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INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT  
Summary Record - 25th Meeting - 18 November 1970

1. The purpose of the meeting was for the IDWG and the Chairmen of the Drafting Groups\* to meet Mr. Maurice Strong, Secretary General designate of the UN Conference on the Human Environment.
2. In a brief preliminary statement, Mr. Strong stressed the importance of the contribution already made by FAO to the Conference preparations and emphasized that future cooperation between FAO, the Conference Secretariat and other agencies will be essential for the success of this Conference. It was recognized that some changes may take place in the process of the Conference preparations but this would not affect the basic approach to and the objectives of the Conference nor the need of the Secretariat to rely on the resources available in the Specialized Agencies.
3. The Chairman then made a brief review of FAO activities in the field of environment in general and in the preparation of the Stockholm Conference and posed specific questions to Mr. Strong which were answered as follows:
4. The role of the ACC ad hoc Working Group and the working arrangements set up by this Group were confirmed by Mr. Strong. It was, however, pointed out that the final choice of agenda items and the structure of the Conference will be strongly influenced by the kind of actions which are expected to be undertaken by the Conference. When these are decided after the meeting of the Preparatory Committee next February, it will then be necessary to review the arrangements set up by the ACC ad hoc Working Group and also the topics selected for documentation. However, for the time being, the preparation of outlines on selected topics for documentation should proceed and the agencies should continue to act as focal points for this first stage of the documentation, as agreed by the ACC ad hoc Working Group.
5. On levels 2 and 3 of the preparations (Action Plan and Specific Actions), the role played by the ACC ad hoc Working Group and the Specialized Agencies will also be essential in defining, between now and February, those issues which are applicable to these two levels. Any action item, for which FAO would be a likely candidate as the action centre, should be identified. For this purpose, it was confirmed that the Group will meet in Geneva on 1 December. To questions as to whether this should be a formal meeting as recommended by FAO, Mr. Strong replied that he had no objections, providing that there are no procedural difficulties and that he would check on this on his return to New York.

\* See attendance list attached.

6. The Secretariat intends, however, to use sources of information and advice from governments (national reports and the Preparatory Committee) and also from other substantial bodies of outside opinion such as IUCN - although the Specialized Agencies will, to some extent, also help in conveying the views from these other sources. In any case, the contributions from UN agencies to the Conference will be acknowledged since it is essential to demonstrate to governments the ability of the UN system to play its role and present concerted views on some basic issues.

7. Mr. Strong indicated that the Secretariat report of end-December 1970 to the Preparatory Committee will include all kinds of recommendations from many sources for consideration and selection by the Committee. These, however, will be categorized in the report and, between now and February, the Secretariat together with the UN agencies will establish priorities among these recommendations. This report will also review the past, present and future activities of the UN system in the field of environment. FAO should, therefore, provide the information required for this report, in addition to that already supplied in the ECOSOC Report S/4657 of May 1969\*.

8. With regard to the funds required to hire consultants, Mr. Strong indicated that the General Assembly had stressed the necessity of using the expertise available in the Specialized Agencies. Since the experts of the Specialized Agencies are already engaged in other programmes of activities, Mr. Strong agreed in principle that the Secretariat might in some cases, if funds are available, take responsibility for the extra costs for consultation, when this appears to be justified.

9. The overall process of the Conference and the results to be expected from it were then discussed.

The normal procedures for conclusion and ratification of international agreements being usually very long, it was suggested that FAO (LDC/SILL), in consultation with the UN Office of Legal Affairs, should submit to the Conference Secretariat a paper containing a review of existing machineries for conclusion and ratification of international conventions and make proposals for accelerating their process. However, it was recalled that all actions considered at Level 3 of the preparations would not take the form of international conventions. Action programmes, new institutions or modifications of existing ones would also be considered.

10. As to the process which would lead to decisions on action in some specific areas, Mr. Strong indicated that one should first reach intellectual consensus on the issues and their solutions and then obtain a political consensus before undertaking the action required. This explained the 3-level process proposed for the preparation of the Conference. The need for an independent and objective appraisal of some critical issues, such as those

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\* Annex - Section C. pp. 49-54.

on the use of pesticides and fertilizers, was also stressed in this respect, in order to avoid premature interference from press-media, private and public sectors on these issues during the Conference preparation.

11. The need for FAO to be informed as soon as possible on the proposed agenda and structure of the Conference and on the plans prepared for its follow-up was also underlined and, to this end, Mr. Strong agreed to maintain close contact and collaboration with FAO throughout the preparation of the Conference.

12. Before closing the meeting, Mr. Strong briefly indicated his preliminary thinking with respect to the follow-up of the Conference, stressing that four basic functions should be ensured in the field of environment:

- a Policy Centre which would continuously report on the state of the human environment to policy makers, preferably through the UN General Assembly;
- a Data Hardware Centre which would coordinate monitoring networks on the environment, centralize and store the available data;
- a Data Research and Evaluation Centre which might be linked with the preceding one;
- a Funding function which would centralize the funds required for any international action.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP  
ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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Present:

Mr. Maurice Strong, Secretary-General designate of the  
UN Conference on the Human Environment

Mr. E. Saouma, Chairman, Inter-Departmental Working Group on  
Natural Resources and the Human Environment

Messrs. Bruce (ESR), Devred (ESR), Hrabovszky (PAB/AGL),  
Pichel (AGP), Riney (FOR), Andersen (FOD), Ross Cockrill (AGA),  
Ruivo (FIR), Watterson (DDL), Contini (LEG), Dudal (AGL),  
Mahler (AGD), Nervik (AGS), Kreutzer (AGL), de Vos (FOR),  
Sand (OIL), Lujan (ESR), Reese (AGL), Malik (ESN),  
Hauser (AGL), Cairncross (DDA).

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Others present:

Messrs. Whittemore (AGP), Turtle (AGP), Fontaine (FOR),  
Vahomies (FOI).

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