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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT Fourth session New York, 2 March-3 April 1992 Plenary session Item 2 of the provisional agenda

> PREPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 44/228 AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OTHER RELEVANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

# Overview of national reports\*

### Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is a synthesis of 72 national and 2 subregional reports analysed by the Conference secretariat reflecting the main findings and trends. Unfortunately not all reports have been received; nor has the secretariat been able to analyse fully all the late reports, owing to time Constraints. Further analysis and processing of data and follow-up action will have to be done over months and perhaps years to come.

2. Only 15 reports were received by the end of July 1991, the official deadline, and by mid-November, the extended deadline and cut-off date for the synthesis report, 72 reports had been received. The analysed reports total some 11,000 pages (without annexes), with approximately two thirds in English and one third in other languages (French 2,000 and Spanish 1,000 pages).

\* The attachments to the present report are available in the language <sup>of</sup> submission only.

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Forty-two reports were presented to the secretariat in English, 9 in another language with an English translation, 11 in French and 5 in Spanish (see attachment 1). A handful of countries have withdrawn their reports for the purpose of updating and revising them.

3. Unfortunately a large number of important countries, in terms of their size, population and economy, had not completed their reports at the time this synthesis was prepared. Thus countries with an estimated population of some 2.25 billion people (or roughly half of the earth's population) have not been covered.

## Guidelines

4. At the first session of the Preparatory Committee, held at Nairobi, the Committee established suggested guidelines as reflected in document A/CONF.151/PC/8 and Add.1. The guidelines proposed that the national reports address, <u>inter alia</u>, development trends and environmental impacts, response to environment/development issues, procedures for preparing reports and the anticipated results of the Conference.

### Secretariat analysis procedure

In its analysis of the reports the secretariat has tried to address those 5. main elements suggested in the guidelines. The secretariat has to the extent possible analysed the reports in chronological order giving preference to final reports with diskette versions. Lack of diskette versions of reports has slowed the review process considerably. As part of the analysis process, brief five-to-seven-page "contents reviews" have been prepared for some 40 countries. The same reports have also been entered on the secretariat computerized database. The remaining reports have been analysed and indexed manually in preparation for this synthesis. The intention of the secretarial is to prepare contents reviews of as many reports as possible. The full unaltered reports will also be stored on a database, which will facilitate retrieval of information from the reports for future follow-up action, research, etc. Only reports submitted in a usable diskette format have been entered on the database. About half of reports have to date been treated in this way. The "contents reviews" are not to be taken as official secretariat documents but merely as short summaries of the main points in the reports concerned. No doubt there can be different interpretations but this is at the same time also a reflection on how a report can be understood by a reader, perhaps with less in-depth knowledge of the country concerned than their report writers. The "contents reviews" have been compiled together in a "quick-reference compendium" which could be made available to interested parties and the public at large. Samples will be available at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee.

6. The reports have been analysed principally by a team of professionals hired for this purpose, under funding provided by the Government of Finland to cover the reports from least developed countries, supplemented by secretaring funding. The same funds have also been used for securing the necessary

equipment to carry out this analysis. Reports have also been analysed by other secretariat staff and experts.

### UNCED Agenda 21 Information System

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7. The retrieval system used by the secretariat is CDS/ISIS (Computerized Documentation System/Integrated Set of Information Systems). The national reports system is envisaged as a part of the larger Agenda 21 information support system (AGIS). The main descriptors used in coding the reports can be found in attachment 2. These descriptors are the result of in-house standardization of the reports to facilitate analysis and other use of the material therein. The contents of the reports have not been changed. The retrieval system, once fully operational will, however, permit searches of the database by whatever word or words needed, thus allowing for very specific research work.

### II. MAIN FINDINGS

8. The main findings of the reports are summarized below and indicate not only global and regional priorities emerging from the reports but also sectoral and cross-cutting issues as they emerge. These may also be described separately in other documents presented to the Preparatory Committee. The findings and figures in this report are indicative of an issue of concern raised by the countries involved. It has not been possible at this stage, because of the unevenness of the data in the reports, to introduce meaningful qualitative global or even regional data. This area needs to be explored further.

### III. ANTICIPATED RESULTS OF THE CONFERENCE

9. The guidelines suggested that reports specifically address the subject of expectations from the Conference; at least 37 reports out of 72 responded to this under a separate heading or as a specific item. But almost half of the reports made no special reference to expectations from the Conference. Often the expectations are included in the text in different parts of the reports, hence making the analysis time consuming. This chapter often also overlaps with another suggested chapter in the Guidelines labelled "Recommendations and priorities on environment and development" dealt with later in this document.

10. Of the countries that responded under this heading, two thirds stressed the need for commitment regarding additional funding, and more than half suggested access to environmentally sound technology under favourable conditions, or free access to it, to enhance capacity-building. Approximately one third specifically addressed the Earth Charter, the various conventions and agreements and stated specifically that Agenda 21 should be action-oriented. These figures are certainly higher when one includes the more detailed recommendations in other parts of the reports.

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11. Developing countries generally expect genuine commitment or proof by the more developed countries that they are prepared to make changes in the world economy and to provide access to new and additional funding, appropriate technology and to assist with capacity-building. These same countries also see the Earth Summit as a forum for the international community to make concrete decisions regarding our common global concerns. More than a quarter of the developing country reports specifically expressed the wish for a stronger multilateral United Nations system to assist in this process. The necessity for improved regional cooperation was also often stressed, and a number of general statements were made about global commitments and the need to cooperate. Other topics mentioned under this heading include the need to address the debt problem, poverty, natural disaster prevention and fair trade.

12. The references to a strengthened United Nations system usually mention the need for closer cooperation between UNEP and UNDP. They also cover the need to integrate bilateral programmes with multilateral ones. Adequate follow-up to the Conference is also recommended.

13. The analysed reports of industrialized countries, which also happen to be major aid donors, support the general expectations of developing countries by stating that the Earth Summit should reach specific and concrete decisions regarding funding, technology issues and capacity-building leading to an action-oriented Agenda 21 programme. A number of developing country reports specifically refer to the Conference process as a way of learning from other developing countries and thus gaining experience. Likewise they are also willing to share their knowledge and experiences. The country-specific issues and problems are dealt with separately under other headings in this report.

14. Regarding regional cooperation, a number of countries with common environmental concerns (e.g. river-basin countries, desert countries, small island States and countries experiencing transboundary pollution) have expressed the need for stronger regional cooperation.

### IV. THE NATIONAL REPORT DRAFTING PROCESS

15. This section is elaborated in somewhat greater detail than expected since a large number of Governments in presenting their reports to the secretariat have specifically commented on the preparatory and consultative processes used in preparing national reports. These processes, often described as unique or most interesting, have included many entities or representatives of the population not usually involved.

16. The guidelines, while recommending that each country adopt its own procedures, nevertheless suggested that a special committee or working group be established which could be comprised of representatives of governmental ministries and agencies at various levels, representatives of the non-governmental community - industry, trade unions, science - and other important constituencies such as environmental and developmental groups, women, youth, consumers and indigenous peoples, in addition to experts in key disciplines such as natural and social sciences, economics, energy, agriculture and urban affairs, etc.

17. Of the 72 countries included, 90 per cent indicated that specific committees on the Conference had been established to prepare for the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and also to prepare the national report. In 50 countries, or 70 per cent, there appears to have been full and close participation from the non-governmental sectors, especially citizens' affinity groups. Women were specifically mentioned as being represented in at least 25 per cent of the countries and in some cases separate chapters or reports were written on the role of women. Countries seldom made any mention of the nature of the drafting process. At least 29 countries (40 per cent) arranged national seminars or workshops, which may well have included women representatives, to discuss or prepare the national level inputs to the Conference (see attachment 3).

### Ministerial involvement in the drafting process

18. Least developed countries reported that a greater number of ministries were involved in the drafting of their national reports than did industrialized countries (more than 50 per cent of country reports from least developed countries drew on the contributions of between 5 and 9 ministries, compared to 40 per cent for industrialized countries; one third of least developed countries had over 10 ministries involved in the process, compared to only 15 per cent of industrialized) (see attachment 4).

19. On the other hand, industrialized countries had specific ministries, departments and commissions for the environment coordinating the drafting process more often than least developed countries did (70 per cent of the time compared to 55 per cent of the time for least developed countries). In the case of the least developed countries (and developing countries), coordinating ministries were often ministries of planning, tourism, natural resources or of forestry.

### V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

20. One general remark is that environmental issues appear to be better covered than developmental ones. It is telling perhaps that reports sometimes indicate names and seemingly very exact numbers for animal or plant species extinct or close to extinction but equally exact figures on population or cost estimates of needs are much more scarce or vague. The percentage figures are only indicative of how many reports mention certain issues (see attachment 5).

# Agricultural pressures

21. Sixty reports, or approximately 85 per cent of the 72 reports received, refer to problems or issues directly linked with agriculture. These issues most frequently concern the dangers of excessive or incorrect use of agro-chemicals (40 per cent). Of reports describing agricultural issues about

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half refer to soil erosion and soil degradation. Other problems described are over-exploitation, or poor soils, poor or incorrect agricultural practices and salinization.

### Demographic pressures

22. Roughly 70 per cent of the reports make reference to demographic pressure as causing concern of one type or another. Of reports describing demographic pressure, 40 per cent mention rapidly increasing population and urbanization problems. Other issues are inadequate housing, i.e. growing slums, etc. The demographic pressures are also often mentioned together with waste management problems, which in turn are reflected in concerns about health and sanitation. Many report health and sanitation-related problems, particularly in urban centres. A number of reports touch upon the negative effects of poorly planned or controlled tourism-related activities. Unemployment is an increasing problem, some expressing particular concerns about unemployed youth. A number of reports express the need for clear national policies on population to address the concerns of population pressure.

### Poverty

23. The regional ministerial-level preparatory meetings listed poverty as one of the most important factors, if not the most important impediment to the achievement by developing countries of sustainable development. Poverty as a subject is dealt with separately in document A/CONF/PC.151/100/Add.2. National reports also, in varying detail, dwell on the issue of poverty. Generally the reports do cover important indicators of poverty such as low incomes, inadequate living conditions, low GNP and a heavy debt burden as well as many of the elements mentioned under demographic pressures.

### Pressures on forests

24. Pressures on forests are closely interlinked with the demographic and agricultural pressures referred to above. Pressures on forests are mentioned in 70 per cent of the reports and they stem from the use of wood as fuel (30 per cent of reports mentioning forest pressures), logging and clearing, agricultural encroachment, urban encroachment and squatting and forest fires.

25. These pressures on forests are also directly linked to habitat loss. Forty per cent of all analysed national reports bring up habitat loss and also refer to loss of biological diversity and loss of fragile ecosystems.

26. In developing countries forests are under pressure from agricultural expansion and from population pressure in the ongoing quest for more land and fuel wood. Only a few of the developing country reports analysed so far give indications of serious effects from the forestry industry and logging. This figure is also a reflection of the fact that several major forest countries have not yet submitted reports. With depletion of forests there is, of course, the related destruction of biological diversity, sometimes linked with local climate change.

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27. In the reports from industrialized nations, including the central and eastern European countries, the concerns regarding forests and forestry are jinked to acidification and pollution problems primarily due to emissions from industry and transport, often transboundary in nature, which have a devastating effect on forests. At least two reports from major industrialized forest countries mention the harmful effect of poor logging practices and clear cutting.

# Waste management and pollution

28. At least 42 reports or close to 60 per cent indicate that countries have waste management problems of a magnitude that concern them now or will concern them in the immediate future. These problems are linked with the use of agro-chemicals (in at least 27 countries, or almost 40 per cent), household waste (35 per cent) and industrial waste including toxic waste (30 per cent). coastal and sea pollution is mentioned in 40 per cent of the reports and 50 per cent of the reports express concern about air pollution, sometimes localized to cities or regions; almost 30 per cent mention freshwater pollution including in some cases groundwater pollution; and soil pollution. Specific references to acidification of water, soil and air are frequently made in the industrialized countries. The reports from central and eastern Europe describe sometimes alarming waste management problems, and have Identified several national level disaster areas sometimes with transboundary effects. A number of reports, in particular industrialized country reports, state that 50 to 90 per cent of air pollution is transboundary and external to the country concerned.

### Mater shortage, harsh climate and/or desertification

29. Limited access to freshwater is reported by 35 per cent of the countries, and 75 per cent of these same countries also report waste management problems. It appears that the access to water is often a question of water quality as well as overall availability. A number of countries make reference to a hostile climate with uneven precipitation and climate change; and one fourth of countries with water shortage refer to desertification. These countries are almost all in Africa. Desertification is linked both to the agricultural practices and forest destruction described above. All but one of the countries reporting desertification are developing countries. One large developing country describes desertification in certain provinces as "catastrophic".

## Matural disasters

30. A significant number of national reports express concern about natural disaster and disaster response. Almost all island and many coastal States mention the danger of possible sea-level rise. Disasters like floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruption as well as man-made armed conflicts are mentioned in a number of reports.

# VI. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AS DESCRIBED IN THE REPORTS

# Priority areas

31. As can be expected the priority areas to be addressed correspond with problem areas identified. Approximately 65 per cent of the reports list conservation of the natural resources as a top priority stressing preventive measures over corrective ones. Agriculture and waste management-related issues are mentioned in nearly half of the reports as the most urgent, closely followed by demographic pressure and forestry-related issues. Water and water resources management is singled out in 35 per cent of all reports although this figure most likely is also included in the broader topic of natural resource protection.

32. There are differences depending on the developmental level of a country. For instance, the industrialized countries see the waste management issues as more pressing, with particular concern for air and water pollution (mentioned in 85 to 95 per cent of industrialized country reports), whereas population, urbanization and quality of life (poverty) issues, as well as the above-mentioned agriculture and forest-related issues, are more important to developing countries, in particular the least developed. Other frequently mentioned priorities include energy, food security, debt and desertification.

### Means of implementation

33. The above figures are probably lower than in paragraphs 20 to 30 listing main areas of concern because most reports have concentrated on the means for addressing the problems. To address these issues the reports appear to concentrate on the following issues. Strengthening of legislation and enforcement (70 per cent of reports); better planning and coordination (65 per cent); capacity-building including institutional strengthening and research (65 per cent). Some 50 to 60 per cent of reports stress the need for awareness building and environmental education as a priority, as well as a participatory process involving non-governmental organizations which is specifically mentioned in some 30 per cent of reports.

34. Other significant means for addressing the problems are strengthened regional and international cooperation (24 to 35 per cent) and funding mechanisms.

### Funding

35. Developing countries invariably stress the need for additional funding over and above present technical assistance and a number of countries make references to the need for a "green fund". The analysed reports from the industrialized countries also support the need for additional funding and pledge their commitment for such funds. The funding needs are considerable and will be addressed separately in the document on financial resources and mechanisms, A/CONF.151/PC/101. Generally speaking, figures on funding needs

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or the cost of elimination of problems are not sufficiently covered in most reports. As can be expected, industrialized countries tend to have more exact figures although a number of developing country reports also provide good figures at least in some sectors.

### Capacity-building

36. Developing countries report a need for capacity adjustments and strengthening to address environment and development-related issues. The capacity-building initiatives, either under way or contemplated, as outlined in the national reports, number in the thousands. Some reports are quite specific about programmes and actions needed, while others are rather general. It is not feasible to summarize in a comprehensive yet succinct manner all the capacity-building proposals into this synthesis report. Most of the suggestions in the reports can best be dealt with at the national level, and these actions form one of the most important ingredients in the follow-up to the Conference.

37. Capacity-building as a general subject is dealt with separately in documents A/CONF.151/PC/100/Add.11 and A/CONF.151/PC/100/Add.26. UNDP and the Conference secretariat have commissioned a study on capacity-building requirements in developing countries which will be presented separately. Many of the elements in the national reports under this heading will be elaborated in further detail in this study.

### VII. EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS

### What worked?

38. In reviewing the preparatory process for the national-level preparation and, in particular the national report preparations, one notes a certain pattern or process that seems to have been used in producing a report.

39. A national committee was convened. Consultants were often engaged to prepare draft reports. Most frequently the Environment Ministry or government environment entity concerned was charged with coordinating the work at the national level; but, judging from reports and correspondence, the final versions of the reports were often discussed during national seminars or meetings and then approved by the committee, sometimes a committee of ministers, or even by parliaments. Financial support from a number of sources through the UNDP field offices and a United Nations presence has facilitated preparations in many developing countries.

### Process

40. The national report preparations have, in many countries, created a unique "consultative process" mobilizing thousands of people around the world. There are reports that list several pages of participants. The magnitude and the number of problems identified as being part of the

development process are so great that Governments alone cannot address and correct ongoing processes and take the necessary steps to change directions. The Conference process has therefore highlighted not only the usefulness but also the necessity of the involvement of the non-governmental sector of society, such as private industry and a number of affinity groups and associations.

### Eco-regional and South-South pooling of resources

41. A number of eco-regional country groupings have also contributed actively to the Conference process, which is reflected in spontaneous regional meetings and reports. It may be advantageous to use these regional groups for regional monitoring within themselves to carry out the monitoring of progress. In this way especially small countries with limited resources could expand their capacities by pooling resources, thus becoming more aware of the problems of neighbouring countries. Examples of such regional groupings which have actively contributed to the process are the Sahelian countries, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) countries, the Amazonian countries, the Pacific island developing countries and the Arctic countries, to mention just a few. This is also touched upon in document A/CONF.151/PC/100/Add.26.

42. A number of developing countries have also expressed the view that they hope to learn from others and share their own experiences with others. The national reports contain a great deal of information that potentially is of great direct value for developing countries provided the means for South-South exchange of experiences exist.

43. From the above synthesis it is clear that a lot of momentum has been generated in most States preparing not only the national reports but also for the Conference itself. It is important that this momentum not be lost after the Conference and that some follow-up action be taken. Some of the processes and mechanisms used, such as Conference Committees, may well be worth preserving in one form or another. It is essential that the symbiotic process which has emerged or been strengthened in most countries between Governments and non-governmental sectors continue to address the issues raised at the national level.

44. There are many players at the international level that can assist developing country Governments in maintaining and strengthening the process. Within the United Nations system itself, the key players, because of their mandates, will be UNDP and UNEP supported by the specialized agencies. The role of the World Bank and regional development banks, the regional commissions of the United Nations, as well as other regional organizations and programmes, should be fully considered.

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Air: A1: atmosphere A2: climate. Al: ozone layer A4: air pollution A5: greenhouse effect A6: acidification Biological: B1: biological diversity B2: flora B3: fauna Waste: C1: waste management C2: hazardous wastes C3: solid wastes C4: toxic chemicals C5: illegal traffic C6: noise **C7:** radioactive waste C8: fertilizers C9: pesticides Social / Political: D1: impact of war D2: legislation D4: state liability D3: sovereignty Environment: El: environment (history) E2: environment (future) Financa-related: F1: financing **F2:** development aid Welfare: H1: living conditions H2: health H3: quality of life H4: working conditions H5: social security H6: sanitation

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- 12: communication
- I3: information
- I4: cultural heritage
- 15: environmental
  - assessment

Land: L1: land resources L2: forest resources L3: deforestation L4: desertification L5: erosion L6: soil L7: soil degradation L8: drought L9: land tenure L10: wetlands Macroeconomic: M1: debt M2: trade M3: economic growth M4: income M5: wealth distribution M6% production patterns M7: consumption patterns M8: government expenditure N9: tax M10: subsidies M11: employment M12: informal sector M13: investment M14: inflation Level: N1: global level N2: national level N3: regional level N4: international cooperation N5: local level Organizations: **01:** international organizations 02: intergovernmental organizations 03: non-governmental organizations

04: UN system

07: grassroots

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05: regional organizations

corporations

Population / Special Groups: P1: population P2: rural P3: urban P4: women P5: youth P6: vulnerable groups P7: poverty P8: children P9: migration P10: human resources P11: ethnic groups P12: indigenous population Conservation: R1: resource status R2: nature conservation R3: restoration R4: recycling R5: parks R6: protection R7: afforestation R8: natural disasters R9: fragile zones Sectoral: S1: mining S2: energy SJ: industry S4: infrastructure S5: transport S6: housing S7: services S8: health services S9: social services S10: education S11: tourism S12: agriculture S13: animal husbandry S14: fisheries S15: forestry S16: hunting S17: gathering S18: raw materials S19: fishing Technology-related: T1: technology transfer T2: human capital T3: science.

**T4:** research

T5: equipment

T6: information exchange T7: biotechnology T8: technology

- W1: freshwater resources W2: seas W3: brackish water W4: groundwater W5: eutrophication W6: water pollution W7: rainfall General: - Z1: background Z2: recommendations Z3: problem areas Z4: existing programmes Z5: environmental policy Z6: sustainable
  - development

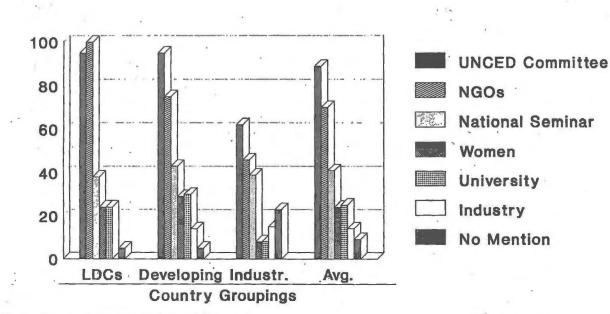
Waters

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Attachment 2

# National Report Drafting Process % of reports showing involvement of

various groups & sectors



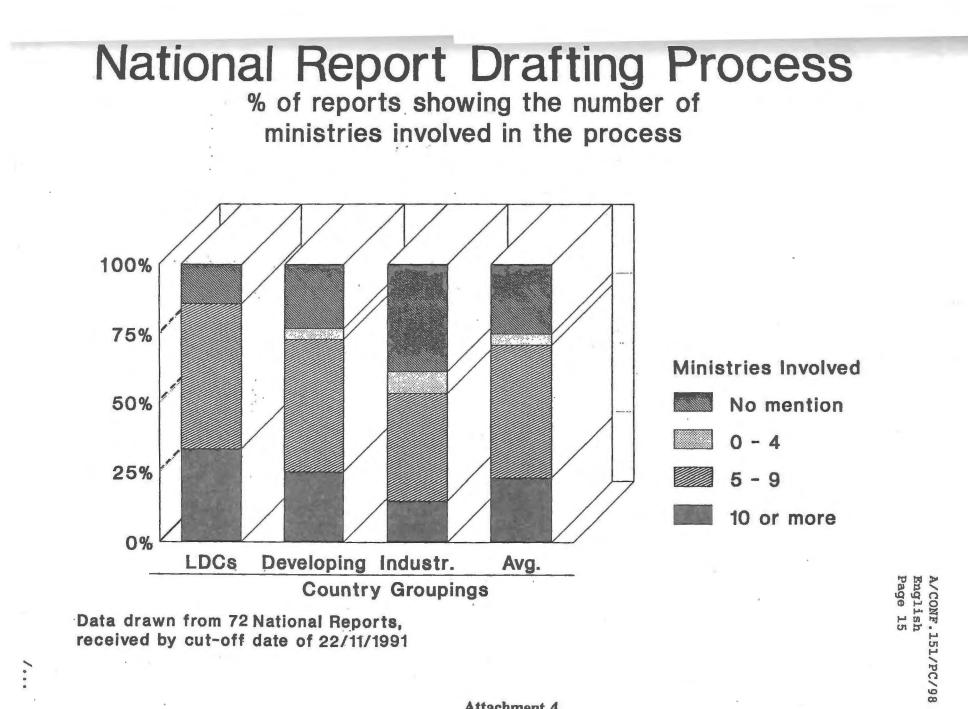
Data drawn from 72 National Reports, received by cut-off date of 22/11/1991

NB. Involvement of women, universities and industry may also be reflected in the figures for NGOs

Page

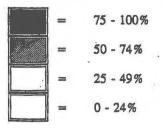
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**Attachment 3** 



		FURIS			
	Developing Countries	Least Developed Countries	Industrial- ized Countries	Central & Eastern Europe	All Analyzed Reports
Agricultural Pressures					
Agro-chemicals					
Soil Erosion & Degradation		Set.			
Demographic Pressures					
Population Growth					
Urbanization					
Housing / Slums					
Pressures on Forests					13.21-5
Habitat Loss					
Waste Management				1	
Household Waste					
Industrial Waste					
Freshwater Pollution					teria .
Marine Pollution					
Air Pollution					P. M.
Water Scarcity				ν	

# MOST FREQUENTLY REPORTED PROBLEM AREAS IN NATIONAL REPORTS



The shading indicates the percentage of reports in each country group referring to a particular problem area. There may be some overlap of these problem areas; for instance, population growth and urbanization are part of the general issue of demographic pressure. (see text, paragraphs 20 - 30).

Data drawn from 72 National Reports prepared for UNCED, as of 22/11/91

Attachment 5