

STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. MAKARIM WIBISONO AMBASSADOR/PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, ON AGENDA ITEM 2: "ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS", AT THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

New York, 20 April 1998

Mr. Chairman,

1. It is a distinct privilege for me to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and to articulate our common positions. Let me also extend to you and your distinguished colleagues our sincere congratulations on your respective elections to the Bureau for this important session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. You can rest assured of our full support in carrying out your demanding tasks during this session and your efforts to bring it to a successful conclusion. The Group would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Vice-chairmen of the Intersessional Working Group for their steadfast support and guidance during the inter-session process last February and March. We are generally satisfied with the overall results of the Inter-session meeting as well as the constructive atmosphere that prevailed during those meetings.

2. At the outset, allow me on behalf of the Group to register some of our concerns with regard the following elements : the delays in issuing documents and reports, the duration of the meetings, the submission of draft decisions to the Commission, the allocation of time to the cross-sectoral issues as well as to the High-level segment.

First, on the delays in issuing documents and reports, let me draw your attention to the fact that we have not had sufficient time to diligently study the documents in advance of the meeting. In addition, such a shortage of time prevented us from having proper and adequate communication with our respective capitals. As a result, it was difficult, if not impossible, to ensure adequate preparations to facilitate productive dialogue and negotiations. I would just like to note that the Group has already expressed its concerns by letters to both the United Nations Secretary-General and you, Mr. Chairman. In that letter we highlighted the fact that this year we are basically engaged in a learning process and that the lessons learned could help to improve the conduct of future meetings of the Commission. We also noted that, in accordance with paragraph 133 of UNGASS, the Bureau should provide adequate opportunities for timely and open-ended consultations between the members of the Commission. In addition, in the intersessional meetings of the Bureau itself to prepare for the Commission, there should be appropriate financial support to enable the Bureau members, particularly those from the developing countries, to participate in the session.

Secondly, as to the duration of the meeting, I should like to mention that we consider the five days, out of the ten day meeting, devoted to the intergovernmental debate and the drafting exercise as rather limited, while there are two days allotted to major groups and three days for the High-level meeting. However, the Group believes that we can still achieve our objectives of having adequate deliberations, but we should seek to improve such scheduling for the future. The cross-sectoral issues, to be taken up by the Commission on April 23 as well as the drafting exercise from April 24-28, should provide to the maximum extent possible an open exchange of views among participants.

Thirdly, on the draft decisions, given the fact that we only have three working days for drafting, we would like to reiterate our position that any draft decisions that are to be formulated should be ready on the second day of the session, which is tomorrow to allow the group of countries such as the Group of 77 that comprise 132 countries to study and come up with common position. On the important question of the drafting

exercise, it was agreed during the earlier consultations with the Bureau members that the relevant working groups should hold meetings on the 24th, 26th and 28th of April. However, the Group also considers it important that not more than two of the working groups should meet simultaneously. This would greatly help to facilitate the participation of the members of the smaller delegations. It is also our fervent hope that during all the drafting exercises, there should be cross-sectoral discussions.

Fourthly, on the industrial segment, in the Group's view this segment should provide an interactive dialogue between the major relevant groups, including the representatives of business community, trade unions, NGOs, governments and international organizations. However, the Bureau and the Secretariat should undertake measures to ensure that a balance is maintained between the representatives of the developed and developing countries in the delegations of all major groups participating in this segment.

Fifth, as to the cross-sectoral issues, I would just like to say that the Group believes that the Chairman's draft should be essentially based on the various proposals that will be put forward by the delegations participating in the deliberations on these issues during the meeting on item 4 this afternoon. And the draft should also be based on the proposals in the meetings to take place in the morning and afternoon of this coming Wednesday, 24 April. It is obvious that the comments by these participants on the Secretary-General's reports should likewise be included.

Sixth, with regard to the High-level segment, it is the view of the Group of 77 and China that the meeting on this segment should provide ample scope for an integrated overview of the implementation of Agenda 21 as well as the consideration of the outcomes of earlier meetings of the Commission. It would also serve as a review of any urgent emerging issues that are brought to its attention. For instance, this year the High-level segment should not only focus on the issue of freshwater, but also on a number of other issues, including industry, the preparations for the 1999 review of the SIDS Programme of Action as well as the transfer of technology, among others. As to the timing and modalities of the High-level Segment, the Group will work very closely with its partners in the developed countries and it believes that the drafting exercise should be ended before this segment begins. It is our sincere expectation that the negotiations will be completed before the Ministers arrive in New York. The Group is also willing to cooperate with its Northern partners to ensure that this segment will provide positive inputs for the implementation of the Agenda 21.

Seventh, and lastly, on the other issues related to the participation of major groups, there will be a large number of side events scheduled to take place during the Commission's session. While such events obviously demonstrate a high level of interest in the Commission on the part of governments, international organizations and major groups, the holding of these events should not be allowed to divert attention from the critical inter-governmental process of the Commission.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China sincerely hopes that the outcome of this meeting and the work done by the Commission will provide the opportunity to ensure that this challenging task will be, without any doubt, completed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.