

5. Seek to encourage national and international efforts to document and disseminate successful micro-level action strategies for reducing population pressures and environmental stress so that such strategies may be replicated on a wider scale.

PREPCOM DISCUSSION

The chapter on population promised to be one of the more contentious sections of Agenda 21. In initial statements in plenary, developed countries, including Canada, pointed out the importance of this chapter in achieving sustainable development. During this session the G77 removed all references to women in the text and bracketed one entire programme area, specifically the one which CANZ had identified as being the most important: implementing integrated population programmes at the local level. It was not clear if this was done in response to Holy See lobbying with the Latin American delegations or as a counter tactic to the USA bracketing one entire programme area in the consumption chapter. In the end it was probably a combination of both.

Following the plenary session there were several negotiating sessions on the population chapter in a small contact group. By the time of the contact group sessions the NGO women's caucus had protested strongly about the use of women as negotiating pawns and the G77 had backed away from their tactic of removing reference to women from all texts.

Hence during negotiations compromise language was found for virtually all paragraphs and strong references to the need to improve the general status of women was introduced into the chapter. When it was clear to the G77 that, with the exception of the United States, developed countries were in support of the chapter on consumption, they removed the square brackets from the third programme area. In the final language, however, commitments are couched in terms of "governments could undertake the activities set out below" which is weaker than the original text.

Like the health and poverty chapters, this chapter became a victim of strong lobbying from the women's caucus; it took four sessions to reach consensus on paragraphs 91 and 92. In addition, unfortunate conflict arose between the UNCED Secretariat consultant and the coordinator of the contact group with the Secretariat either refusing to make changes to the text agreed by delegates or inserting their own changes without the agreement of delegates. This was not only confusing but added additional uncertainty to a text which was already difficult to negotiate.