

New York, 6 March 1997

Mr. Co-Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. The Group of 77 and China met this morning to discuss the cross-sectoral issues in the Co-Chairmen's text. The Group covered a number of paragraphs dealing with poverty eradication, freshwater, oceans, energy and transport, atmosphere, population, toxic chemicals and wastes and biodiversity.

Concerning poverty eradication, the G-77 stressed that the eradication of poverty is one of the fundamental goals of the entire United Nations System. Policies to combat poverty, in particular, provision of basic social services enable and promote broader socio-economic development, since enhancing the capacity of the poor to produce increases both the well-being of individuals and national wealth. In this context, priority actions could include:

- Improving access to sustainable employment, entrepreneurial opportunities and productive resources, including land, water, credit, technical and administrative training and appropriate technology, particularly for the rural poor and the urban informal sector, including the support to microenterprises, the microcredit programs and rural employment. Providing universal access to basic social services, including basic education, health care, nutrition, clear water and sanitation;
- Progressive development, in accordance with the financial and administrative capacities of each society, of social protection systems to support those who cannot support themselves, either temporarily or permanently;
- The promotion of the involvement of NGOs, women's groups, and other local and community organizations, in projects aiming at the eradication of poverty and social development.

Freshwater

From the developing countries' perspective, freshwater is a priority and a basic need, especially taking into account that in many developing countries freshwater is not readily available for all segments of the population, inter alia, due to water scarcity and technical and financial constraints.

Hence, from the developing countries' perspective, it is premature to discuss the view of water as an economic good, particularly referred to the pricing of water as a means to recover costs.

Unless there is a proven commitment by the international community for the provision of new and additional financial resources for the attainment of sustainable development, intergovernmental processes on freshwater resources are not going to be fruitful.

Indeed, given the high costs involved in sustainable freshwater management, particularly with regard to the infrastructure that is required for the supply and sanitation of water, financial and technical support from the international community for the developing countries is indispensable.

On para. 23 there are specific comments to be made:

Firstly, consensus on water management principles is yet debatable given varying geographical and socio-

economic conditions in different countries.

Secondly, it needs to be underscored that increasing stress on water supplies is mainly caused by developing countries' unsustainable use patterns, particularly regarding industrial processes that require vast amounts of water that then cannot be used for other purposes.

Regarding subpara. "a", it is up to Governments, according to their own policies and needs, to decide what priority they are to accord to issues such as water management, land degradation and desertification. Developing countries often find themselves at odds when trying to address each one of these issues. Thus, integrated land and water management goes beyond most of the developing countries capacities and capabilities. For this reason, addressing this concept from an international perspective may be premature.

On subpara "b", as was mentioned before, the high costs involved in water supply and sanitation render it difficult for Governments of developing countries, and even the private sector, to provide these services on their own. For this reason, financial assistance from the international community concessional and preferential terms cannot be substituted as a means to enable countries to provide basic services for all.

With respect to subparas "e" and "f", intergovernmental processes that are not driven by the political will to support developing countries in their efforts, are doomed to be partially, if at all successful.

Thus, for the time being, bilateral and regional agreements may prove to more effective towards the achievement of sustainable water management, than a Global Water Partnership.

Oceans

Regarding para 24, what is understood by the concept of "ocean governance" is not clear. Clarification from the co-chairs in this respect would be useful.

With respect to subpara "a", though an integrated approach for the follow-up of international legal instruments relative to ocean matters could prove useful, the institutional arrangements required for this purpose – which may prove to be of a substantive nature – have not been specified. Indeed, a number of UN bodies are currently serving as secretariats for the array of legal instruments that relate to ocean matters.

Furthermore, follow-up and monitoring of actions at a national level is, by definition, up to Governments and not to the international community at large.

Regarding sub-para "b", implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, by developing countries is to be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Accordingly, developing countries should be provided with all the international technical and financial assistance which they require for the implementation of the GPA.

Energy and Transport

Energy and transport should be dealt with in separate paragraphs. Though in the long run both matters pose adverse effects on the global atmosphere, these two subjects have different dynamics and different ways to be tackled.

The provision of public services in all rural and urban areas should be ensured. This is the first priority that needs to be taken into account while considering energy as an emerging issue.

Relevant outcomes of the CSD sessions regarding this matter should be considered. In the case of energy, transport and atmosphere, important elements such as natural gas, developmental needs of developing countries, particularly economic and social ones, as well as the impacts of proposed measures relating to the elimination of subsidies must be adequately addressed.

It is necessary to underscore the main role of technology transfer and respective know-how from developed to developing countries in order to assure the achievement of sustainable development of developing countries.

The wasteful consumption and production patterns of developed countries, that include unsustainable use of energy resources should be also underlined.

The international community should commit seriously to the study and development of new and renewable sources of energy. In this context, financial efforts in this regard should be doubled or at least increase substantially. Development countries should have access to the technologies and correspondent know-how that allows the use of these new and renewable resources of energy on concessional basis, while cooperation potential in this matter between developing countries could be strengthened.

The private sector and governments as owners of these technologies should consider active cooperation with developing countries in this matter.

Incremental costs regarding sustainable use of renewable and non-renewable energy resources in developing countries should be supported by the international community.

Subsidies to energy production and consumption are in some cases a policy response to the provision of services to urban or rural populations. In this context, references to a time-frame and targets for the elimination of subsidies, must take into account differences between developed and developing countries in order to consider them a feasible possibility.

In relation to the Common Strategy for better coordination of energy activities in the UN system, further elaboration on this matter is necessary so as to identify the scope of this approach.

The transport issue leads to the consideration of infrastructure for development. In this context, the promotion of transport policies that consider alternative approaches to meeting commercial and private mobility needs, should consider alternative means of transportation and be more specific.

At the same time, the transport sector should be addressed, among other sectors that are identified as high polluters.

Identification of issues and areas to be considered within this item should be pointed out in a more specific and clear manner.

Atmosphere

The following concerns of developing countries have not been addressed in this para:

- i. It needs to be recognized that activities undertaken in pursuit of the objectives of protection of the atmosphere take into full account the legitimate priority needs of the developing countries for the achievement of sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty. Notwithstanding the efforts to implement the provisions of chapter 9 of Agenda 21, there are still several

objectives which remain to be unfulfilled. Most industrialized countries CO2 emissions continue to rise and very few of these countries are likely to reach their current UNFCCC targets of stabilization of GHG emission at 1990 level by the year 2000. These countries must continue their efforts to reduce and abate their level of GHG emissions and to provide support and assistance to the developing countries to meet international objectives as stipulated in the UNFCCC.

- ii. Although several countries have reported marked progress in curbing environmental pollution and slowing the rate of resource degradation, as well as reducing the intensity of resource use, actions and initiatives taken by developing countries at the national level should be acknowledged. In the supply sector, GHG emission can be reduced by adopting more efficient fossil fuel technologies; decarbonization of fuels; and increasing the use of renewable sources of energy. However, these initiatives require the necessary financial assistance and the appropriate transfer of technology to developing countries.
- iii. Additionally, terrestrial and marine resources are important sources and sinks of atmospheric gases, they should be managed sustainably and conserved. As called for by the CSD during its Fourth Session, integration of protective measures is needed to address effectively the problems of adverse impacts of human activity on the atmosphere and the oceans. Notwithstanding efforts made by the developed countries to reduce their levels of GHG emissions by adopting cleaner technologies and also to assist developing countries in the sustainable management and conservation of terrestrial and marine resources as sinks for atmospheric and ozone depleting gases, development and management of sinks should not give developed countries the license to maintain the status quo of unsustainable production and consumption patterns.
- iv. A more committed spirit of cooperation is needed to accomplish the global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem and climate system. There is a need for renewed efforts on the part of industrialized countries towards the implementation of their obligations with respect to the stabilization of GHG emissions.

Population

Regarding para 27, the Group of 77 would agree, in general, with the ideas contained in paragraph 27 of the Co-Chairmen's text. The population issue is cross-sectoral because it is closely related to economic growth, poverty, employment further expansion of basic education and health care. However, it would be useful to include some additional relevant information. While it is true that poverty eradication and further expansion of basic education and health care would contribute to the current slowdown in population growth rates, the Co-Chairmen's text should reflect that this must be accomplished within the expansion of economic growth.

As to the specific reference to expanding basic education, it is important to reflect the particular needs of women and the girl child. It is in this context that there is an urgent need for an integrated, comprehensive approach to the implementation of the several major UN conferences. Similarly, reference to the expansion of health care should give more emphasis to "universal access to primary health care." In this regard, there is a need to obtain technical and financial development to the developing countries for the implementation of the ICPD recommendations.

With regard to the inclusion of assistance to environmental refugees at the end of paragraph 27, it would be useful to provide further clarification on this reference.

Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals, radiocative material and wastes

Progress has been made through the establishment of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety

(IFCS) and the Intergovernmental Programme for Sound Management of Chemicals (IOCM). The early conclusion of an effective convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) is a matter of priority.

Whilst recognising the work being done on a Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), developing countries affirm that a comprehensive approach to the elimination of such pollutants is essential and includes necessary international, regional and national legal mechanisms. Developing countries call upon developed countries to assure that the international objective of minimizing effects on the environment by POPs be fully supported by the early availability of environmentally safe substitutes that are affordable, scientifically sound and accessible to developing countries and assistance to develop national capabilities for production of such substitutes.

Management of toxic substances, such as pesticides, PCBs, waste oil and heavy metals, and radioactive material, their transboundary movement, as well as pollution from ships, is a concern to developing countries. The lack of trained staff, infrastructure and legislation to deal with these problems is a significant constraint to sustainable development. In relation to movement by sea, preparedness for marine pollution emergencies will be essential and require trained personnel, legislation and infrastructure to allow contingency plans to be implemented in the event of an emergency.

As highlighted in the Secretary General's report an area of special need includes Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Coastal States in which special methods need to be developed where the risk of health and environmental impacts may be more significant.

Substantial progress has been made to implement the Basel Convention and several regional conventions including the Bamako and Waigani Conventions. Storage, transportation, transboundary movement and disposal of radioactive wastes must be in conformity with these and other relevant international agreements and important principles of the Rio Declaration, notably Principles 14, 15 and 19.

Further action includes:

- Need for enhancing awareness of the importance of the safety and management of toxic chemicals, radiation and wastes;
- Preventing incidents and accidents involving the uncontrolled release of toxic chemicals, radiation and wastes.
- Completion, before the end of 1997, the drafting of the Convention on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management;

Completion of a protocol under the Basel Convention on liability and compensation for damages resulting from transboundary movements or disposal of hazardous wastes.

In relation to these issues the international community should:

- Discourage the dumping of toxic chemicals, radioactive material and wastes at sea;
- Urgently support clean-up of contaminated sites as a result of the utilisation of radium, production and testing of nuclear weapons and the uranium mining industry.
- Pursue efforts towards a global approach by establishing regional cooperation agreements relating to radioactive waste management such as the Bamako and Waigani Conventions;
- Ban the illegal movement of hazardous and toxic wastes and make available reports on non-

compliance.

Biodiversity

On the issue of biodiversity, the Group of 77 raised the following issues:

- Establishment of a clearing-house mechanism;
- The role of women in sustainable use of biological resources;
- Integration of biodiversity into national, sectoral policies and plans;
- Incentive measures at national, regional, sub-regional and global levels;
- Intellectual Property Rights in line with UNCTAD BIOTRADE Initiative and "the users pay principle";
- Implementation of EIA's and Capacity-building and enhancement public awareness at national, sub-regional, regional and global levels be given practical attention.
- Legislation at national level.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.