

NGOs, Looking Good for CSD 5

AT A GLANCE

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COMMENTARY...

OUTREACH '97
 CSD NGO Steering Committee

World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)

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CSD 5 - Great Expectations on Integration, Commitment and Action.

Every environmental path now leads to New York and the UN - or so it might appear to the keen political observer. A short month has elapsed since the Intersessional ended - yet so much has apparently happened.

The Secretary General of the UN

Mr. Kofi Annan, has disclosed some of his reform plans. Official delegates have renewed their environmental mandate in their capitals, and NGOs have renewed their commitments to being critical and creative in the CSD 5 proceedings. A major NGO environment event took place in Rio - maybe with some serious repercussions for the future of global environment policies.

Streamlining, efficiency and integration

are key words in one of the statements on reform measures coming from the Secretary-General. Accountability, transparency and gender equity are reiterated as basic values that are here to stay. Relying on the good experiences and positive results of the past 50 years of activities is a necessity to create a new future for the organization that is meant to "meet the changing needs of the world community as it moves into the next millennium."

A 'Code of Conduct'

has been drafted and is a part of the reform programme for the UN System. It lays out in clear form expectations for conduct and performance, requires the highest standard of efficiency, competence, independence and integrity and sets out a framework of accountability for performance, sets standards of conduct designed to avoid real or apparent conflict of interests - to mention but a few of the strong points in the statement by the Secretary-General.

NGOs have always been critical

of the 'Establishment.' In fact this is - in a manner of speaking - one of our "raison d'etre." We have reason to believe that our common efforts in working to improve the UN have also resulted in

some of the strong wording in the reform statement. But nourishing such a feeling commits us to believe in and work for continually improving our work. NGOs' standards can hardly afford to be lower than those of the Established world. Thus the 'Code of Conduct' and the general direction of the reform statements is also a challenge to NGO performance during the CSD 5 proceedings.

We should strive to integrate our efforts - it has not always been the NGO forte. We are almost always strong in substance - and have almost always won any debate - but have often lost the final vote because of lack of coordinated efforts among ourselves.

The CSD/NGO Steering Committee

has made serious efforts at streamlining the NGO input as well as making the NGOs work in a more efficient, transparent, accountable and integrated way. The past two years have shown considerable success in this area.

A major event

such as Rio+5 in Brazil in March attracted attention from the entire environment world - not the least because of the sheer size of its budget, the impressive list of the invited speakers, the contents of the conference documents and the bold and courageous visions contained in its policy statements.

Rio + 5 was labeled an NGO event

Any event this big will attract laudatory remarks as well as criticism. Was all well in Rio? Were all these efforts, all this energy and all this money well spent? Several sources of information referred to chaotic meetings, high levels of frustration and overspending. Many have focused such criticism on an alleged sum, some 300 000 US dollars paid as fee to a Mr. Gorbachev for a short lecture on global environment he gave in Rio. If this is true, how wise is such spending in a time when people everywhere demand that less money is spent with more concrete results?

The UN is going through a catharsis-like period in order to save money and reduce spending everywhere it is possible. The reform programme

COMMENTARY (CON'T)

of the UN features this as a major area of concern. Surely the text of the reform programme must have been known to key persons within the RIO+5 proceedings? All of our actions communicate a message. What is the final message from RIO+5 to the world and to the CSD? As it was labeled an NGO event, how does it contribute to the common NGO environmental and sustainable development efforts?

A heavy responsibility has been placed on the shoulders of the organizers of the RIO +5 to communicate a substantive and serious message to the rest of the sustainable development NGOs, Agenda 21 stakeholders and to all the participants of CSD 5. We all need to be given something substantial, something strong and bold, something to really believe in as a message from RIO + 5. When this is given to us, we should be able to integrate this in our joint efforts to improve the environment and sustainable development. Then we will all be able to proceed forward much more strongly.

The sustainable development NGOs are meeting

to join forces and integrate their efforts these few days leading up to the opening of the CSD 5 on Tuesday. At a crucial time in history, we the NGOs, have an almost unique opportunity to be heard.

We all have great expectations. Let us hope that all is well that ends well towards the end of April, and that we all come out of this experience a lot richer, more accountable, more streamlined, more integrated and perhaps even more transparent. Good luck with our work.

...jgs

The **Steering Committee** has a web page. <http://www.igc.apc.org/habitat/csd-97>
There is also a general list server for those interested it is csdgen@undp.org just send a message to be added to it.

The complete NGO statement referred to under "UPDATE" will be posted on the web site in a couple of days.

ANNOUNCEMENTS**CSD/NGO STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING SCHEDULE**

When: 5-7 April 1997

*Where: UN Church Center
777 UN Plaza, 8th Fl.*

Saturday, 5 April

9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Meeting

2:30-3:45 p.m.

Caucus Meetings

4:00 p.m.

Building closes

Sunday, 6 April

9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Caucus and Regional Meetings

2:30-3:45 p.m.

NGLS Orientation for new NGOs

4:00 p.m.

Building closes

Monday, 7 April

9:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Discussion of Major Points

Additions to intersessional documents

NGO REGISTRATION

Registration of NGOs will take place at a Registration Desk located in the Public Lobby of the General Assembly Building (enter through the Visitor's Entrance located on 1st Avenue and 45th Street). For security purposes, all representatives are requested to bring a photo ID (i.e. passport or drivers license), as well as a copy of their letter of accreditation from their organization. *Passes will not be available for persons whose names have not been communicated in advance.*

Schedule for registration:

Monday, 7 April 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, 8 April 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, 9 April 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Monday, 14 April 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, 15 April 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

NOTE: At all other times, please call the NGO Section at (212) 963-4843 or (212) 963-4846 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for information on how to secure your passes.

**REQUESTS FOR MEETING SPACE
8-25 April**

IN THE UNITED NATIONS BUILDING...

Contact:

Ms. Zehra Aydin, Major Groups Focal Point
2 UN Plaza, 22nd Floor
tel.: (212) 963-8811
fax: (212) 963-1267

Procedure:

- 1) Fax your request to the above number **before 4:00 p.m. the day prior** to the requested date.
- 2) Costs for the rooms vary, depending on type of room and service needed, i.e. sound (cost runs \$60.00 per hour - if your meeting runs over *even by 5 or 10 minutes*, be prepared to pay for the full second hour).
- 3) Ensure that contact person and contact number are presented clearly in your fax.

NOTE: Space is extremely limited due to an increased level of participants and decreased allocation of space.

AT THE CHURCH CENTER, 777 UN PLAZA...

Contact:

Ms. Linda Arnold
tel.: (212) 682-3633

Procedure:

- 1) Pick up forms to reserve space at the Church Center on the 2nd Floor of 777 UN Plaza (corner of 44th Street & 1st Ave.)
- 2) Fill out the form and hand it in to Ms. Linda Arnold before 4:00 p.m. prior to the requested meeting date.
- 3) **FOR ALL BOOKINGS AT THE CHURCH CENTER AFTER 6:00 P.M., A \$60.00 SECURITY CHARGE WILL APPLY.**

Important:

As of 8 April, daily NGO strategy sessions will be held every morning from 9:15-10:30 a.m. in conference room D. At all other times, NGO activity will be based in Conference Room E.

The **HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT CAUCUS** will be held from 2:00-3:00 p.m. in Conference Room E on the following dates:

Tuesday, 8 April
Thursday, 10 April
Monday, 14 April
Tuesday, 15 April
Wednesday, 23 April
Thursday, 24 April

ANNOUNCEMENTS (CON'T)

**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.

**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

**HOW TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE TO
OUTREACH...**

OUTREACH will be serving the NGO Community particularly at CSD 5 and Earth Summit II in June. We will make efforts to include statements made by NGOs during the sessions as well as articles you wish to see published.

The editors reserve the right to choose and edit any contribution. All contributions must be submitted, with a proper by-line, NO LATER THAN 4:00 P.M., to be considered for publication the following day.

Note: Where possible, it is preferred that contributions are made in "ready format," i.e. that they are submitted on a IBM compatible diskette or sent via e-mail, indicating clearly that it is a submission to OUTREACH. To submit electronically, send to < wfuna@undp.org >, marked 'submission to OUTREACH'.

**NEWS FROM THE
CONFERENCE ROOM**

In the last issue of OUTREACH (19 March), we printed excerpts from the Moderator's Summary of the Panel Discussion and Dialogue on Women and the Environment. A "gender pledge" was accepted during the discussions at CSW, however, the official language of the pledge is somewhat weaker than what the NGOs themselves suggested. Today, we bring you the original text as it was presented by WEDO:

WOMEN'S LINKAGE CAUCUS

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

11 March 1997

Recognizing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as the strongest consensus on gender equality, empowerment and justice ever agreed to by the world's governments, the Women's Linkage Caucus celebrates the critical role played by women

at recent UN conferences, infusing both the process and outcomes with a feminist analysis.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We commit ourselves to recognize women not only as a "major group" of the Rio Agenda but also as significant agents for local and global change, so that compartmentalized approaches give way to genuine integration of gender in sustainable development.

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

We pledge to create effective new processes and mechanisms to strengthen links between the World

NEWS FROM THE CONFERENCE ROOM (CON'T)

Bank, IMF, WTO and post-Rio plans of action that include examination of sovereignty and foreign investment issues.

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

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

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

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

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

We re-commit ourselves to implement the HABITAT II agenda which calls for governments to create "regulatory and legal frameworks...to promote

socially and environmentally responsible corporate investment and reinvestment in partnership with local communities."

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

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

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

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

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

RIO GRINDS...

Stirring it up

Rio Grinds will resume its commentaries on Tuesday of next week. This was probably the column that most people reacted to; which only goes to show that NGOs and delegates are good humored people and that we all love a good laugh.

Obviously, many people wanted to contribute to this humorous column. We will therefore be open to good humored and satirical comments about all from all.

The good natured editors will be found every day around 4:00 p.m. in the well scented coffee area - Vienna Café - ready to receive the whims of your intellectual wit.

The Editors

Find all previous editions of OUTREACH on the CSD/NGO Steering Committee website:

<http://www.igc.apc.org/habitat/csd-97>

CLASSIFIED ADS

OUTREACH is looking for volunteer typists and/or a 'jack (or Jill) of all trades' to help in the production, and reproduction of this daily newsletter.

OUTREACH is looking for a talented hand to serve as 'political cartoonist.' Any who qualify should meet the Editors in Vienna Café.

VISION...

Quotations of Albert Einstein

"The world today is more than ever in need of international thinking and feeling by its leading nations and personalities if it is to progress towards a better and more worthy future."

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift."

"Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile."

UN PUBLICATIONS...

THE UNITED NATIONS BLUE BOOKS SERIES

This series of publications is an invaluable research and reference tool for scholars, policy makers, journalists and others interested in gaining deeper understanding of the work of the United Nations. Each book focuses on a major issue of concern to humanity in which the United Nations has played a leading role and brings together, for the first time in a single volume, key United Nations documentation. Inside, the reader quickly finds:

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