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27 November 1979

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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON NEW
AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY
Technical Panel on Fuelwood and Charcoal
First Session
Rome, 21-25 January 1980

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Nomination of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Global use of fuelwood and charcoal.
4. National fuelwood and charcoal assessments of resources and use.
5. Production of fuelwood: existing and new resources.
6. Conversion systems for fuelwood: industrial and domestic uses.
7. Production and utilization of charcoal.
8. Alternatives to fuelwood and charcoal.
9. Economic, social and environmental considerations.
10. Strategies for more efficient use of fuelwood and charcoal in developing countries.
11. Recommendations for inter-sessional activities.
12. Contribution of Panel members and of the United Nations system to the work programme.
13. Adoption of the report of the first session.

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ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Nomination of officers

Nomination of the Chairman and the Rapporteur. The Chairman will assume the chair.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The agenda is based on the terms of reference of the Fuelwood and Charcoal Technical Panel.

3. Global use of fuelwood and charcoal

Issue 3(A) What is the magnitude of fuelwood and charcoal use, particularly in developing countries where wood and charcoal is widely used for domestic cooking and heating?

Comment: The Panel may wish to review the existing data on the use of fuelwood and charcoal to see how it can be improved for inclusion in a proposed Atlas of New and Renewable Sources of Energy and how the data can best be presented. Emphasis should be directed towards the realistic assessment of domestic and industrial uses, through direct combustion, in relation to sustainable yields. Industrial conversion of wood into other fuels will be dealt with by the biomass panel.

4. National fuelwood and charcoal assessments of resources and use

Issue 4(A) What specific recommendations can be made to Governments wishing to assess their current fuelwood and charcoal supplies and usage?

Comment: The Panel may wish to review inventory or data collection methods to assess the supply and use of fuelwood and charcoal to meet the needs of various countries, especially where forests are being depleted. Any proposals should take account of the difficulties of getting meaningful statistics on fuelwood in rural areas, particularly where the wood does not enter into the formal or organized commercial sector. Appropriate consideration should be given to the availability of logging and manufacturing residues for fuel.

5. Production of fuelwood: existing and new resources

Issue 5(A) How can supplies of fuelwood and charcoal be increased by improved management of existing resources and by creating additional resources through reforestation; what are the obstacles to introducing such improvements, and what steps can be taken to overcome these obstacles?

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Comment: The Panel may wish to review the potential for increasing the supply of wood for fuel land, in particular, the current efforts for reforestation (including village woodlots) as well as the introduction of new species and of new management systems and the multiple use of the trees. Can measurable impacts result from these efforts? Further the Panel may wish to review other present and future uses of the land in relation to fuelwood supplies. The obstacles to the introduction of these improvements are social, technical, financial and other. What steps can be taken to overcome these obstacles in order to accelerate the introduction of improved production systems?

6. Conversion systems for fuelwood: industrial and domestic uses

Issue 6(A) The existing conversion systems need to be reviewed for both industrial and domestic uses, in particular, in rural areas of developing countries where their use for cooking and heating is often very inefficient. What are the barriers to the introduction of known more efficient and low cost systems and what can be done to bring about changes?

Comment: The Panel may wish to review low cost cook-stoves and other innovative systems for use in developing countries. Their introduction could reduce the demand for fuelwood, save time in cooking, improve health and have additional environmental benefits. However, attempts to introduce improved cook-stoves have not been encouraging and the Panel should address the question of social acceptability.

7. Production and utilization of charcoal

Issue 7(A) Charcoal is produced in developing countries using earth, beehive, or other simple kilns which are relatively inefficient. Low cost improved kilns have been developed to increase the efficiency of the conversion of wood to charcoal. What are the barriers to the spread of this technology and how can they be overcome?

Comment: The Panel may wish to review the different charcoal production systems to see what specific assistance could be provided to Governments to assist in the introduction of more efficient lower cost systems.

Issue 7(B) Charcoal is often used in inefficient hazardous burners or stoves. What can be done to promote the development and introduction of more efficient and less hazardous systems?

Comment: The Panel may wish to review the more efficient existing equipment to see what information could be provided to Governments to assist them in introducing this in their countries.

Issue 7(C) Should the conversion of wood to charcoal be encouraged?

Comment: The conversion of wood to charcoal results in a product which contains only about one third the initial energy content, wasting the other two-thirds of the energy content. Arguments have been used that the charcoal is easier to transport and results in more efficient usage at the point of consumption. The Panel may wish to discuss the trade-offs between using the wood directly and converting it to charcoal.

8. Alternatives to fuelwood and charcoal

Issue 8(A) The use of fuelwood and charcoal for cooking, heating, and industrial purposes may not be the best use of the renewable sources. What other systems are available that can be used?

Comment: A number of possible alternative systems which would supply heat and energy for cooking, will be discussed by the other Technical Panels. These include low and medium calorific value gases and synthetic liquids and solar cookers. Can these systems be introduced, thus reducing the absolute need for fuelwood and charcoal and alleviating the supply problem or, where relevant, making the wood available for other uses? The alternative use of organic residues as fuels should also be examined as well as its implications.

9. Economic, social and environmental considerations

Because of the dimensions of these considerations and of their relation to basic energy needs, attention should be given to economic, social and environmental considerations.

Issue 9(A) Economic viability of fuelwood and charcoal production and use.

Comment: What are the economic parameters which can measure the viability of fuelwood options? Are they sufficient for decision making and, if not, how can social, environmental and other benefits most appropriately be included in the overall social cost-benefit analysis?

Issue 9(B) Social implications.

Comment: Fuelwood and charcoal supply and use have a strong social-cultural component. What are the implications of fuelwood and charcoal scarcity? How can we overcome possible resistance to changes, particularly towards more efficient uses? What are the social issues related to successful implementation of rural energy programmes?

Issue 9(C) Environmental considerations.

Comment: Especially in more fragile ecological areas, fuelwood and charcoal use may have strong implications for the environment. How can priority be given to solutions which take due consideration of environmental constraints or even integrate environmental and energy objectives?

10. Strategies for more efficient use of fuelwood and charcoal in developing countries

Issue 10(A) Fuelwood and charcoal use in developing countries cannot be separated from broader issues of rural development. What advice would the Panel have for Governments faced with the problems of the fuelwood crisis?

Comment: The Panel may wish to consider the role of rural extension services, of demonstration projects, of local production, of simple and low cost equipment, financing needs and modalities and other approaches to this problem.

11. Recommendations for inter-sessional activities

The Panel will make appropriate recommendations, based on its deliberations, for the activities to be undertaken before the next session.

12. Contributions of Panel members and of the United Nations system to the work programme

The members of the Panel, on behalf of themselves and of the organizations to which they are affiliated, may wish to inform the Secretariat of definite activities related to the Conference, which they would be prepared to undertake before the second session of the Panel late in 1980. Specialized agencies of the United Nations, Inter-Governmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with the United Nations may also wish to volunteer contributions. These contributions should be related to the proposals for working group meetings, consultant studies and other activities arising out of their deliberations and may also include suggestions for further cross-disciplinary and synthetic studies.

13. Adoption of the report of the first session

The final report will be drafted jointly by the Chairman, Rapporteur and Technical Secretary, based on the recommendations for inter-sessional activities and the proposed contributions.