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## **U.N. Conference On Environment & Development (earth Summit): Summary Of Results**

by Barbara Khol

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The Earth Summit, formally known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), took place June 3-14 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. [See Chronicle 06/09/92 for previous coverage.] Summit results are summarized below. \* Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (formerly known as "Earth Charter"): A non-binding broad proclamation on environmental rights and responsibilities of all nations. The accord was completed June 11 after Israel dropped objections to language in provision referring to rights of people living under occupation on the condition that the clause not be included in Agenda 21. About 150 nations, including the US, signed the policy statement. \* Agenda 21: The 900-page blueprint of financial sources and methods to implement Rio Declaration. Agenda 21 is non-binding. The UN estimates that developed nations would have to provide US\$125 billion per annum in aid to the Third World in order to achieve environmental targets by 2000. The document calls for industrialized nations to raise foreign development aid to 0.7% of GDP by the end of the 1990s. The text of Agenda 21 includes proposals for dealing with desertification, fresh and salt water conservation and clean-up, and transfer of technology. The text proposes, but does not obligate, developed nations to provide "clean" technology for sustainable development in developing countries. The action plan also includes mechanisms for dealing with poverty, hunger, illiteracy, housing shortages, health care requirements, and population control. Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 is expected to result in higher water utility rates. According to UN estimates, full implementation of proposed measures in this chapter would require spending of up to US\$54 billion. Half of the total is to derive from multilateral financial institutions. Proposals to reduce and prevent desertification include a convention in 1993, focused primarily on African nations. The document specifies guarantees to patent rights for genetic resources. It also proposes safety norms, and ethics in genetic manipulation, and suggests international coordination for laws regulating trade in toxic products. Governments can select action plans considered most urgent in respective jurisdictions. Delegates approved the World Bank's Global Environment Facility as one of the financing mechanisms for Agenda 21, but with changes leading to more "democratic" decision-making procedures. Developing nation representatives insisted on no new forms of conditionality. Summit delegates also agreed that debt relief (debt-environment swaps or simple debt pardon) constituted an effective means of promoting sustainable development. The Third World transfers an estimated US\$200 billion per year to advanced industrialized nations under the rubrics of terms of trade losses and foreign debt service. Actual financial commitments by developed nations were far below the UN recommendation. Summit secretary general Maurice Strong asked for only US\$10 billion from these governments as an "initial commitment" during the conference. The Third World has received about US\$55 billion per annum in development aid in recent years. Brazilian Economy Minister Marcilio Marques Moreira said industrialized nations appeared ready to provide the additional US\$10 billion recommended by Strong. Bonn was expected to triple contributions to Agenda 21 programs to 780 million marks (US\$484 million) by 1995. In a speech at the Earth Summit, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said his government would raise the amount spent on development aid to 0.7% of GNP

"as soon as possible." Germany currently spends 0.42% of GNP (1991: 2.807 billion marks or US \$1.754 billion) on development aid. According to Portuguese Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva, the 12-nation European Community (EC) has pledged to increase aid for environmental projects by US\$4 billion. The Japanese government promised a US\$7 billion environmental aid package. Observers pointed out that in reality, only part of the proposed funds are new, and additional spending on environmental projects might come from existing development aid programs. Also, details were scant. For example, EC spokespersons did not mention a timetable for spending the additional US\$4 billion. \* **Forestry Principles:** Seventeen points outlining principles and methods to protect forestry resources. This document is also non-binding. The statement of principles was not completed because of differences on financing. Industrialized nation representatives focused on tropical rain forests and developing countries sought regeneration of temperate forests. According to a UN study released at the Earth Summit, destruction of tropical forests increased by 50% during the past decade. The report by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) said about 16.4 million ha. of forest land were destroyed in 1991, compared to 11.16 million ha. in 1980. Half of Latin America's land area is covered by forests, as is 33% of Asia and 27% of Africa. About 70% of total deforestation takes place in rain forests. Global forestry conservation initiatives administered by the World Bank have been delayed as low-income nations want to control how the money is spent. The US government proposed increasing aid for saving rain forests by US\$150 million. \* **Biodiversity Treaty:** A binding pact to protect animal and plant species. The deadline for signing the treaty is June 1993. On June 10 in Washington, the Bush administration proposed an initiative to catalog the world's flora and fauna. Meanwhile, officials reiterated the administration's refusal to sign the biodiversity treaty because it does not adequately protect US biotechnology company patents. British Prime Minister John Major announced a plan to study the world's biological resources, apparently similar to the US proposal. \* **Global Warming Treaty:** A binding pact urging reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" believed responsible for global warming. Treaty language includes no deadline dates for such reduction, nor specific maximum emission levels. The EC delegation confirmed June 9 that the 12 EC nations would sign a declaration on June 13 calling for reducing carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by 2000. The EC had wanted that provision included in the global warming treaty, but Washington agreed to sign the treaty only after it was watered down to make emissions reductions voluntary. Washington argued that the original timetable would hamper US industry, which is heavily dependent on coal and oil major sources of carbon dioxide when burned as fuels. US representatives asserted that the US was the only country, other than The Netherlands, with a national action plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The US leads the world in carbon dioxide production. According to President Bush, the US plan would reduce US annual net greenhouse gas emissions by 125 million to 200 million tons below projected levels in the year 2000. The EC declaration also introduced a Community-wide tax on carbon dioxide emissions, and other tax incentives to encourage energy savings. Members of the EC delegation said the emissions reduction statement will be binding among EC nations. The EC document was separate from the so-called "like-minded countries" declaration, a non-binding document circulated at the Summit which called for strong emissions controls. Next, EC nations called for a meeting in Fall 1992 to consider amendments that would strengthen the global warming treaty. British Prime Minister John Major said British climate control technology will be made available to developing nations. On June 11, William Reilly, chief US delegate and head of the Environmental Protection Agency, said Washington has proposed a US\$1.4 billion fund to monitor climate change as well as cataloging the world's plant and animal species. Journalists pointed out that the fund is not a new initiative. The US\$1.4 billion was part of the budget plan President

Bush submitted to Congress early this year. On June 12, President Bush called on industrialized nations to join the US in promptly implementing specific measures to reduce emissions of gases responsible for global warming. Bush proposed that signatory countries meet by Jan. 1 "to present and review our nations' action plans" to implement the global warming convention to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl asserted that Germany was the first large industrial country to set itself a limit of cutting carbon dioxide emissions by between 25 and 30% up to the year 2005. \* Summit negotiators agreed on the creation of a new UN agency to monitor environmental actions worldwide. The UN Sustainable Development Commission would require periodic environmental action reports from governments, international agencies and environmental groups. The commission will also monitor compliance with the treaties drafted at the Earth Summit and earlier environmental accords. The Commission is expected to be formally established at the next UN General Assembly in September. On June 14, at the close of the Summit, 150 heads of state had signed both the biodiversity and global climate treaties. Ratification by respective legislatures is required before the treaties go into effect. Environmental organization leaders welcomed the two treaties as well as the intent expressed in the Summit's other major documents. However, environmentalists and others pointed out that ratification may take many years. A concrete example of the "gap" between signing and ratification is the UN Convention on Maritime Law. The convention draft was initiated at the 1972 Stockholm conference, and the text finalized 10 years later in Jamaica. To the present, only 51 legislatures have ratified the treaty. The minimum required for implementation is 60. Consequently, the right of nation-states to sea exploitation up to 200 nautical miles from respective coastlines is not yet de facto international law. Since 1972, however, the convention has been used as a consensual juridical instrument among many nations. Environmental groups pointed out that several developed nation governments refused commitments to modify consumption, production and resource use patterns. Washington was reluctant to address the link between consumption patterns, environmental damage and non-renewable resource depletion. President Bush said, "Our lifestyle is not up for negotiation." Developing nation leaders pointed out that if wealthy nations were not willing to reduce excessive resource consumption, they have little or no moral right to ask developing nations to make sacrifices when most inhabitants are already impoverished. [Basic data from Deutsche Press Agentur, 06/10/92, 06/12/92; Agence France-Presse, 06/11/92, 06/12/92; Prensa Latina (Cuba), 06/12/92, 06/15/92; Chinese news service Xinhua, 06/15/92; Associated Press, 06/09-13/92, 06/15/92; Big media group-Eco 92 (Brazil), 06/12/92, 06/15/92, 06/16/92; Third World Network (TWN), 06/24/92]

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