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Policy Review March 8, 1993

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United States Department of State

*Bureau of Oceans and International
Environmental and Scientific Affairs*

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 8, 1993

TO: IWG Sub-Group Members on the UN Commission on
Sustainable Development (CSD):

OEB:	Dan Blank	456-6231
OMB:	Janet Piller	395-5651
CIA:	Bill Richardson	703-790-5736
EPA:	Alan Hecht	260-4470
	Mark Kindall	
NOAA:	Tom Laughlin	482-4307
AID:	Barbara Upton	647-5189
DOJ:	Chuck Sheehan	514-0557
	Annie Petsonk	
USTR:	Marissa Perrone	395-3911
CEA:	Natalie Tawil	395-6947
NSF:	Joseph Bordogna	357-9421
	William Butcher	357-5166
USDA:	Ron Blackley	720-5437
DOE:	Ted Williams	586-2062
DOI:	David Williams	208-5902
OSTP:	Nancy Maynard	395-3719
Treas:	Michael Kaplan	622-1228

FROM: Curtis Bohlen, Chair

SUBJECT: Organizational Meeting for CSD Policy Review

I will convene an IWG sub-group meeting on the newly established UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) on Tuesday, March 9, at 3:00 p.m. in Room 7835 at the Department of State. This meeting is a follow-up to the February 25 IWG meeting that was convened to organize work on the global environmental policies and programs reviews called for in Presidential Review Directive (PRD) Number 12.

The purpose of this meeting is to review and provide comments on our outline for the proposed CSD policy review paper. We will provide this outline to you by no later than noon on Monday.

Please let us know--by no later than COB Monday, March 8, at 647-9266--if you, or another individual in your Agency, will attend so that we can take steps to arrange for preclearances into the Department.

OUTLINE
POLICY REVIEW PAPER:
UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD)
(PRD/NSC-12 item 10)

PART I: ASSESSMENT

1. Introduction and Context

- Twenty years after Stockholm Conference: growing interest in integrating environmental and economic concerns to promote sustainable growth and development
- Brundtland Commission and the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) Report: "sustainable development"
- Action forcing event: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, June 1992 in Rio.

2. Description of Current Policy involving the CSD

- USG supported Agenda 21 with caveats; we have strongly supported the creation of the CSD as articulated in Agenda 21 (Chapter 38) and UNGA Resolution 47/191
- Key U.S. Policy statements:
 - U.S. speech at UNCED Prepcom 3, August 1991 on institutional follow-up
 - U.S. position at UNCED Prepcom 4, March 1992
 - U.S. Statement at ECOSOC organizational meeting, February 5, 1993.
- Congressional interest

3. Current international situation and likely future course

- ECOSOC Organizational Meeting of 2/2-12
 - Establishment of CSD as functional commission (E/1993/L.9, decision IV)
 - Rules of Procedure including NGOs and question of EC membership (E/1993/L. 11 and E/1993/ L. 17 and 18)
 - Establishment of High Level Advisory Board (E/1993/L. 15)
- CSD Organizational Meeting of 2/24-26
 - Agenda for June (CSD Draft decision I of 2/26/93)
 - Organization of CSD Work (CSD Draft decisions II and III of 2/26/93)

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-- Longer Term, Underlying Issues and Interests

- Group of 77: developing countries (NICs and LDCs)
- EC
- Japan
- CANZ Group
- Nordic Group
- Russia and Eastern Europe
- Others: UN system, Bretton Woods organizations, business, science, environment, development, major groups

-- What we can expect in the next five years:

- continued interest with greater emphasis on N-S issues characterized by a "dynamic tension" between Western focus on sustainable development planning and implementation (integration of environmental concerns into all aspects of economic development) and G-77 focus on getting more development assistance with fewer conditions
- slow progress institutionally and politically on building a "partnership" approach to reconcile these different but potentially compatible interests, providing OECD countries lead by example in applying the principle of sustainable development at home and provide assistance bilaterally and through multilateral institutions to help developing countries develop their own sustainable development plans and related investment projects.

4. Linkages Between the CSD and Other International and Domestic Environmental Issues

-- CSD will provide high level, international focal point for integrating environment and development policy concerns related to:

- reform/revitalization of UN system (ECOSOC, UNEP, UNDP, FAO, Bretton Woods institutions, etc.), in the economic and social sectors, primarily by using sustainable development as an organizing principle for imposing real coordination of UN system-wide economic and social activities;
- development and implementation of UN system-wide environment and sustainable development program; and
- regional and national efforts to comply with Agenda 21.

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-- Internationally, the CSD can be a useful instrument for promoting U.S. objectives related to:

- UN reform;
- development assistance reform at home and abroad;
- improved coordination and procedures among and within the IFIs that will provide financing for environment and development activities;
- greater international cooperation between developed and developing countries, especially in the areas of environment and development.

-- Domestically, U.S. participation in the CSD will require us to take a coordinated approach to rethinking and possibly revamping policy and programs in the following areas:

- development assistance, especially as regards environmentally sound technology cooperation with developing countries;
- international financial assistance for environment and development;
- integrated decision making and the use of full cost accounting;
- international cooperative scientific research;
- role of major groups and public participation in decision making;
- population;
- fresh water, oceans and coastal zones;
- land use, forests and biodiversity;
- transboundary pollution, energy efficiency and alternative energy sources; and
- toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes.

5. Pending Questions

A. Substantive Policy Issues

-- What is our working definition of "sustainable development"? Are we prepared to use this concept to help inform and organize our foreign policy related to development assistance, North-South dialogue, and multilateral social and economic activities, including multilateral finance, science and technology cooperation and trade policy? Are we prepared to incorporate it in domestic policy formulation, especially as it relates to energy, scientific R&D, technology development, transportation, trade, natural resource management, and waste management.

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-- Assuming the U.S. wants to play a leading role in the CSD, what should be our primary objective(s)? What should be our secondary objectives?

-- What should be the relationship between the CSD and the Bretton Woods institutions? How prepared is the US to provide new and additional financial assistance?

-- What are U.S. priorities related to the implementation of Agenda 21? (How much do we focus on which issues? To what extent do we want to rely on existing programs and activities? Initiate new ones? Should there be a separate budget for the CSD or UNCED follow-up, in addition to reliance on UNDP and the specialized agencies to implement Agenda 21, along with GEF and Bretton Woods IFI support? Or should the CSD concentrate on its primary monitoring and coordination role?)

B. Policy Process Issues

-- Will the US have a National Agenda 21 Action (Implementation) Plan? If so, how should the Plan be prepared? Who leads? Who decides content? Who publishes? Who pays (staff and budget)?

-- What process should the USG use for coordinating domestic and international actions related to the implementation of Agenda 21?

-- How will the U.S. handle reporting to the CSD? Who should prepare and who should pay for the reporting? What are other associated costs?

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PART II. OPTIONS FOR POLICY

6. U.S. GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The character of the CSD will be defined by the most conservative and strident elements of the Group of 77 of developing countries. Hence this is an institution that at best can only be built and strengthened through careful confidence building over time. In this context, the U.S. can aspire to the following goals and objectives:

GOAL: Foster purposeful dialogue among governments to promote sustainable economic growth and development

OBJECTIVE: firmly establish a CSD information exchange (reporting) process that is based on the preparation and presentation of national plans (Agenda 21 action plans/sustainable development plans) by all countries (including U.S.). Such reporting might be done:

.. piecemeal, with year-by-year submissions on topics on CSD's annual agenda;

.. in an integrated manner, with certain countries or regions addressed in a given year;
or

.. some combination of the two, with integrated or comprehensive plans from Western countries and piecemeal, evolving plans from developing countries.

GOAL: promote greater coordination, enhanced efficiency and effectiveness in economic/social sectors of the U.N. system;

OBJECTIVE: preparation and presentation of system-wide environment and sustainable development program; formal adoption by all relevant agencies/programs.

GOAL: respond constructively to G-77 desire for more and better development assistance, encouraging especially the newly industrializing countries (NICs) to move into the mainstream and adopt a more pragmatic approach to problem solving than in the past.

OBJECTIVE: revamp bilateral foreign assistance to support sustainable development and implement Agenda 21; strengthen support for the GEF and get IFIs fully involved in implementing Agenda 21 and cooperating/coordinating with CSD; promote international environmental technology cooperation through a well-defined U.S. initiative that involves both the private and public sectors.