

Third UNCED PrepCom
Working Group II
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CANADIAN INTERVENTION ON FRESHWATER

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CANADIAN DELEGATE**

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Canadian delegation, I wish to express our appreciation for the excellent documentation prepared by the Secretariat related to the freshwater issue. We have found the reports under this item to be of interest and value as they identify key areas in which actions are urgently needed to ensure sustainable management and use of the world's water resources.

The delegation would like to offer a number of comments which we feel will help clarify the direction we should be going in on freshwater. These comments relate to the documents prepared by the Secretariat, and secondly, to the upcoming International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin, Ireland in January.

Concerning the Secretariat document PC/42/ADD.7, we are pleased to see that links are made among water issues such as sewage treatment and human health, land-use planning and water quality, and capacity building and water resource management; recognition of such linkages is an important prerequisite to managing water resources in an integrated fashion. We are similarly pleased to see that the importance of managing urban water is recognised, in light of the tremendous growth of urban populations expected in the coming years. However, we also have several concerns about the document that I would like to share with you and with other delegates.

First, we feel that the emphasis in the document is perhaps overly skewed toward calling for actions in developing countries to resolve water problems. Although this is certainly where the most pressing problems are to be found, we should not lose sight of the fact that the industrialised countries also need to address their water problems. As an example, paragraph 26, which suggests that countries promote the efficient and equitable allocation of water, is as relevant to the developed countries, where high rates of water consumption occur, as it is to the developing countries.

Second, we feel that while the document identifies actions needed at the national level to resolve water concerns, there is insufficient reference to actions required at the regional and global levels. For example, section F on integrated water resources management focuses exclusively on actions required at the national level. We agree that the primary responsibility for implementing water management strategies rests with national governments, but there is also a need for actions at the regional and global levels which should be elaborated in the document.