

## **RIO DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

At its thirty-fifth session, in 1980, the General Assembly examined the agenda item entitled “International cooperation in the field of the environment” in plenary. The Assembly adopted resolution 35/74, entitled “International cooperation in the field of the environment” on 5 December 1980 in plenary on the recommendation of the Second Committee. The Assembly, *inter alia*, took note of the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), which had held its eighth session from 16 to 29 April 1980, in which the Council examined the report of the high-level group of experts on the interrelationships between population, resources, environment and development. The Assembly also decided to convene, in 1982, a session of a special character of the Governing Council to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm.

The Governing Council of UNEP adopted a resolution at its session of special character, held from 10 to 18 May 1982 (A/37/25), in which it recommended to the General Assembly the establishment of a special commission to propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development to the year 2000 and beyond (the “Environmental Perspective”).

At its thirty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 37/219 of 20 December 1982 in plenary on the recommendation of the Second Committee, requesting the Governing Council of UNEP at its eleventh session to make concrete recommendations to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the modalities for preparing the Environmental Perspective. Pursuant to this resolution, the Governing Council of UNEP adopted decision 11/3 at its eleventh session, on 23 May 1983, regarding the process of preparation of the Environmental Perspective and annexed a draft resolution for consideration by the General Assembly on the creation of an intergovernmental inter-sessional preparatory committee, which was to report to the Economic and Social Council, and of a special commission to propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development.

In 1983, the Economic and Social Council took note of this decision and recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution (E/DEC/1983/168). At the General Assembly’s thirty-eighth session in the same year, the Assembly adopted resolution 38/161 of 19 December in plenary on the recommendation of the Second Committee, by which it approved the decision to establish an intergovernmental inter-sessional preparatory committee. It also suggested that the special commission, when established, report on the environment and the global *problématique* to the year 2000 and beyond, including proposed strategies for sustainable development, within two years of its establishment, and set out the terms of reference for the special commission.

The Intergovernmental Inter-sessional Preparatory Committee held its first session on 28 and 29 May 1984. The Governing Council of UNEP adopted the Preparatory Committee’s first set of recommendations by decision 12/1 of 29 May 1984, and the Governing Council additionally noted the progress made in the establishment of the Special Commission (Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on the work of its twelfth session to the General Assembly, 16 to 29 May 1984, A/39/25). The Special Commission, which had adopted the name the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1984, began its work in May 1984.

At its fortieth session, in 1985, the General Assembly adopted resolution 40/200 of 17 December in plenary on the recommendation of the Second Committee, in which it, *inter alia*, took note of the work done by the World Commission, and of the work by the Intergovernmental Inter-sessional Preparatory Committee in the preparation of their reports.

In March 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development issued the report “Our Common Future” (A/42/427), in which it made a formal recommendation that relevant legal principles should be consolidated and extended in a new charter to guide State behaviour in the transition to sustainable development, and it submitted a set of proposed legal principles for the purpose of drafting a universal declaration.

At its fourteenth session, in 1987, the Governing Council of UNEP, by its decision 14/13, adopted the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, prepared by the Intergovernmental Inter-sessional Preparatory Committee, and recommended for adoption by the General Assembly a draft resolution on incorporating an environmental perspective. At the same session, the Governing Council also adopted decision 14/14, entitled “Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development”, and, *inter alia*, decided to transmit the Commission’s report to the General Assembly, for its consideration and adoption by Member States, together with a draft resolution annexed to the decision, welcoming the findings of the World Commission and, *inter alia*, calling upon Governments, as well as the governing bodies of the organs, organizations and programmes in the United Nations system, to ensure that their activities contribute to sustainable development.

At its forty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 42/187 of 11 December 1987 in plenary on the recommendation of the Second Committee, in which it welcomed the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and decided to transmit the report to Governments and governing bodies of the organs, organizations, and programmes of the United Nations. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly a progress report on the implementation of the resolution and a consolidated report on the same subject. The General Assembly further invited the Governing Council of UNEP to provide comments on matters concerning progress on sustainable development to the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly, and invited Governments, in co-operation with UNEP and, as appropriate, intergovernmental organizations, to support and engage in follow-up activities, such as conferences at national, regional and global levels.

In May 1988, the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, a progress report (A/43/353 - E/1988/71) on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 42/187. The report set out the actions taken by Governments, governing bodies and other intergovernmental organizations to implement policies on sustainable development.

During the forty-third session of the General Assembly, in 1988, a draft resolution was introduced by Finland in the Second Committee, on behalf of Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, which proposed that a United Nations Conference on Environment and Development be convened in 1992 (A/C.2/43/L.36). On 23 November 1988, the Second Committee had before it a revised version of the draft resolution (A/C.2/43/L.36/Rev.1). On 5 December 1988, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/43/L.36/Rev.2, as orally revised, and recommended its adoption to the General Assembly. The General Assembly thus adopted resolution 43/196 of 20 December 1988, where it decided to consider at its forty-fourth session the question of convening such a conference no later than 1992. The Assembly also took note of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 42/187. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Executive Director of UNEP, to obtain and submit views on the objectives, content and scope of the conference to the

General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, through the Economic and Social Council. It also invited the Governing Council of UNEP to submit its views in the same manner.

In response to the request of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted a report, containing the views of Governments, organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on the convening of the conference on environment and development. Several responses cited the importance and timeliness of such a conference, and there was a general agreement that an intergovernmental preparatory committee would be required (A/44/256 and Corr.1 & Add.1 & 2).

On 25 May 1989, the Governing Council of UNEP adopted decision 15/3, in which it decided to recommend that the General Assembly, when taking a decision on the scope, title, venue and date of the proposed United Nations conference on environment, consider a number of elements that were attached as an annex to the Governing Council's decision. The decision was then transmitted to the General Assembly for consideration by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1989/87 of 26 July 1989.

On 18 December 1989, at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Second Committee approved a draft resolution introduced by its Chairman (A/C.2/44/L.86) and recommended it to the General Assembly for adoption. On 22 December 1989, upon this recommendation, the General Assembly adopted resolution 44/228, by which it decided to convene a United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil and to establish a Preparatory Committee for the Conference which was to prepare draft decisions for the Conference for consideration and adoption. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report for the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee, containing recommendations on an adequate preparatory process. The Assembly also decided to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-fifth and forty-sixth sessions an item entitled "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development".

The Preparatory Committee held its organizational and first session from 5 to 16 March and 6 to 31 August 1990 during which it established two working groups to provide guidance to the preparatory process (Reports of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to the General Assembly, A/44/48 and A/45/46). On 21 December 1990, the General Assembly adopted resolution 45/211 in which it took note of the report of the Preparatory Committee and decided that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development shall take place at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 1 to 12 June 1992.

The second session of the Preparatory Committee was held from 18 March to 5 April 1991. During the session, the Preparatory Committee established Working Group III, which was tasked with, *inter alia*, examining the feasibility of elaborating principles on general rights and obligations of States and regional economic integration organizations in the fields of environment and development, and considering the feasibility of incorporating such principles in an appropriate instrument, charter, statement or declaration (Report of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to the General Assembly, A/46/48).

At the third session of the Preparatory Committee, held from 12 August to 4 September 1991, the Secretariat of the Conference prepared an annotated check-list of principles on general rights and obligations to be considered at the Conference (A/CONF.151/PC/78). A draft proposal was also introduced by Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77, entitled "Rio de Janeiro Charter/Declaration on Environment and Development" (A/CONF.151/PC/WG.III/L.6). The Chairman of Working Group III subsequently compiled all proposals submitted by delegations in a consolidated draft (A/CONF.151/PC/WG.III/L.8/Rev.1), which was taken as the basis for discussion at the

fourth session of the Preparatory Committee (Report of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to the General Assembly, A/46/48).

During its forty-sixth session, in 1991, the General Assembly considered the reports of the Preparatory Committee and, on 19 December 1991, adopted resolution 46/168 on the recommendation of the Second Committee, in which it called for the full implementation of resolution 44/228. The Assembly set out the entities that were to be invited to attend the Conference, and endorsed the decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee in their second and third sessions. The Assembly also decided to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-seventh session an item entitled "Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development".

The Preparatory Committee held its fourth and final session from 2 March to 3 April 1992. The Chairman of the Preparatory Committee introduced draft principles proposed by him, entitled "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development" (A/CONF.151/PC/WG.III/L.33/Rev.1). The Preparatory Committee adopted decision 4/10 in which it decided to transmit the proposal to the Conference for further consideration (A/CONF.151/PC/128).

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held from 3 to 14 June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. On 10 June, the Main Committee of the Conference reviewed the proposal submitted by the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee on the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (A/CONF.151/5). Upon the proposal of its own Chairman, the Main Committee approved, by acclamation, the Rio Declaration and recommended it to the Conference for adoption (A/CONF.151/5/Rev.1). At its 19th plenary meeting, on 14 June, the Conference had before it a draft resolution entitled "Adoption of texts on environment and development", with the Rio Declaration as recommended by the Main Committee attached as an annex, sponsored by the delegation of Brazil (A/CONF.151/L.4/Rev.1). The Conference adopted the draft resolution to this effect by which it accordingly adopted the Rio Declaration (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1).

At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly had before it the report of the Conference (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1). Upon the recommendation of the Second Committee, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992, in which it endorsed the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and urged Governments and organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to take the necessary action to give effective follow-up to the Rio Declaration.