

UNCED THIRD PREPCOM: OVERVIEW AND EVALUATION

SUMMARY

At the Third UNCED PrepCom, the UNCED process finally turned the corner from the declaratory phase to the negotiating phase. Delegations have now assumed responsibility for finding solutions to the many complex problems on the UNCED agenda, rather than simply requesting more studies from the Secretariat. The two basic documents that will emerge from Rio next June - the Earth Charter and Agenda 21 - have begun to take shape. Our rules of procedure for both the final PrepCom in New York next March, and for UNCED itself, have been largely hammered out. But with three PrepComs down, and only one more to go before the largest ever gathering of Heads of Government in Rio, there remains an enormous amount of substantive work left to be done on all issues. The texts on sectoral environmental issues are extremely uneven, heavily square bracketed and will need to be overhauled to accommodate the generic structure for Agenda 21 devised at this PrepCom. As for major cross-sectoral issues, actual negotiations began at this PrepCom on only text dealing with transfer of technology. On the critical issue of financial resources, the best we could obtain as an agreed point of departure, was a compilation of views prepared by Canada as chair of the informal negotiations. The greatest challenge of all, however, will be to overcome the widening North-South tensions in this process. We need to avoid structuring the final bargaining in New York as just a trade-off between increased environmental protection for the North, in return from increased development assistance for the South. Our common interest in combining environment with development will need to be re-affirmed through a political dialogue between governments, if we are to conclude the PrepCom process with a successful package for leaders to sign at Rio.

REPORT

The Canadian delegation came to this PrepCom well prepared to make a substantive contribution to those issues where we believed that UNCED can make a difference. We were particularly involved in negotiating the outcomes dealing with forests, oceans (both living marine resources and marine pollution), the Earth Charter, institutional issues, and financial resources.

In co-operation with our NGOs and a number of other delegations, we helped to develop and co-sponsor specific resolutions that will strengthen the participation of women and indigenous people in the UNCED process. Lastly, through CANZ, we had a significant input into the decisions on the structure of Agenda 21 and the format of the Rio conference. The following paragraphs briefly review the major outcomes of the PrepCom.