgs

VISION...

Quotations of Albert Einstein

"Nuclear power is one hell of a way to boil water."

"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

"If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?"

"Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet."

RIO GRINDS...

Grounded temporarily. Awaiting shipment of new beans from the South.

NEWS FROM THE CONFERENCE ROOM

THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)

MEETS IN NEW YORK, 10-21 MARCH

On 10 March 1997, the 41st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), meeting in New York from 10 -21 March 1997, discussed Women and the Environment. Today, OUTREACH brings you some extracts from the discussion. The following is an abbreviated version of the Moderator's's Summary of the Panel Discussion and Dialogue on Women and the Environment:

"Sustainable Development will be an elusive goal unless women's contribution to environmental management is recognized and supported."

Beijing Platform for Action

Mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes for sustainable development and in the implementation of Agenda 21

A Holistic Approach

A holistic approach to sustainable development was crucial. Sustainable development could not be achieved without solving environmental problems, and environmental problems needed to be dealt with in the context of wider issues of human rights, gender and social equality, fair distribution of resources, and empowerment of people.

Agreements reached at the recent UN conferences and summits represented an evolving understanding of the links between gender, environment, population, and economic and social development. A cross sectoral approach was critical for addressing crucial interrelationships for achieving sustainable development. A further challenge was to infuse the development agenda with a human rights perspective.

The UN Conference on Environment and Development

UNCED represented a breakthrough in environmental awareness, including drawing attention to the important role women play in sustainable development. The inclusion of women as a major group in Agenda 21 needed, however, to be revisited in light of subsequent international agreements. The concept of women as a special group had been rejected at Vienna, Cairo and Beijing in favour of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all aspects of development. The series of global UN conferences since the Rio Conference had indicated this important shift away from women as a special group to women as key actors in all sectors of sustainable development.

The CSD 5 and the Special Session in June should take the results of other conferences fully into account and should employ a gender perspective in assessing the implementation in all sectors.

The importance of integrating a gender perspective

The importance of integrating a gender perspective in all policies and programmes was emphasized, including creating awareness of the impact of various policy measures and programmes for sustainable development on women as well as men.

The focus on women's empowerment and participation in decision-making for sustainable development should not divert attention from the importance of shared responsibility of both women and men, and the inclusion of women and men, and the inclusion of women in decision-making should not be seen as a sufficient response to the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

The importance of capacity-building, both internationally and nationally, for gender mainstreaming in sustainable development was noted.

Resources for gender mainstreaming were too often taken from the limited funds available to women's ministries or offices. More resources should be made available.

Women's participation in decision-making for sustainable development

The relationship between women and the environment should be considered in the light of the shift in focus from women as either victims or preservers of the environment, to empowerment of women both economically and politically.

The participation of civil society, women and men, had proved to be essential for sustainable development. The reliance on top-down structures and decision-making and the creation of mega-structures often prevented participation by local communities and other actors in civil society in preventing negative environmental impacts.

One of the ways to increase women's participation

One of the way to increase women's participation in decision-making for sustainable development was to provide women with access to education and training in science and technology. The importance of alliance-building and networking among those women who are in decision-making positions was underlined.

Women at the local level often have specialized knowledge, traditions and interest that makes them efficient managers of natural resources. However, this did not automatically put them in position to take critical decisions given their often subordinate position in the household and the community. Their input into decisions on community resources management needed to be ensured through formal arrangements. Particular attention should be given to women in the agricultural sector where access to training, land and productive resources would facilitate their participation in decision-making for sustainable development.

Assessing the relationship between women and the environment and the impact of environmental factors on women

Transfer of technology

In identifying or developing technological solutions for environmental problems, it was considered essential to ensure that these solutions reflected the needs and interests of both men and women and that they were compatible with indigenous knowledge and local realities. Technologies that were inexpensive, easy to install and to operate, and consistent with the needs of communities, including women, had been highly successful. Solar energy was an example of a technology for which women could play a pioneering role in its development. Transfer of technology should promote capacity-building for both women and men include training for both groups.

Globalization

It was suggested that all development policies and programmes should include a gender impact assessment along with an environmental impact assessment. It was considered important to assess in a gender-sensitive way, the impact of globalization processes, privatization and liberalization of trade, industrialization and export-oriented production in relation to environmental concerns. The impact of international and regional trade agreements on women should be examined as well.

Women's health

The pressing need for research on the impact of environmental degradation on women's health, including breast cancer and other female cancers was pointed out.

Information on technologies and pollutants should be made widely available, especially to women to assist in prevention of environmental damage.

Economic Recovery

The economic recovery and structural adjustment programmes of the last decade had necessitated the removal of subsidies on some products like liquefied petroleum gas with definite links to environmental degradation. Concern was expressed about the export of banned pesticides from developed to developing countries and the environmental impact on women and men.

The lack of gender disaggregated data

The lack of gender disaggregated data, indicators - both qualitative and quantitative, and research on gender impacts of environmental policies and programmes was noted. Efforts were needed to collect and improve data disaggregated by sex to better understand the impact of environmental policies and programmes on women. The lack of such data should not, however, be used as a reason to postpone mainstreaming of a gender perspective into policies and programmes at all levels.\

Water Resources

The significant link between water resources and agriculture, forestry, and urban development was emphasized. The decline of water quality and the increased demand for clean water was noted. Local communities, especially women, should be given a more prominent role in water resource planning, development and management.

NGO VIEWPOINT...

Comments on the Co-Chairman's Report to the CSD Intersessional,

24 February-7 March 1997

A thumbnail sketch...

A brief history of the CSD

Agenda 21 called for the creation of the CSD and GA resolution 47/191 set out the terms of reference of the Commission in the fall of 1992. This resolution decided on its composition, its guidelines for the participation of NGOs as well as how it should organize its work and its relationship with other UN bodies.

The first four CSD sessions have accomplished many things. Outlined are a few highlights:

First Session (June 1993) - saw the adoption of a multi-year thematic programme of work;

Second Session (May 1994) - a) took on cross-sectoral chapters of Agenda 21: trade, environment and sustainable development, consumption patterns, major groups; b) discussed sectoral issues: freshwater, toxic chemicals, hazardous solid and radioactive wastes.

Third Session (April 1995) - examined local aspects of implementing Agenda 21 and sectoral issues such as land resources, deforestation, desertification and drought, sustainable agriculture and rural development, biological diversity and biotechnology. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) was established.

Fourth Session (April 1996) - began considering preparations for the Special Session in 1997 and examined the third cluster of issues.

When the Commission on Sustainable Development meets in April, it will begin its Fifth Session.

Below is the Co-Chairmen's report from the Intersessional, which is divided into 4 sections:

An overall Political Purpose of the Special Session in June 1997

An overall political purpose of the Special Session in June is to secure *high level commitment* on a) implementation, b) financing for Sustainable Development, c) Technology Transfer and d) Capacity Building.

Still to be discussed is also a "statement of commitment." It is hoped that this should be forward looking and politically attractive, reaffirm the final documents of Rio, highlight the main environmental achievements since Rio, highlight the main environmental achievements since 1992, address the vicious circle of poverty, reiterate the need for changing consumption and production patterns and focus on implementation and commitments.

The Structure of the Document

The structure of the final document was also subject for discussion during the Intersessional. It now consists of 4 sections: a) statement of Commitment; b) Assessment of Progress Reached After Rio; c) Strategies for Implementation; d) International Institutional Arrangements. After some deliberation, part c) Strategies for Implementation was subdivided into: I) Policy Approaches; II) Areas Requiring Urgent Action; III) Means of Implementation.

The Major Groups

The Major Groups were often referred to. There is some indication that the number may be expanded. The major groups now are: Women; Children and Youth; Indigenous People; The NGOs; Local Authorities; Workers and Trade Unions; Business and Industry; Scientific and Technological Communities; and Farmers.

Several states have indicated an interest in getting both the Education Community as well as Elderly People as major groups. Others have mentioned the Media as well as Parliamentarians.

The Expressions 'Sectors and Issues' and 'Cross Sectoral or Overarching Issues'

The Expressions 'Sectors and Issues' and Cross Sectoral or Overarching Issues' were often used in the plenary discussions. Eleven 'sectors' or 'issues' are specified in the document so far: freshwater; oceans; forests; energy; transport; atmosphere, chemicals and wastes; land and sustainable agriculture; decertification and drought; biodiversity; sustainable tourism.

Eight 'Cross Sectoral or Overarching Issues' are defined. They are: eradicating poverty; changing consumption and production patterns; making trade, environmental and sustainable development mutually supporting; population; health; sustainable human settlements; small island states; natural disasters.

Seven areas delineated as "Means of Implementation"

Seven areas were delineated as "Means of Implementation," including financial resources and mechanisms (GEF, dealing with debt, etc.); transfer of environmentally sound technologies; capacity building; science; education and awareness; international legal instruments and the Rio Declaration; information and tools to measure progress.

International Institutional Arrangements

International Institutional Arrangements is also a specific chapter in the report. This chapter also

mentions "greater coherence in various intergovernmental organizations and processes" as a specific area. Naturally a discussion and proper listing of the "role of relevant organizations and institutions of the United Nations System" as well as the future role and programme of work of the CSD: was discussed. Finally, the "CSD's method of work" is discussed.

...jgs

NGO Top Ten Priority Issues for the Next Five Years for Adoption at Earth Summit 2...

compiled by

Clif Curtis, Greenpeace

This draft list of priority issues was prepared by NGOs on the final day of the CSD Intersessional meeting in New York (7 March 1997). It is drawn from a) the NGO issues statement that contains nearly 40 issues ("Recommendations for Actions and Commitments at the Earth Summit II, NGO Draft Background Paper") that was distributed to governments during the Intersessional meeting, and b) discussions among NGOs (and with governments) during the Intersessional with respect to key issues, as well as concrete targets and timetables. The number of issues is based on our feeling that a core group of priority issues should be substantially fewer than the total package of issues, e.g., from 5-10 at most.

As with the larger issues list, the authors of this draft priority list have no intention of speaking for all NGOs nor civil society at large. The list has been prepared by a number of the NGO organizational representatives participating in the CSD Intersessional meeting, several of whom are recognized experts in their issue areas. To the extent this priority list is helpful, as is, or amended to address issues of special concern to your organization or geographical region, please use it as an aid in lobbying governments and in talking with media representatives and other NGOs/civil society groups in the lead-up to the CSD meeting from 7-25 April 1997, including the Ministerial, high-level segment of 7-9 April.

The actions called for in this list, which is not in any order of priority, is directed to heads-of-state and government delegations participating in the April CSD meeting and the UNGA's Special Session in late June - Earth Summit II:

SECTORAL ISSUES:

- 1. CO2/CLIMATE:** Agree to a legally binding commitment to reduction of CO2 emissions to 20% below 1990 levels by the year 2005, and other appropriate reductions in greenhouse gases at Kyoto, Japan in December 1997, including special initiatives to protect and compensate small island developing states;
- 2. TOXIC CHEMICALS:** Ensure that the legally binding, persistent organic pollutants (POPs) global instrument is concluded and opened for ratification by 2000, at the latest, and that industrialized countries make a concerted effort in the next 12 months to assist developing countries in preparing for the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) that will meet beginning in early 1998, especially in relation to difficulties in acquiring substitutes and transferring technology for the development and/or production of such substitutes;
- 3. FORESTS:** Commit to the continuation and enhancement of the intergovernmental policy dialogue on forests under the CSD, while also promoting (in a transparent, participatory manner) an action-oriented program to solve critical forest-related problems involving all types of forests,

including a halt to further destruction of primary and old-growth forests around the world, and the establishment of networks of ecologically representative and socially appropriate forest protected areas (covering at least 10% of the world's forests) by 2000;

4. FRESHWATER: Initiate negotiations on a global agreement or arrangement on freshwater by 1998, with terms of reference that include a commitment to a catchment (watershed/airshed) approach as the basis for action on freshwater in national sustainable development strategies and any international plans or strategies;

5. MILITARY WEAPONS: Adopt a global, legally binding ban on anti-personnel land mines by 1999 - applicable both within and between countries; and conclude negotiations on a global, legally binding ban on the production and use of nuclear weapons by 2002;

CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES:

6. FINANCE: Establish an Intergovernmental Panel on Finance at the Special Session, with terms of reference that include, inter alia, the need to create innovative mechanisms for NGO and civil society access to capital, credit and capacity building for community based sustainable and environmentally sound economic development projects; industrialized countries should provide substantial additional financial resources in support of sustainable development to the developing countries by 2000, including a 50% increase in the current replenishment of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF); they should undertake targeted debt reductions in twenty (20) of the most indebted least developed countries by the end of 1998, in exchange for significant initiatives to further sustainable development; industrialized countries should meet the 0.7% of GNP target for aid by 2002, and achieve one-half (0.35%) of that target by the end of 1998; and all countries should take steps to ensure, by no later than 1998, stricter scrutiny, including new laws or other measures, to prevent abuse of all funds and corrupt practices - in the public and private sector - at national and international levels;

7. TRADE: Adopt a clear, internationally agreed, understanding by 1998 that environmental conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) shall not be bound by WTO-imposed requirements or restrictions (given that such WTO measures have, with few exceptions, undermined those important agreements); convene a trade and environment Ministers summit before the next Ministerial meeting of the WTO, which includes, inter alia, a discussion on fair trade versus free trade; and take steps to adopt measures, applicable to the next WTO Ministerial meeting, that ensure transparency and effective opportunities for NGOs and other major groups to observe and contribute to those deliberations;

8. CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY: Establish a Sub-Commission of the CSD at the Special Session enact internationally agreed, government-based mechanisms by no later than 1999 that are designed to ensure significantly greater accountability of business and industry, especially transnational corporations;

9. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: Establish at the Special Session a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples within the UN System (under the CSD) to coordinate all international initiatives on indigenous peoples; and

10. NGO ACCESS: Ensure that the arrangements for the UN General Assembly Special Session are, at minimum, based on the newly revised Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations - Part VII of Resolution 1996/31 - and that those arrangements apply to strengthening NGO access to and participation in the General Assembly and its Main Committees and other subsidiary bodies, including inter alia adequate representation by NGOs and other major groups from the South.

ON THE FINANCE SECTION...

by Rob Lake, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

On financial issues, the Draft Report of the Intersessional shows some significant improvements over the first Co-Chairmen's paper that was tabled at the beginning of the second week of the meeting.

Key points are:

- the explicit recognition of the continuing need for Official Development Assistance for the environment and for the poorest countries;
- the much more balanced treatment of the relationship between public and private funds, and the stress on the need for social and environmental policies that can help ensure that foreign investment is environmentally and socially beneficial;
- support for an increased GEF, but caution on widening its mandate;
- continuing support for the 0.7% of GNP aid target, with a target to return to 1992 GNP shares within five years;
- the references to the need for environmentally damaging subsidies to be scrapped;
- encouragement for coordinated international action on various economic instruments, including innovative financial mechanisms.

The paper does not refer explicitly to the Intergovernmental Panel on Finance that NGOs were advocating at the Intersessional. "Insiders" have suggested that the references to coordinated work led by the World Bank and the IMF is an attempt by the Co-Chairmen and Secretariat to leave the door open for a Panel proposal.

At CSD5, the challenge for NGOs will be to defend and strengthen those elements of the existing paper that we support, while working hard to get support for the Panel in particular. Finance will be central to the success of CSD5 and UNGASS - the developed countries will need to make convincing commitments if the developing countries are to be satisfied that it is worth staying at the table. A package involving an increased GEF, real pledges on other aid, strong commitment to harnessing private investment for environmental and social ends, and new intergovernmental machinery to take forward coordinated international action on new revenues could provide this. We also need to continue to press the EU in particular on the air fuel tax.

All contributions to the work of the Finance Caucus are welcome. We particularly need expertise from development NGOs and stronger southern perspectives. I hear rumors that the World Bank/IMF HIPC Initiative is foundering. Does anyone know what is happening?

NEXT ISSUE OF OUTREACH

WILL FEATURE

SEVERAL ARTICLES ON

"RIO + 5"

ANNOUNCEMENTS...

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 1997

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.

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY:

LOCAL INITIATIVES FOR CITIES & TOWNS

From 1-5 June 1997, an international conference will be held in New Castle, Australia to examine and encourage environmental awareness in local communities. The outcome of the conference will be presented to UNGASS in June. For more information, contact the Conference Managers, Capital Conferences Party Ltd. in Australia at: tel.: 612 9252 3388; fax: 612 9241 5282; email: capcon@ozemail.com.au

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION:

ITS EFFECT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

The Sixth International Conference of The World Information Transfer will be held at United Nations Headquarters on 17 -18 April 1997. Running parallel to CSD V, this conference, which is being co-sponsored by the Government of Chile, will focus on "Environmental Degradation: Its Effect on Children's Health." Further information can be obtained by contacting the following: *tel: (212) 686-1996; fax: (212) 686-2172; email: wit@igc.apc.org*

A small workshop was held on the contents and profile of OUTREACH immediately following the CSD Intersessional. It was decided, among other things, to always run by-lines on articles, as well as featuring the disclaimer on the first page of every issue.