

Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Chairman of the Group of 77, at the First Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting on International Environmental Governance

New York, 18 April 2001

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Ministers,
Dear Colleagues,

It is indeed a great honour and pleasure for the Chairman of the Group of 77, the largest bloc in the universal intergovernmental body, to have the opportunity to address this august gathering on such an important issue. First and foremost, let me express, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our deep gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Klaus Topfer and UNEP for the preparation and presentation of a rich, comprehensive and thought-provoking report. A report which, I am sure, will provide an excellent input for the intergovernmental process of deliberation starting here today.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to underscore one point right here, and that is, I will be very brief. In doing so I have everybody's interest in mind and look forward to a constructive dialogue and exchange of views across the board. There are two major aspects to the discussion of the International Environmental Governance (IEG); one substantive and the other procedural. And on each this statement merely suffices to address the essence of the issue involved, leaving a more detailed expose to a later stage of our deliberations.

On the substance of the issue at hand, let me just underline that we look at the whole issue from a holistic perspective and consider it within the overall framework of the concept of sustainable development. Hence, the question of environmental governance becomes a question of sustainable development governance, with due emphasis on the three pillars we all agreed on in Rio almost ten years ago. It is within the same framework and in the same spirit and consistent with the provisions of the GA resolution 55/199 that we embark on this intergovernmental discussion and consider it as an important element in the wide-ranging agenda of the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Viewed as such, we consider the General Assembly resolution 53/242 of 28 July 1999 as an already agreed framework for the continuation of our discussions on a wide spectrum of issues involved in the process, including as relates to the role of UNEP in this regard. On the basis of the very clear provisions of this resolution, we fully support the further strengthening of the coordinating role of UNEP vis-à-vis the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other institutions, as well as granting it, in actual practice, adequate and stable financing. Simultaneously, the pivotal role of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in this whole review process needs to be emphasized. In our view, the upcoming three-day session of the CSD-10 should be in a position to establish the necessary links to this end.

As for the process and the procedure, I suppose our already stated emphasis on the intergovernmental feature of the process should have made our preferences quite clear. Nevertheless, the Group of 77 and China is well disposed and fully prepared to engage actively in this review process in all earnestness and with good faith. It should be obvious, therefore, that we favor an open-ended, transparent and fully participatory process for the review, and in a manner that would allow adequate time for in-depth discussion. Moreover, apart from the substantive considerations involved to which I just alluded, due consideration should also be accorded to the institutional limitations of many developing countries in participating in various meetings in different parts of the world. It is in this light that the Group of 77 would prefer to see that more effective use be made in the

