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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY
Third session
30 March-17 April 1981
Agenda item 9*

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

DRAFT REPORT

Rapporteur: Mr. Richard H. O. OKWARO (Kenya)

CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
_____	OPENING STATEMENTS	1 - 6	2
_____	SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE; PREPARATIONS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL; PREPARATIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL	7 - 27	4

* A/CONF.100/PC/45.

OPENING STATEMENTS

1. The Secretary-General of the Conference briefly reviewed the progress that had been made in preparations for the Conference as a consequence of the decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee at its second session 1/ and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/204 of 16 December 1980. Eight technical panels had submitted reports on the sources of energy before the Conference. In addition, reports on the use of peat for energy (A/CONF.100/PC/32) and draught animal power (A/CONF.100/PC/39) had been prepared. Six meetings of ad hoc groups of experts had analysed the various problems connected with the application of new and renewable sources of energy. All the analytical work had been reviewed and consolidated by the synthesis group in its report to the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.100/PC/41 and Add.1). Public information activities related to the Conference had been increased. At the regional level, preparations undertaken under the auspices of the regional commissions had made a valuable contribution. Agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, had contributed to the work of the Conference secretariat and had also undertaken significant activities on their own initiatives in preparation for Nairobi. The Secretary-General also reported that logistic preparations for the Conference were going smoothly, both those undertaken within the United Nations and those undertaken by the Government of Kenya. In that context, the Secretary-General noted in particular that the secretariat was working closely with the Government of Kenya to ensure the success of the exhibition-cum-demonstration that would take place at Nairobi at the time of the Conference.

2. Several general conclusions appeared to the Secretary-General to be evident from the preparatory work that had been completed. First, the technical review of the different sources of new and renewable energy had demonstrated their relevance and significance for the future energy balance of mankind. It had become evident that the various technologies were at very different stages of development: some were well known and well established, others could play a major role during the next decade, while others still required elaboration and improvement. The Secretary-General noted that the preparatory work had emphasized the difficulty of evaluating the economic and financial viability of different energy sources, and the limitations of generalizations about their applicability. It had been possible to make a systematic evaluation of some of the main obstacles inhibiting the large-scale adoption of some technologies, and the Secretary-General drew attention to the basic role that considerations of energy efficiency would play in the future in both industrialized and developing countries. Social, cultural and environmental factors were also important, especially in regard to attempts to replace energy use patterns that were deeply rooted.

3. Turning to the possible scope of the Conference, the Secretary-General suggested five concepts that might aid discussion in the Preparatory Committee:

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 43 (A/35/43), Part Two, annex I.

(a) Awareness of the role of new and renewable sources of energy in the energy transition of mankind;

(b) Enhancement of national decision-making capacity in the field of new and renewable sources of energy;

(c) Launching of a programme of international co-operation for the development of new and renewable sources of energy;

(d) Stimulation of the national utilization and international transfer of resources which would enhance the application of new and renewable sources of energy;

(e) Mobilization and intensification of activities of the United Nations system in the field of new and renewable sources of energy.

4. Lastly, the Secretary-General drew attention to the need for the Preparatory Committee to indicate its priorities for the final stage of preparations before the Conference. One vital topic appeared to be the development of a draft programme of action that could ultimately be adopted by the Conference. He indicated his intention to submit a preliminary draft outline of such a programme at the current session of the Preparatory Committee, in accordance with the request in paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 35/204. On the basis of guide-lines and directions given by the Preparatory Committee as a consequence of its consideration of the preliminary draft outline, a draft programme would be prepared by the secretariat for consideration at the fourth session. The Secretary-General also announced his intention to send a number of high-level missions to Governments to help to ensure a high degree of political participation in the Conference; he expressed his belief that the public information programme also had to be accelerated. He stated in conclusion that the preparatory process had demonstrated very clearly the importance of the subject with which the Conference would deal; the direct relationship between policies for promoting new and renewable sources of energy and the over-all general policy of development in developing countries; and the need and opportunity provided by the Conference for international co-operation at all levels.

5. In his opening statement, the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee stated that there had been a marked improvement in the state of Conference preparations since the second session of the Committee. He referred to the close links that had been maintained between the Bureau and the secretariat in the intervening period. They had been useful to all concerned and had been marked by a general readiness to consider new ideas and suggestions. With help from several Governments, the capacity of the secretariat had been enhanced and excellent work had been achieved, particularly in regard to the intensive series of meetings of technical panels and ad hoc groups of experts. The Chairman also expressed his appreciation of the work of the Synthesis Group, the activities of the regional commissions and other bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, and the activities of other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, such as the recent international conference on Energy 2000 in Tunisia. The Chairman reiterated his thanks to the Government of Kenya for its excellent co-operation in the Conference preparations.

6. In the opinion of the Chairman, the necessary analytical material was now available, and the major task of the current session of the Preparatory Committee was to consider the preliminary draft outline of the programme of action. The task would require patience, foresight and mutual understanding, if it was to bring realistic results. He emphasized his view that the programme of action should identify short-term, medium-term and long-term activities at different levels, including the regional and subregional levels. Although the Conference could not be a panacea, it should not limit itself merely to describing the problem; agreement should be reached at Nairobi on concrete actions that could be implemented after the Conference.

Chapter

SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE (Agenda item 2)

PREPARATIONS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL (Agenda item 3)

PREPARATIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL (Agenda item 4)

7. The Preparatory Committee considered agenda items 2, 3 and 4 concurrently at its 17th to 24th meetings, from 30 March to 3 April and on 6 April and held a general debate on them; it also considered specific subitems in detail.

8. Most delegations expressed their satisfaction at the progress that had been made in the preparations for the Conference in the period that had elapsed since the second session of the Preparatory Committee, although there was general recognition that much still remained to be done and that the preparatory process was now moving into a decisive phase, especially in regard to the draft programme of action. A few delegations expressed the view that the work that had been carried out in the preceding months did not satisfactorily contribute to meeting the objectives of the Conference, as expressed in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 33/148 of 20 December 1978, nor had the work followed the guidelines established in the relevant decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee at its second session. 2/

A. Progress report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

(Agenda item 2)

9. There was general agreement among the delegations taking part in the debate on the subject that the progress report of the Secretary-General of the Conference (A/CONF.100/PC/40), as well as his opening statement to the Preparatory Committee at its current session, provided an accurate view of the appropriate orientation

2/ Ibid.

for the Conference. Several delegations recalled the objectives defined in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 33/148 and linked them to the wider objectives of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 35/56). It was suggested, in that context, that the Conference should represent a major step in international scientific and technical co-operation leading to the creation of a new international economic order. It was pointed out that, in both industrialized and developing countries energy was inextricably linked to matters of social and economic development.

10. There was wide support for the view that several forms of new and renewable energy offered great opportunities for immediate, widespread and substantial development, but it was also noted that developing countries would continue to require increasing amounts of conventional energy for the foreseeable future in order to meet development needs; new and renewable sources of energy should therefore be regarded as complementary to conventional energy sources.

11. The emphasis that had been placed in the Secretary-General's statement on the relationship between policies for promoting the use of new and renewable sources of energy and general policies of development commanded a wide measure of support among delegations. One delegation noted, however, that it was only one side of the problem facing the Conference; substantial changes had taken place in the world energy situation since 1973 and that aspect had largely been neglected in Conference preparations so far. The view was also expressed that the Conference objectives defined by the General Assembly indicated that the Conference should not be concerned primarily with development patterns, or with technology or energy comparisons; instead, the Conference should be a means to promote the use of new and renewable sources of energy in social and economic development. In that context, several delegations emphasized the close relationship that existed between the objectives of the Conference and the proposed programme of action, and offered comments and suggestions concerning elements to be included in the programme.

12. The delegation of Kenya informed the Committee of the state of preparations by the host country for the Conference. In particular, attention was drawn to the need for early decisions by Governments concerning participation in the exhibition-cum-demonstration, in order that the necessary facilities could be provided.

B. Reports of the technical panels and ad hoc groups of experts

(Agenda item 2)

13. The Preparatory Committee had before it for its consideration the reports from eight technical panels (A/CONF.100/PC/23 and Corr.1, 24 and Corr.1, 25 and Corr.1 and 2, 26, 27 and Corr.1, 28, 30 and 34), reports from consultants on the use of peat for energy (A/CONF.100/PC/32) and on draught animal power (A/CONF.100/PC/39), and reports from the six ad hoc groups of experts (A/CONF.100/PC/29, 31, 33 and 36-38).

/...

14. Many delegations expressed their satisfaction at the general high quality of the reports, although several delegations indicated that, especially in regard to the reports from the technical panels, there were omissions or errors on points of detail that should be corrected. It was noted that, in a number of cases, the technical panels had clearly identified specific technologies that were ready for widespread adoption. One delegation expressed the view that the reports did not make a significant contribution to the development of appropriate conclusions by the Conference; by limiting themselves to surveys of opportunities and difficulties, the experts had not adequately responded to the needs expressed in General Assembly resolution 33/148.

15. The Preparatory Committee agreed that it would be desirable for Governments to communicate to the secretariat in writing any detailed comments or corrections concerning individual reports. The secretariat should then consider the desirability of issuing an addendum or addenda to the reports, listing such recommended alterations.

C. Report of the synthesis group

(Agenda item 2)

16. In the view of most delegations, the report of the synthesis group (A/CONF.100/PC/41 and Add.1) was a satisfactory analysis that provided a sound basis on which the draft programme of action could be developed. Some delegations felt that more emphasis should have been given in the report to certain forms of new and renewable energy (for example, biomass and solar energy); the basis for cost comparisons among different energy sources was also criticized by some delegations, although it was recognized that substantial theoretical and data problems hindered a more comprehensive approach. The conclusions in chapter V were felt by many delegations to be generally valid and relevant, although some reservations were expressed concerning specific paragraphs.

17. A few delegations expressed the view that the report of the synthesis group fell short of their needs and did not make a sufficient contribution to the preparatory process. In that connexion, one delegation stated that the report should have contained a review of the international situation in regard to liquid fuels, and its implications for Conference objectives. Another delegation felt that the report did not meet the challenges established for it in paragraphs 9 and 11 of the report, and expressed the view that, in chapters III-V, the synthesis group had gone beyond its mandate and had attempted to identify appropriate patterns of development for developing countries.

D. Activities of the relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the field of new and renewable sources of energy

(Agenda item 2)

18. In accordance with subparagraph(e) of Preparatory Committee decision 7 (II), 3/ organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system had submitted reports on their activities relevant to the subject of the Conference (A/CONF.100/6 and addenda; activities of the regional commissions are listed separately, see sect. E below).

19. In their statements to the Preparatory Committee, all representatives of United Nations bodies and agencies emphasized the increasing importance that was being given to new and renewable sources of energy in their programme activities. It was anticipated that the programme of action that was to be developed for the Conference would provide further impetus to those activities. Many representatives drew attention to projects already being undertaken in co-operation with Governments, and also noted the close liaison that had been established with the Conference secretariat during the preparatory process.

E. Preparations at the regional level

(Agenda item 3)

20. In accordance with the recommendations contained in paragraph (f) of Preparatory Committee decision 7 (II), 3/ all the regional commissions of the United Nations had organized special meetings devoted to new and renewable sources of energy. In two cases (Africa and Latin America), regional plans of action had already been adopted; they were currently being elaborated and implemented. The reports of the regional meetings were before the Preparatory Committee (A/CONF.100/8 and addenda), together with comprehensive reports on other relevant activities of the regional commissions (A/CONF.100/7 and addenda).

21. In their statements, representatives of the regional commissions referred to the technical assistance that had been provided to individual countries, in co-operation with the Conference secretariat, especially in connexion with the preparation of national reports. Although only a small number of national reports had so far been completed, many would soon be available and would be extremely useful in developing an appropriate programme of action for the Conference. The representatives emphasized that, because of the site-specific and similar characteristics of many forms of new and renewable sources of energy, a regional approach was often essential. The value of that approach had already been demonstrated at several specialized seminars and workshops organized by regional commissions on specific forms of new and renewable sources of energy.

22. The value of the regional approach to international co-operation was also confirmed by many delegations. The plans of action developed for Africa and

3/ Ibid. sect. B.

Latin America were welcomed, and several delegations from countries outside those regions felt that the plans for action offered valuable guidelines and examples for the development of the programme of action to be presented for adoption at the Conference.

F. Preparations at the national level

(Agenda item 4)

23. In their contributions to the general debate, most delegations referred to recent activities at the national level concerned with the increased use of new and renewable sources of energy. In some cases they arose directly from the preparatory process for the Conference, but in many countries significant decisions and actions had already been taken to ensure a more diversified and self-reliant energy mix in the medium-term to long-term future. Frequently, therefore, preparations for the Conference, including the preparation of national reports, were already viewed as an integral part of continuing national activities to promote the use of new and renewable energy sources.

24. Several delegations stated that special units or committees had been created at the national level, with a mandate to evaluate opportunities and to promote the development of new and renewable sources of energy. Such special groups were normally established within the over-all national framework of energy and development planning. In a number of cases, significant reorientation of energy planning and development had already been achieved, although it was generally recognized that the relative contribution of new and renewable energy to national energy supplies would increase substantially only in the medium and long-term.

25. In the context of national activities linked to international co-operation, several delegations referred to projects in their countries that were being undertaken in co-operation with other countries, or with the assistance of bodies of the United Nations system or other intergovernmental organizations. Several delegations indicated in their statements various constraints faced by their countries in efforts to develop new and renewable sources of energy. Other delegations indicated that their preparations at the national level for the Conference included the compilation of information on research, training and other facilities that could be utilized by other countries.

G. Chairman's concluding remarks

26. At the conclusion of the general debate, the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee expressed the view that an extremely fruitful exchange of views had taken place. A large number of delegations and representatives of organizations had participated in the debate, and many of the statements would be helpful in the preparatory tasks that still lay ahead.

27. The Chairman stated that the following general conclusions might be drawn from the debate on agenda items 2, 3 and 4.

/...

(a) Delegations had expressed their general satisfaction with the progress that had been made in preparations for the Conference since the second session of the Committee;

(b) The work undertaken by the technical panels, ad hoc groups of experts and the synthesis group had been of generally high quality, although some delegations had expressed reservations or disagreements on points of detail: it would be useful if Governments could communicate such comments in writing to the secretariat as soon as possible, and no later than 31 May;

(c) In the view of many delegations, the report of the synthesis group contained much material that would be useful in developing the draft programme of action;

(d) The summaries of national preparations for the Conference that had been contained in the statements of many delegations had done much to enrich the Committee's understanding of the needs and objectives of the Conference;

(e) It was evident from the debate that activities at the subregional and regional levels were already substantial and were much appreciated by Governments: the contributions made to the debate by representatives of the regional commissions had been extremely valuable;

(f) Similarly, there was evidence of growing co-operation and co-ordination among United Nations bodies and agencies in regard to new and renewable sources of energy; the close links that had been established within the United Nations system in the preparatory process were very important for a successful Conference;

(g) In the course of the debate, many delegations had indicated in general terms their expectations for the draft programme of action that would be developed. Those views would be of considerable assistance when considering the preliminary draft outline of the programme of action, which constituted the next item of the Committee's agenda.
