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The impact of civil society networks on the global politics of sustainable development

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The impact of civil society networks on the global politics of sustainable development:

Abstract of the thesis

International networks of non-governmental organisations have assumed increasing importance in global politics over the past two decades. Attention to issues of environment and sustainable development in particular present a strong rationale for their engagement as active participants at every level of decision-making. Over the same period, significant advances in communication technology have changed the nature of global dialogue, and made it possible for organisations to interact globally in new ways.

However, many International Relations theorists consider Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as significant actors principally to the extent that they influence inter-governmental deliberations. This ignores a wealth of material which illustrates the diversity of objectives NGOs prioritise in the global polity. In particular, the functions and principles evident in the work of international NGO networks suggest much more complex and diverse goals and ways of working.

This thesis presents a novel consideration of ways in which interaction between NGOs collaborating internationally is significant. It explores the different functions international NGO networks exist to perform, and the ways in which these challenge established understandings of the role of non-governmental actors in global governance. Attention is also given to the distinctions between issue-specific networks, established to enhance collaboration in particular policy areas, and broader networks which attempt to transcend these divisions. Problems and tensions which can arise within international NGO networks are also addressed.

The thesis includes a detailed study of international NGO networking before, during and after the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. It draws on an extensive array of primary material from the UNCED process and subsequently which has not previously been widely available, and considers ways in which 'sustainable development' has been interpreted by organisations which exist to challenge prevailing economic and social norms.

List of abbreviations

ACC	Administrative Committee on Co-ordination
AI	Amnesty International
ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition
ANPED	Alliance of Northern Peoples for Environment and Development [now the Northern Alliance for Sustainability]
ASEED	Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Development
BNGOF	Brazilian NGO Forum
CAN	Climate Action Network
CGG	Commission on Global Governance
COCF	Centre for Our Common Future
CONGO	Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
DPCSD	[UN] Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development
ECA	[UN] Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	[UN] Economic Commission for Europe
ECOSOC	[UN] Economic and Social Council
EEB	European Environment Bureau
EIA	Environmental Investigation Agency
ELCI	Environment Liaison Centre International
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
ForUM	Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development
G7	Group of 7 Leading Industrialised Countries
G77	Group of 77 Developing Countries
GA	[UN] General Assembly
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IACSD	Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBFAN	International Baby Food Action Network
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICLEI	International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development [Cairo 1994]
IFC	International Facilitating Committee (Centre for Our Common Future)
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organisation
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INGOF	International NGO Forum [also Forum of International NGOs and Social Movements]
IOCU	International Organisation of Consumers Unions [now Consumers International]

IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IR	International Relations
ISC	International Steering Committee (Environment Liaison Centre International)
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources [now the World Conservation Union]
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
NGLS	Non-Governmental Liaison Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Rifle Association (USA)
NTA	New Transatlantic Agenda
PrepCom	Preparatory Committee
RIOD	Réseau International d'ONG sur la Désertification
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
TNC	Transnational Corporation
TWN	Third World Network
UN	United Nations
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development [Rio de Janeiro 1992]
UNCHE	UN Conference on the Human Environment [Stockholm 1972]
UNCTC	UN Centre on Transnational Corporations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNGASS	UN General Assembly Special Session
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
UNPAAERD	UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development
UNRISD	UN Research Institute on Social Development
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development [previously BCSD]
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development [aka the Brundtland Commission]
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organisation
WFUNA	World Federation of United Nations Associations
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WSSD	World Summit for Social Development [Copenhagen 1995]
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Chapter 1:

Civil Society and Sustainable Development in Global Politics

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the ways in which civil society organisations collaborate at the global level and the motivations for such collaboration, with a particular focus on the politics of sustainable development. Over the past twenty years rapid growth in the numbers of non-governmental actors playing an active role in international political processes has occurred. This has been accompanied by the emergence of a multiplicity of global networks which link these entities and assist them in the pursuit of common goals. The study of such networks can help in understanding why civil society organisations wish to participate in global politics and how they gauge influence and success. It also allows for consideration of the internal dynamics of civil society networks, and the tensions and divisions which characterise the participants' interactions. Indeed, particularly in the context of sustainable development, these fault lines can be seen as of central importance in the identification of challenges and dilemmas for the global polity as a whole.

My research on these subjects draws on nearly ten years of working for various non-governmental organisations which are active in the global politics of sustainable development. The UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and more recently the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) have generated global awareness of the challenges of sustainable development. They have also provoked widespread reflection on the role of civil society in global politics, while similar considerations have occurred in other policy areas (human rights, gender issues, health and so on). My intention here has been to present empirical material on the processes with which I have been involved (and a range of others) while also assessing the degree to which academic analyses help in understanding and explaining their significance. I have relied principally

upon an 'agent-centric' approach in considering social causation throughout the thesis, and avoided

using more systemic notions such as class, power or gender to interpret my findings. It may be that my

closeness to many of the events addressed has made it difficult to apply the distance necessary to adopt

these analytical perspectives; but more fundamentally, the politics of sustainable development

accentuates particularity and complexity – so I have been cautious in advancing general conclusions

on the basis of the specific contexts considered.

This approach extended to my consideration of the impacts and measures of success used to gauge the

effectiveness of civil society networks in influencing global politics. I have focused principally on the

stated or evident goals for collaboration, and only addressed underlying structural factors such as

North-South issues (and resultant power imbalances) when dealing with tensions and contested

objectives within networks. A focus on these shared priorities presents some clear challenges to many

analysts' assumptions about the role of civil society in global politics and allows a more nuanced

consideration of impacts and effectiveness than would otherwise be possible.

1.1 Introduction

Ken Conca and his colleagues pose a series of challenging questions about analyses of environmental issues at the global level, and the actors and analytical approaches which are of relevance for those studying the area:

> The study of global environmental politics ... involves the search for co-operative solutions to ecological dilemmas. The idea that global environmental problems require 'international co-operation' is widely accepted. But the appropriate scope and content of such co-operation is hotly contested. Does international co-operation mean formal, treaty-based agreements among governments? Does it mean a broader 'global bargain' between North and South, linking a number of issues in a single package? Or does it refer to a still broader process of global dialogue, not limited to governments, in which different societies move toward a global convergence of values? Does an increasingly global network of environmental organisations represent an effective new form of international co-operation or is it simply one more way in which the strong impose their will upon the weak? Is the goal to create an increasingly dense web of transnational linkages, one that binds nations to a common future and a common commitment to environmental protection? Or would it be wiser to work toward delinking an already tightly

coupled world system, so that various localities and regions have more flexibility to pursue responses appropriate to their unique circumstances? [1]

Awareness of environmental problems has increased exponentially in recent decades. While elements of an environmental movement can be discerned over the past 100 years or more,[2] widespread concern over the harmful impacts of human activity on the environment emerged only in the 1960s. Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*[3] presented evidence of the damage caused to wildlife by commonly-used pesticides, and was used as a spur for to action by European and North American activists who pushed for changes in laws and for the adoption of alternative practices by pesticide users. *Only One Earth*,[4] written by Barbara Ward and René Dubos for the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, outlined issues which required international consideration, and began to focus on relations between environmental, social and economic issues. Yet in international negotiations, environmental problems were still considered 'individually, simplistically, and overwhelmingly from a developed western country's standpoint'.[5]

In recent years, additional perspectives have been grafted onto this approach. Attention to environmental problems which are transnational or global in scope, such as climatic change or atmospheric pollution, led to broader conceptions of the ways in which problems could be solved, or polluters identified. In turn, as dialogue at the global level on environmental issues grew, involving non-governmental organisations and companies as well as governments, these questions were increasingly framed by overarching concerns relating to international development and co-operation.

To what extent has the 'internationalisation' of environmental issues resulted in alterations to existing systems and approaches? The most notable occurrence has been the emergence of 'sustainable development' as a supposedly holistic set of policy objectives, intended to encompass both environmental concerns and social and economic imperatives. Sustainable development also recasts the relationship between the state and other actors, suggesting distinct yet complementary roles for different sectors of society; environmentalists identify NGOs and other social movements as the

1 Conca, Ken, Michael Alberty, and Geoffrey D. Dabelko, eds. *Green Planet Blues: Environmental Politics from Stockholm to Rio* Westview Press, Boulder USA 1995 p.5.
2 John McCormick suggests that the world's first private environmental group was the Commons, Open Spaces, and Footpaths Preservation Society, founded in Britain in 1865. McCormick, John *The Global Environmental Movement* Belhaven Press, London 1989 p.5.
3 Carson, Rachel *Silent Spring* Houghton Mifflin, Boston USA 1962.
4 Ward, Barbara and René Dubos *Only One Earth* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth UK 1972.
5 Holdgate, Martin, Mohammed Kassas, and Gilbert White *The World Environment 1972-1982* Tycooly Press Dublin 1982.

principal agents for change.[6] As will be considered later, both of these factors challenge established theories of International Relations (IR), which in various forms presume the dominance of the state in initiating and delivering policy change in international affairs.

All of these issues are alluded to in the invitation from Conca and his colleagues to consider the nature of 'international co-operation' to solve global environmental problems. They suggest three overlapping perspectives which could be adopted: formal agreements between governments; a deal between North and South which incorporates a wider range of issues; and a more diffuse global dialogue on norms and values involving societies as well as governments. They also assert that increased global convergence and greater local autonomy constitute alternative approaches to problem-solving in this context, both of which could be interpreted as beneficial or detrimental in achieving solutions to ecological dilemmas.

The distinction Conca *et al.* draw between three levels of influence is also important in that it leads us to consider relations between these different contexts – how, for example, the 'global convergence of values' in different societies impacts upon, and is shaped by, the negotiation of formal agreements by governments; whether the linking of issues in negotiations between North and South helps or hinders attempts to tackle specific environmental problems in more localised contexts; and how principles underlying notions of a common future are formulated and accepted. In introducing a broader conception of the actors involved in global politics, and of the fora which are significant, the authors invite a consideration of the relative influence of these various processes, and of conflicts which might arise if objectives pursued at different levels are not compatible.

It is useful to establish these perspectives at the outset. If we are to consider who is engaged in 'the search for co-operative solutions to ecological dilemmas', our focus must extend to a very broad range of actors. Consideration of the nature and the functioning of civil society at the global level presents us with a complex, overlapping web of activities and objectives. These are reflected in the diversity of structures of association, or networks, established to link groups and individuals with an interest in the global polity. What unites the participants is a shared intention to contribute in some way to the establishment or promulgation of norms at the global level.

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6 See for example Doyle, Timothy and Doug McEachern *Environment and Politics* Routledge London 1999 for an extended analysis of this distinction.

Yet just as Conca and his colleagues establish a schema for their deliberations which allows for hostility and enthusiasm towards creation of a 'web of transnational linkages', so the assertion that international networks of civil society play a distinct role in global politics should admit their capacity to do so in divergent ways. Thus networks can function as the means by which non-governmental input to inter-governmental processes is streamlined, obliging participants to negotiate common positions and reach compromises in so doing. Conversely, networks may be the medium for oppositional stances, allowing participants to strategise and articulate their rejection of the 'mainstream'; or they could function in other ways, prioritising influence in quite different contexts – on the activities of transnational companies, for example, or in achieving broader societal change. Given this range of possibilities, the central purpose of this thesis is to consider the question:

- *What is the impact of civil society networks on the global politics of sustainable development?*

This principal enquiry throws up a number of subsidiary questions:

- *What is meant by 'civil society', and how is this relevant in the global context?*

- *In what ways does 'the environment' differ from more established concerns of international politics?*

- *What is meant by 'sustainable development', and what has been the effect of its widespread acceptance in global politics?*

- *How have academic theorists explained the exercise of influence by non-state actors in international affairs?*

- *Which factors justify a focus on the impact of global non-governmental networks on global politics? What countervailing perspectives should be taken into account?*

In order to place the questions considered so far in a less abstract context, it is useful to consider how the general rationale outlined above relates to the particular circumstances of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, which serves as a central point of reference for the thesis as a whole.

1.2 The Rio Summit

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Rio Summit, as it has become known, focused global attention on issues of sustainable development, defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.[7] Changes in the involvement of non-governmental actors in international politics which occurred during the UNCED process are also widely cited as significant.[8] Certainly the numbers of organisations participating in preparatory meetings and at the Summit were higher than at previous UN conferences, although not dramatically so. Peter Willetts notes that UN officials have described the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as 'unprecedented',[9] but qualifies this by commenting that steadily increasing NGO influence had been apparent in UN conferences since the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment: 'Far from the situation being "unprecedented", the NGOs made such an impact at Rio because the weight of precedents made it impossible to restrict their numbers and their activities'.[10]

Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink also identify significant precedents in the Stockholm Conference for future transnational NGO collaboration:

> This first NGO forum parallel to a UN official conference pioneered a transnational process that would become absolutely central to the formation and strengthening of advocacy networks around the world. As it developed, the NGO forum format led to dialogue, conflict, creativity, and synergy. The face-to-face contact helped activists from different backgrounds and countries recognize commonalities and established the trust necessary to sustain more distant network contacts after the conference was over.[11]

In one important respect the involvement of NGOs did break new ground: the official texts and public pronouncements from most UN officials and Heads of State placed greater emphasis on the vital roles to be played by non-governmental actors than at any comparable event previously. The notion of

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7 World Commission on Environment and Development *Our Common Future* Oxford University Press, UK 1987 p.43.
8 The UNCED texts, most notably Agenda 21, support this perspective. See also the Commission on Global Governance *Our Global Neighborhood* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995; and Foster, John W and Anita Anand eds. *Whose World is it Anyway? Civil Society, the United Nations and the Multilateral Future* The United Nations Association in Canada, Ottawa Canada 1999.
9 E/AC.70/1994/5 'General Review of Arrangements for Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations' Report of the Secretary-General, para. 101, 26 May 1994.
10 Willetts, Peter 'From Stockholm to Rio and beyond: the impact of the environmental movement on the United Nations consultative arrangements for NGOs' pp. 57-80, *Review of International Studies* No.22, London 1996.

16

'partnership' advanced in the official texts also presented a rubric for the involvement of sectors of civil society in policy formulation and implementation at national and local levels. This constituted a significant shift from previous practice and conferred legitimacy on national NGOs as participants in international deliberations on sustainable development.

A number of other aspects of the Rio Summit challenged established theory and practice in global politics. Environmental degradation in its various forms required the recognition of limits and imperatives, and the development of new means for collaboration. While international agreements on environmental issues have a long history, the conventions on biological diversity and climate change, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and Agenda 21, the non-binding blueprint for sustainable development, were predicated on the central importance of environmental concerns in global politics. This in turn was inextricably linked to principles and objectives regarding human well-being, and the forms of development which could be sustained without long-term damage to the environment. Here again, while international attention to development issues predated UNCED by several decades, the emphasis on decentralised approaches through involving communities in decision-making constituted a significant shift in emphasis.

It is also important to note the established concepts which were not challenged through the official UNCED agreements. Economic growth, through increased international trade, greater use of natural resources, and higher levels of expenditure, is presented as desirable, despite the obvious difficulties in reconciling these intrinsic elements with environmental limits. The role of transnational corporations (TNCs) is considered to be constructive, and their capacity to contribute to progress is not qualified by any recognition of detrimental, divisive or harmful impacts on humans or the environment from various industries, which might necessitate international regulation of their activities. Military expenditure, and the attendant possibility of increased environmental and social harm, is not addressed at all.

A further qualification in assessing the transformations attributable to UNCED lies in the lack of evidence of significant change resulting from these inter-governmental agreements. The gap between the income of the 20 per cent of the world's population living in the richest countries and those living

11 Keck, Margaret E, and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1998 p.123.

in the poorest 20 per cent grew from a ratio of 30:1 in 1960 to 60:1 in 1990, and to 74:1 in 1997.[12]

Species loss, climatic change and desertification show no sign of abating, despite the agreement of

global conventions.[13] Cynicism arising from the apparent inadequacy of international commitments in

these areas to effect sufficient change was already widespread among NGOs and other commentators

in 1992. The lack of progress towards agreed targets for official development assistance, and the

negligible impact of the plethora of inter-governmental environmental accords were widely

condemned.[14] Nevertheless, there were many at the time who hoped that UNCED's attempt to

introduce new priorities into international collaboration and national policy would lead to improvement

in these areas, and provoke a fundamental shift in the principles governing international affairs.

However, this brief outline of the scope and the shortcomings of the official UNCED process provides

insufficient context for an appraisal of the activities of non-governmental organisations in global

politics. While attempts to influence official negotiations are of great importance to the majority of

organisations participating in such processes, a separate imperative should also be acknowledged – the

need to establish links with each other, and engage in dialogue on issues of common concern. One

objective in such collaboration is frequently to increase effectiveness in influencing governments, but

NGO dialogue also focuses on global problems which governments are unable to tackle. One

commentary asserts that 'the international NGO community sees itself – and is increasingly seen by

governments – as part of embryonic institutional structures that will define a different form of global

governance, a model in which citizen action occurs at the global level'.[15]

The clearest manifestation of this perspective in the Rio process is in the negotiation of 'Alternative

Treaties' by NGOs attending the NGO Global Forum (the non-governmental event which took place in

parallel to UNCED in Rio). Participating organisations were not attempting to provide an alternative to

the official agreements, but rather to present common principles and commitments to action shared by

NGOs. These would demonstrate that 'they are moving from being critics of governments to being

12 United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report 1999* Oxford University Press, New York 1999 p.3.
13 United Nations Environment Programme *Global Environmental Outlook 2000*, Earthscan, London 1999 'acknowledges the efforts being made to halt environmental deterioration but recognizes that many of these are too few and too late; signs of improvements are few and far between. This is further exacerbated by the low priority that continues to be afforded to the environment in national and regional planning, and the sparse funding the environment receives in relation to other areas.' p. xii.
14 See, for example Conca, Ken *Environmental Change and the Deep Structure of World Politics* in Lipschutz, Ronnie and Ken Conca *The State and Social Power in Global Environmental Politics* pp.306-326, Columbia University Press, New York 1993; and Jakob von Uexkull's foreword to Ekins, Paul *A New World Order: Grassroots Movements for Global Change* p.vii, Routledge London 1992.
15 *Democratic Global Civil Governance Report of the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs* Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo Norway 1996 p.4.

inventors and builders of the sustainable society'.[16] The official texts negotiated through UNCED also present a more pluralistic understanding of the functions and roles of organisations of civil society. Section 3 of Agenda 21 contains ten chapters focusing on the roles of the 'major groups' of society. The introduction to the section, titled 'Strengthening the Role of Major Groups', states that 'broad public participation in decision-making' is '[o]ne of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development'.[17] The nine chapters which follow consider: Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development (24); Children and youth in sustainable development (25); Recognising and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities (26); Strengthening the role of non-governmental organisations: partners for sustainable development (27); Local authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21 (28); Strengthening the role of workers and their trade unions (29); Strengthening the role of business and industry (30); Scientific and technological community (31); and Strengthening the role of farmers (32). [18]

The UN Non-Government Liaison Service described this third section as 'the most extensive and formalised recognition in a UN Document of the potential and actual contributions of NGOs and other independent sectors'.[19] Yet it has been widely criticised for lacking intellectual consistency and for constituting little more than a sanitised version of theories of civil society which governments at the UN might find palatable. Dissenting voices have been raised about the questionable value and the arbitrary nature of the 'Major Groups' concept. The omission of significant groups of society such as older people; the education community; parliamentarians; racial minorities; and men have been queried frequently. When questioned directly on the origin of the term and the implications its coiners felt it would have, UNCED Deputy Secretary General Nitin Desai has been quite candid in stating that the UNCED Secretariat intended to expand on previous understanding of the nature of civil society, and that they had not anticipated any of the conceptual wrangling which has ensued.[20]

Given the stated intention of the drafters of Agenda 21 to extend inter-governmental agreement on the range and importance of contributions made by those outside central government to the achievement of

16 'International NGO Forum: International Steering Committee (1992-1993)' *The Network* No.29, Centre for Our Common Future, Geneva August 1993. From a paper drafted by Peter Padbury and circulated at the first session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, New York June 1993.
17 *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992) A/CONF.151/26 (Vols I, II, III and IV) United Nations, New York 1992. Part 23.2, Agenda 21 — subsequent references are to Agenda 21, The Regency Press London 1992.
18 The importance of public participation in decision-making and the distinct roles of the various major groups are also addressed in the Rio Declaration, and in the texts of the two conventions opened for signature at the Rio Summit, *ibid*.
19 'E & D File 1992' *E & D* No.31 UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, Geneva July 1992 p.1.
20 Note from the author's participation in discussions with Nitin Desai, April 1994.

19

sustainable development, one valid criticism is that the major groups concept has not really helped to clarify practical steps by which the involvement of organisations of civil society in decision-making at every level can be enhanced. The principles of sustainable development have had a galvanising effect in many aspects of the work of the UN. As we shall see, UNCED provoked successful calls for the rules governing NGO involvement in the work of the UN to be updated. Yet the review of arrangements for consultation with NGOs carried out by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) between 1993 and 1996 did not build upon the ideas outlined in the relevant chapters of Agenda 21, and attempts by a few countries to introduce the 'Major Groups' concept were dismissed as unworkable in the context of the UN's administrative arrangements.

As Chapter 3 will explore, critics and enthusiasts are united in interpreting the prominence given to non-governmental actors in Agenda 21 and the pluralistic approach adopted to consider their activities as responses to broader changes in global politics. Similarly, the emergence of structures such as the Alternative Treaties process which are intended to facilitate articulation of shared norms is often attributed to the impacts of aspects of globalisation. This association encompasses the technological advances which enable organisations and individuals to develop more sophisticated and responsive systems for communication and interaction and the social and economic transformations which provoke co-ordinated global resistance.[21]

1.3 What is meant by 'civil society', and how is it relevant in the global context?

The involvement of a wide range of organisations and other actors in the functioning of a democratic society is widely accepted, and often taken for granted.[22] The voices of concerned individuals, trade unionists, industrialists, representatives of voluntary organisations and professional associations are heard on matters of concern to them. Their views are frequently sought by policy makers, and their contribution to domestic political life is well established. Yet despite the fact that many issues of

21 As a number of commentators have stressed, it is important to avoid overstating the impact of globalisation, or implying that its progress has been universal, inevitable or irreversible. See for example Scholte, Jan Aart 'The Geography of Collective Identities in a Globalising World' *Review of International Political Economy* No.3 pp.565-607, Routledge / RIPE, London Winter 1996 p.573.

22 Jan Aart Scholte suggests that reference to 'civil society' goes back to the 16th century, while mention of 'global civil society' has emerged only in the 1980s and 1990s. Scholte, Jan Aart 'Global Civil Society: Changing the World?' Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation Working Paper No.31/99, University of Warwick, Coventry UK 1999 p.7.

interest to such sections of society are addressed at the international level, awareness of the scope for input and influence has generally been lower regarding decisions taken in inter-governmental fora than it is for their domestic counterparts. Academic theories of international relations have focused predominantly on the activities of states, and have taken into account the broader spectrum of actors which can be termed 'organisations of civil society' only insofar as they influence inter-governmental decision-making and foreign policy formulation.

Much current analysis of global civil society reveals a similar residual preoccupation with governments as the pre-eminent actors in international politics, and privileges efforts by civil society organisations to influence governments over other interactions. Yet this is not consistent with the views or actions of many of those most closely involved. As this thesis will explore, non-governmental actors collaborate for a wide variety of purposes other than to attempt to shape inter-governmental deliberations.

An emerging body of work in IR explores the role of civil society at the international level, arguing that 'the state does not monopolise the public sphere'.[23] A range of studies have considered the functions of civil society at the global or transnational level.[24] The term 'civil society' is distinct from NGOs in that it is more diffuse. NGOs are constituted to carry out demarcated tasks, consistent with principles and objectives which are (more or less) clearly stated; the impact of 'civil society' can be understood to encompass the range of activities carried out by the whole gamut of organisations and individuals not part of the governmental structure.[25] It is broadly accepted that 'civil society' is outside government; and that it does not include commercial enterprises, or prioritise profit in its activities.[26] Yet it does

23 Peterson, MJ 'Transnational Activity, International Society, and World Politics' pp.371-388 *Millennium* vol.21 No.3 London Winter 1992 p.375.
24 See, for example, Wapner, Paul 'Politics beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics' *World Politics* No.47 pp.311-40, April 1995; the special issue of *Millennium* on social movements and world politics vol.23 No.3, London Winter 1994; and Florini, Ann M. ed. *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society* Japan Center for International Exchange / Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Tokyo / Washington D.C. 2000.
25 For a more detailed assessment of distinctions between the terms 'NGOs' and 'civil society' see, for example, Stanton, Kimberly 'Promoting Civil Society: Reflections on Concept and Practice' in Schechter, Michael ed. *The Revival of Civil Society: Global and Comparative Perspectives* pp.243-251, Macmillan Press Ltd., Basingstoke UK 1999.
26 Agenda 21 includes 'business and industry' in its roll call of 'major groups of civil society', which has led to arguments in various contexts over the legitimacy of their inclusion in this context – *Agenda 21, op.cit.* These are explored in more detail in Chapter 3. In meetings of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and various other instances a distinction has been drawn between business associations, which play a representative role and do are not themselves profit-making, and individual companies. This has not satisfied many NGOs – there have been sustained criticisms of the inference that such associations should be considered as analogous with NGOs: see for example the NGO Task Force on Business and Industry *Can Corporations be Trusted? Towards Social and Environmental Responsibility and Accountability in the Corporate Sector* The Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED), Amsterdam February 1999.

include a vast range of actors and perspectives: 'civil society exists whenever people mobilise through voluntary associations in initiatives to shape the social order'.[27]

In meetings of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and various other instances a distinction has been drawn between individual companies and business associations such as the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Business Council on Sustainable Development, which play a representative role and are not themselves profit-making. Those who defend their presence argue that attempts to tackle global environmental, social and economic problems are meaningless without the inclusion of this perspective. A series of major group dialogue sessions has been initiated by the CSD to pursue this rationale. The first, held in 1998, focused explicitly on the role of the private sector in achieving sustainable development.

This has not satisfied many NGOs, who assert that in pursuing the interests of the private sector, and according such organisations a status in international processes, the UN has undermined its capacity to identify the perpetrators of environmental harm and act effectively to curb their activities. The NGO watchdog Corporate Europe Observatory, for example, cites the lobbying role of the ICC in particular as a destabilising influence, and quotes Pirelli Board Member Riccardo Perissich to show the degree to which the ICC's agenda supports that of individual companies and counters the positions taken by NGOs: 'The interests of companies that do business globally are effectively represented by the ICC in international fora like the World Trade Organisation. Amid the clamour of the numerous single issue pressure groups, companies with international reach need a powerful voice.'[28]

While the terms 'NGOs' and 'civil society' are often considered to be synonymous,[29] clear distinctions should be acknowledged from the outset. Although NGOs may constitute an element of global civil society, they are not all of it; neither can all NGOs be located unequivocally within global civil society – many have strong ties with governments and other state bodies through funding and other links which call into question their 'independent' status. The Commission on Global Governance concludes that global civil society 'covers a multitude of institutions, voluntary associations, and networks – women's groups, trade unions, chambers of commerce, farming or housing co-operatives, neighbourhood watch

27 Scholte, Jan Aart 'Global Civil Society: Changing the World?' *op. cit.* p.7.
28 'ICC: Powerhouse of Corporate-Led Globalisation' ICC Fact Sheet #1, on the Corporate Europe Observatory website: http://www.xs4all.nl/~ceo/icc/icc_intro.html. Visited 1 September 2001.

associations, religious-based organizations – [which] channel the interests and energies of many communities outside government, from business and the professions to individuals working for the welfare of children or a healthier planet'.[30] Miguel Darcy de Oliveira and Rajesh Tandon assert that the citizens' movements which they believe constitute global civil society are 'now a constant, global phenomenon': 'Solidarity and compassion for the fate and well-being of others including unknown, distant others; a sense of personal responsibility and reliance on one's own initiative to do the right thing, the right impulse toward altruistic giving and sharing; the refusal of inequality, violence, and oppression.'[31]

A related concept is that of '(new) social movements', which can be loosely defined as progressive groupings within society, constituting a counterbalance to the more conservative tendencies of governments and other sectors with significant influence in society. Thus Chadwick F Alger writes of 'the massive emergence throughout the world of collective actions which are non-violent and pragmatic in their methods, non-integrated and multiple in their structures, anti-hierarchical and networking in their organisations, heterogeneous (cross-class, cross-ideology, cross-age) in their constituencies, non-coercive in people participation and non-exclusive in their adherence'.[32]

By contrast, Jan Aart Scholte suggests that much of the activity Alger describes is strongly hierarchical and exclusive: 'The initiative in transborder civic activity has lain disproportionately with urban-based, (relatively) high-earning, university-educated, computer-literate, English-speaking professionals. In sum, participation in global civil society has revealed many of the same patterns of inequality that have marked the globalising world more generally.'[33] Susan Strange introduces a further caution against assumptions that the emergence of social movements in the global polity of necessity leads to enhanced accountability and democracy. The rapid increase in the numbers and influence of transnational

29 See for example the Commission on Global Governance *Our Global Neighborhood, op. cit.*, with its recommendation for the convening of an Annual Forum of Civil Society; and the World Civil Society Conference held in Montreal in December 1999.
30 *Ibid. p.32*.
31 Darcy de Oliveira, Miguel and Rajesh Tandon 'An Emerging Global Civil Society' in Darcy de Oliveira, Miguel and Rajesh Tandon eds. *Citizens: Strengthening Global Civil Society* Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Washington DC 1994 pp.2-3.
32 Alger, Chadwick F 'Citizens and the UN system in a changing world' in Sakamoto, Yoshikazu ed. *Global Transformation: Challenges to the State System* pp.301-329, United Nations University Press, Tokyo 1994.
33 Scholte, Jan Aart 'Global Civil Society: Changing the World?' *op. cit* p.31.

enterprises and criminal gangs, or mafias, is such that 'their authority in world society and in world economy rivals and encroaches upon that of governments'.[34]

Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink find insufficient evidence to support assertions that an identifiable 'global civil society' exists. They propose a focus on 'transnational advocacy networks', within which NGOs play a central mobilising role:

> Major actors in advocacy networks may include the following: (1) international and domestic nongovernmental research and advocacy organizations; (2) local social movements; (3) foundations; (4) the media; (5) churches; (6) parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations; and (7) parts of the executive and / or parliamentary branches of governments. Not all of these will be present in each advocacy network. Initial research suggests, however, that international and domestic NGOs play a central role in all advocacy networks, usually initiating actions and pressuring more powerful actors to take positions. NGOs introduce new ideas, provide information, and lobby for policy changes.[35]

A common factor in many analyses which address the role of civil society in global politics is the plurality engendered by processes of globalisation. Michael G. Schechter, for example, argues that '[g]lobalization has simultaneously contributed to the weakening of states' and intergovernmental organizations' abilities to govern, especially in the economic sphere, while strengthening civil society in many countries in the world and planting the seeds for an evolving global civil society'.[36] Rita Krut argues that the anti-democratic impacts of globalisation constitute the principal spur for organisations of civil society to collaborate in order to advance democratic principles and norms in global politics.[37]

A further claim which has been widely advanced is that the development of new technologies and social and economic globalisation have enabled non-state actors to assume new roles in global politics – Jessica Mathews writes that

> [i]n every sphere of activity, instantaneous access to information and the ability to put it to use multiplies the number of players who matter and reduces the number who command great authority. ... By drastically reducing the importance of proximity, the new technologies change people's perceptions of community. Fax machines, satellite hookups, and the Internet connect

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34 Strange, Susan *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* pp.110-121 Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK 1996.
35 Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1998 p.9.
36 Schechter, Michael G. 'Globalization and Civil Society' in Schechter, Michael G. ed. *The Revival of Civil Society: Global and Comparative Perspectives*, pp.61-101, *op. cit* p.61.
37 Krut, Rita *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making* United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Discussion Paper No. 83, Geneva Switzerland 1997. Available online at http://www.rrojasdatabank.org/toc83.htm. Visited on 1 September 2001.

people across borders with exponentially growing ease while separating them from natural and historical associations within nations.[38]

David Held challenges theorists who assert that the growth of global communications and changes in the structures of economic life, alterations in environmental circumstances, and transformations in military technology have led to a 'sense of global belonging and vulnerability which transcends loyalties to the nation-state'. He notes Richard Falk's claim that a common commitment to human rights, the emergence of a growing global political orientation, and the success of organisations such as Greenpeace in showing the interconnectedness of the problems they seek to tackle across nations and regions constitute 'the integral elements of an emerging global civil society'.[39] However, Held concludes that such claims are premature, and asserts that these stimuli also generate an awareness of difference: 'The evidence points sharply towards the persistence of a plurality of frames of political meaning and reference – not a universal political history in the making'.[40]

Despite these substantial differences in interpretation, the authors noted here share the view that it is legitimate to identify transformative effects of new technologies and societal and political change, even if they differ over the validity of attempts to discern normative coherence in these processes. Thus while the uses to which the term is put are contested, its general significance is increasingly accepted. Nevertheless, more widespread adoption of the term 'global civil society' does not necessarily signal the emergence of organisational phenomena evident in the activities of organisations of civil society at the national level in the international context. As chapter 2 will consider more fully, even a writer such as Martin Shaw, who discerns global linkages which are 'making a reality of global civil society', concludes that 'civil society is still predominantly nationally framed'.[41]

This brief essay of some recent considerations of notions of globalisation and global civil society suggests a good deal of conceptual imprecision and ambiguity, as well as disagreement over the relative significance of various factors in determining consequence. It is intended to sketch out the

38 Mathews, Jessica T. 'Power Shift', *Foreign Affairs* vol. 76 No. 1 pp.50-66, Washington DC January / February 1997. Located online at http://www.yale.edu/ycias/stimson/stimson99/africa/power_shift.htm. Visited on 3 January 2002.
39 Falk, Richard 'Positive Prescriptions for the Near Future World Order Studies Program Occasional Paper no.20, Princeton University Center for International Studies, Princeton New Jersey 1991.
40 Held, David *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* pp.124-5. Polity Press Cambridge UK 1995.
41 Shaw, Martin 'Civil Society and Global Politics: Beyond a Social Movements Approach' *Millennium* vol.23 No.3 pp.647-667, London Winter 1994 p.655.

complexities explored by others, before establishing (in chapter 2) the terms on which I will consider the interaction of civil society organisations in the international context.

1.4 How does 'the environment' differ from more established concerns of international politics?

Mainstream theories of international relations suggest that the principal concern of states in their dealings with one another is to safeguard national security. This is most commonly understood to entail defending territory and interests through the exercise of force when necessary, but for the most part through diplomatic relations, which often entail the creation of procedures and institutions intended to facilitate interaction and promote co-operation in specific issue areas. The principal external threats are perceived to be military (and more recently economic). In recent years the conventional approach has encompassed environmental politics by adopting the concept of environmental security. Daniel Deudney contrasts the ways in which security can be conceptualised according to conventional and environmental criteria:

●Table 1.1 Conventional and environmental notions of security[42]

National Security	Environmental Security
Specific threats	Diffuse threats
Others as enemy	Ourselves as enemy
Intended harm	Unintended harm
Short time scales	Long time scales

If danger is posed by the continuation of current activities, the maintenance of prevailing economic and social norms within and between countries can be understood to threaten the stability and well-being which it is the responsibility of the state to safeguard. US President George Bush was widely quoted before the Rio Summit as saying that 'the American way of life is not up for negotiation'.[43] This rather neatly captures the paradox at hand: if external policy is intended to bolster domestic stability, issues of environment and sustainable development pose some rather awkward questions – not least of these is who should be negotiating the American way of life?

26

How do non-governmental organisations fit into this framework? Claims by such groups to represent the priorities of the environment, of concerned individuals, of future generations, of women, of local communities and many others have considerable significance if the earlier points regarding environmental security are taken to their logical conclusion. In recent years, conflicts have become increasingly apparent between international environmental priorities (as established in a range of multilateral environmental agreements) and economic imperatives, particularly those relating to trade. For example, negotiation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, was initially stymied by the USA and allies in the so-called 'Miami Group' in early 1999. 'The group's interest was to enable free trade of [Genetically Modified] products without burdensome bureaucratic approval procedures and without allowing room for protectionist trade barriers masquerading as environmental protection'.[44] These conflicts and evidence of the pursuit of other priorities in place of environmental principles look likely to increase in future.

1.5 What is meant by 'sustainable development'?

The term 'sustainable development' first came to prominence in 1980, when the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) agreed its World Conservation Strategy. This established 'the overall aim of achieving sustainable development through the conservation of living resources'.[45] Prior to this, Barbara Ward had called for action to address what she termed the inner and outer limits of sustainability.[46] The notion of sustainable development was given general currency by the Brundtland Commission – the World Commission on Environment and Development, convened by the UN General Assembly in 1983. In its 1987 Report *Our Common Future*, the Commission set out the nature and scale of environmental, social and economic problems to be confronted.[47] It placed the concept of sustainable development at the heart of its proposals for action to be carried out by governments in co-operation with other key sectors to tackle pressing issues such as climate change, population growth, poverty, deforestation, and economic inequality between countries.

42 Deudney, Daniel 'The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security' in *Millennium* vol. 19 No 3, London 1990.
43 Quoted in Environment Liaison Centre International *Ecoforum* vol.16:1 ELCI Nairobi March / April 1992 p.2.
44 Cosbey, Aaron and Stas Burgiel 'The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety: An analysis of results International Institute for Sustainable Development briefing note, Manitoba Canada 2000 p.6.
45 IUCN *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development* IUCN, UNEP and WWF, Gland Switzerland 1980.

It is also worth noting that, first among its recommendations for achieving sustainable development, the Commission placed '[a] political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making'. This association between sustainable development and participatory democracy has become part of the rhetoric of diplomacy in this area. Take, for example, the words of Shri Kamal Nath, Indian Environment Minister, speaking in 1993:

> We must recognise that the nature of public administration is changing from an apparatus run on abstract principles of bureaucratic idealism to one driven directly by the felt needs of citizens and their demands for goods and public services. Sustainable development, therefore, requires an added dimension to the agreed policy goals of environmental management and good governance. It must include the concept of social partnership in which decisions that affect the community are taken in consultation with them.[48]

Sustainable development, as elaborated in Agenda 21, is intended to provide a coherent policy framework within which economic, social and environmental priorities can be addressed. The explicit claim to span and co-ordinate activities in these spheres suggests that sustainability should be a governing principle for decision-making at every level, and on every issue, if a pattern of human activity which is viable in the long term is to be realised.

The 'democratisation' of policy formulation this implies is widely apparent – in the abstract, at least. Roberto Bissio claims that an earlier draft of Chapter 40 of Agenda 21 on 'Information for Decision-Making' stated that 'in sustainable development everyone is a decision-maker', an assertion subsequently reduced to 'everyone is a user and provider of information'.[49] One of the enabling documents prepared at the outset of the UNCED process goes a stage further and presumes a set of shared goals underlying collaboration in pursuit of sustainable development:

> One of the major challenges facing the world community as it seeks to replace unsustainable development patterns with environmentally sound and sustainable development is the need to activate a sense of common purpose on behalf of all sectors of society. The chances of forging such a sense of purpose will depend on the willingness of all sectors to participate in genuine

46 'Environmental stress sets the outer limits, beyond which the economic conditions for sustainable production break down. Inequality sets the inner limits – the extremes within which social cohesion breaks down. The two sets of limits are related, not separate.' Paraphrased in United Nations Development Programme *The Human Development Report 1999*, Oxford University Press, Oxford UK 1999 p.104.
47 World Commission on Environment and Development *Our Common Future* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1987
48 Shri Kamal Nath, Minister for Environment and Forests of India, 'The Unfinished Agenda' Address to the First Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development New York June 1993 p.5.
49 Bissio, Roberto 'Occupying new space for public life: Politics and people in a network society' in Foster, John W. and Anita Anand eds. *Whose World is it Anyway? Civil Society, the United Nations and the Multilateral Future* pp.429-460, United Nations Association in Canada, Ottawa Canada 1999 p.437.

social partnership and dialogue, while recognising the independent roles, responsibilities and special capacities of each.[50]

However, numerous commentators have expressed reservations about the validity of 'sustainable development' as a focus for significant change on two counts in particular. First, that it sanctions economic growth as a necessary element in planning for the future; and second, that it deflects attention from attempts to identify and stigmatise or punish those responsible for environmental degradation by suggesting that all are 'in the same boat', and should collaborate to find mutually acceptable solutions. Doyle and MacEachern conclude that, following publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 'business organisations rapidly came to understand that adopting sustainable development was an effective response to environmental criticism, not in the sense that it changed how business conducted itself so as to do less harm, but because it provided a rhetoric to protect the continuation of business as usual'.[51]

Given the degree to which the meaning and the implications of the term are contested, it is perhaps surprising that 'sustainable development' has assumed a central importance in global politics since the early 1990s. How are we to account for this growth of interest and recognition, particularly in the context of the United Nations? Weiss, Forsythe and Coate suggest that the concept has spanned the ideological divide that otherwise separates actors in the global arena:'

> In the Rio process and beyond, sustainability has served as an important bridge in institutional bargaining. The associated political process has been characterized more by bargaining among autonomous and self-interested participants striving for consensus and less as a regime-building process dominated by consensual knowledge communities. Operating under a veil of uncertainty about the likely effects of their alternative choices, these participants engage in transnational alliance formation and politics that link issues. Many participants may be associated with specific communities of knowledge, but the political process is a pluralistic one in which groups of participants perceive and act on differing conceptions of problems, values, interests, and stakes.[52]

It is unclear whether these intersubjective interactions differ markedly from those evident in collaboration in other issue areas – 'uncertainty about the likely effects of alternative choices' can be

50 A/CONF.151/PC/100/.Add.13 '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: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups - Report of the Secretary General to the Conference', New York 1990.
51 Doyle, Timothy and Doug MacEachern *Environment and Politics* Routledge London 1998 p.140.
52 Weiss, Thomas G, David P Forsythe, Roger A Coate *The United Nations and Changing World Politics* Westview Press Oxford 1997 p.256.

discerned in most aspects of policy deliberation. Even so, this formulation provides a useful starting point for an appraisal of the conflicting interpretations of the UNCED process.

1.6 How do non-state actors exercise influence in international affairs?

To what extent do existing academic approaches provide a framework within which these issues can be explored? IR theory has had to adapt rapidly over the past decade to come to terms with dramatic change in the previously fixed constellations by which it had charted its course since the Second World War. The stasis of bipolar politics has given way to much more volatile and complex interactions: processes of globalisation are leading to new forms of governance, notably the emergence of what Rosenau terms 'sovereignty-free actors' such as multinational corporations, transnational societies, and international organisations.[53] As a result, although the extent and the nature of the impact on the state system from globalisation is contested, it is widely agreed that influence within the international system is becoming less concentrated – for example, Susan Strange states that 'the reality of state authority is not the same as it once was'.[54]

Theories addressing the existence of forms of global governance have emerged as responses to the perceived inadequacy of the various realist conceptions of global affairs to explain what has occurred since the end of the Cold War, while more established ideas relating to the activities of international regimes have been substantially revised.

The notion that some form of order exists at the global level constitutes a direct challenge to the various realist schools[55] of international relations. Timothy Dunne writes that 'The core elements of Realism are: the state is the key actor and statism is the term given to the idea of the state as the legitimate representative of the collective will; the first priority for state leaders is to ensure the survival of their state; self-help is the principle of action in an anarchical system where there is no global government'. Anarchy is mitigated by the existence of some form of equilibrium in the power at their disposal. Two

53 Rosenau, James N. *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* Princeton University Press, Princeton USA 1990.
54 Strange, Susan *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* Cambridge University Press UK 1996 p.84. See also Lake, David A. 'Global governance: A relational contracting approach' in Prakash, Aseem and Jeffrey A. Hart eds. *Globalization and Governance* pp.31-53, Routledge/ RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (Research Centre for International Political Economy, University of Amsterdam) London 1999.
55 Dunne, Timothy 'Realism' pp. 109-124 in Baylis, John and Steve Smith eds. *The Globalization of World Politics* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997.

models most commonly cited are a balance of power, which ensures that it is not in the interests of any one state to act aggressively towards the other(s); and the existence of a hegemonic state, whose influence dominates international transactions. In both instances, neo-realist theorists such as Kenneth Waltz would recognise the possibility for co-operation between states to take place.[56] This is more true in areas categorised as 'low politics' (environment, welfare, human rights) than in 'high politics' (security). Even so, the extent of such co-operation is limited by the benefit participating governments expect to accrue to them, or by the damage which might occur through failure to participate. The influence of inter-governmental institutions can be no more than an amalgamation of the will of the governments which are active within them, and the role of NGOs in the work of such institutions is of negligible significance.

Questions about international regimes have been considered by students of international relations for over twenty years. In broad terms, they have attempted to account for the emergence of rules-based co-operation in the international system in certain instances. Stephen Krasner's definition of international regimes, advanced in 1983, is still the most widely cited:

> [regimes are] implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behavior defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice.[57]

Hasenclever, Mayer and Rittberger identify three schools of thought within the study of international regimes: 'realists, who focus on power relations; neoliberals, who base their analyses on constellations of interests; and cognitivists, who emphasize knowledge dynamics, communication, and identities'.[58] The last of these appears to offer most scope for consideration of the role of non-state actors, whose capacity to bring expertise and distinct perspectives has been recognised in this context.[59] Nevertheless, even these refinements do not constitute a dramatic move away from the predominant focus in regime

56 Waltz, Kenneth *Theory of International Politics*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1979.
57 Krasner, Stephen 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables' in Krasner, Stephen ed. *International Regimes* pp.1-21, Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1983 p.2.
58 Hasenclever, Andreas, Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger *Theories of International Regimes* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK 1997 pp.1-2.
59 See for example work on epistemic communities - Haas, Peter 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination' in Haas, Peter ed. *International Organization* special issue, 46:1, 1992. Haas' focus is on the 'advice' such communities are able to bring to policymakers at the 'interstate level'.

theory on the interaction of states. Robert Cox suggest that the top-down approach this suggests is integral to regime theory:

> There is a "mainstream" school of international organisation studies that has privileged the analysis of "regimes". Regimes are the ways in which multilateral processes in specific issue areas are conventionally organised, whether through formal organisation and regulation or through informal expectations of international behaviour. Despite the considerable work accomplished through this approach, one should bear in mind that the study of regimes in practice views multilateralism from the top down. It takes on the perspective of those forces with the most influence on outcomes – the Group of Seven (G7), the principal trading powers in the GATT, and the agencies of the world economy dominated by the richer countries. It is centred upon states as the actors in multilateral relations. Regimes analysis is status quo-oriented and aims at problem solving in this context.[60]

Are there other theoretical approaches which adopt a less hierarchical perspective on international affairs? One more recent challenge to the assumptions noted above focuses on the organisational model they have broadly adopted. Oran Young, writing in 1996, challenges the realist preconceptions and associations drawn between domestic and international governance systems.[61] Young argues that the establishment of order at the international level has been a preoccupation for IR scholars throughout the 20th Century; they have looked to experience at the domestic level for inspiration regarding forms of governance at international level. However:

> fundamental flaws exist in many examples of domestic government ... the achievement of governance does not invariably require the creation of material entities or formal organisations of the sort we ordinarily associate with the concept of government. Once we set aside our preoccupation with structures of government, it is apparent that governance is by no means lacking in international society, despite the conspicuous absence of a material entity possessing the power and authority to handle the functions of government for this society as a whole.

Even so, his consideration of 'governance without government' does not extend to more than fleeting attention to the impact of non-governmental organisations, which are by implication peripheral to decision-making in international governance systems. The change in focus does not entail a move away from the state-centric, top-down perspective which characterises much of the work of Young and others on international decision-making structures.

60 Cox, Robert 'Foreword' in Sakamoto, Yoshikazu ed. *Global Transformation - Challenges to the State System*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo 1994 p.ix.
61 Young, Oran R *International Governance: Protecting the Environment in a Stateless Society* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1994 p.7.

James Rosenau suggests that governance 'is a more encompassing phenomenon than government'. It is 'a system of rule that works only if it is accepted by the majority (or, at least, by the most powerful of those it affects), whereas governments can function even in the face of widespread opposition to their policies'.[62] Despite this reframing of the focus of debate, Rosenau pays scant attention to the activities of non-state actors.

It is also important to note that 'global governance' is a term widely used outside academic contexts. The Commission on Global Governance was established after UNCED in 1992 at the suggestion of Willy Brandt, former West German chancellor, and with the support of then UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali. Its report *Our Global Neighbourhood*, produced in 1995, includes the following definition:

> Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest. ... At the global level, governance has been viewed primarily as intergovernmental relationships, but it must now be understood as also involving non-governmental organisations (NGOs), citizens' movements, multinational corporations, and the global capital market.[63]

'Global governance' can therefore be understood to entail the existence of formal or informal processes at the global level which go beyond the functions of consultation and limited co-operation between states acknowledged by some realist theorists. The existence of such a system or process can only be confirmed if it can be demonstrated that decisions are taken or conclusions arrived at which are more than a reflection of the wishes of participants with traditional power capabilities, and if these decisions or conclusions can then be shown to guide the subsequent actions of relevant organisations.

This suggests a further consideration – the degree to which the state can be thought of as a coherent entity in its actions at the international level. Krause and Knight propose a 'state/society perspective' as a means by which to incorporate the many and complex ways in which state policy in multilateral

62 Rosenau, James N. 'Governance, Order and Change in World Politics' in Rosenau, James N. and Ernst-Otto Czempiel eds. *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* pp.1-24, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK 1992 p.4.
63 Commission on Global Governance *Our Global Neighborhood, op. cit.* pp. 2-3.

relations is formulated.[64] Their analysis of the work of the UN emphasises the shift this entails: 'the basic unit of analysis is not the state but the complex of social relationships that coalesce within and across states and are projected into the international dimension'.[65] In the same vein, Douglas Chambers asserts that 'the state cannot be isolated from civil society: it is defined by the series of links that form both the state and the societal groups'.[66] Thus in certain instances, groups in society can be understood to exercise considerable or even controlling influence over policy formulation in given areas. The correlation between positions taken by state representatives in international fora and the priorities of various groups within society can only be determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the complexity of relations between these different groupings.

This formulation is useful in that it assumes a web of interactions between social groupings as an important determinant in international affairs. Whereas the other theories touched upon are inherently state-centric, and allow a limited set of functions to non-state actors, Krause and Knight recognise a set of choices and priorities open to civil society organisations in attempting to realise their objectives. Associations between different civic groupings at the international level are motivated by complex calculations of reciprocity, competition, influence and mutual benefit which are not touched upon in most mainstream international relations theory. These assertions undermine distinctions between state and society which underpin much IR theory. If they are not separate at the national level, how can society and state be considered as wholly discrete in international affairs? Thus, while the study of international regimes and realist and functionalist understandings of international processes provide valuable insights in considering the global politics of sustainable development, they do not adequately contextualise the multi-faceted roles played by civil society organisations.

By contrast, an extensive range of empirical material is available which supports further study of the activities of civil society organisations. In addition, a growing body of work considers the activities of 'networks' of civil society operating at the global level.

64 Krause, Keith and W Andy Knight *State, Society and the UN System: Changing perspectives on Multilateralism* United Nations University Tokyo 1995 pp.4-5.
65 *Ibid.* p.261.
66 Chambers, Douglas 'Corporatism and Comparative Politics' in Howard Wiarda ed. *New Directions in Comparative Politics* rev. ed. pp.56-79, Westview Press Boulder Colorado USA 1991 pp. 69-70.

1.7 Why focus on the impact of non-governmental networks on global politics?

Various studies have shown the steady, and at times dramatic growth in the number of international non-governmental organisations. The table below illustrates this process and the issues on which these groups concentrate, using information from the Union of International Associations.

•Table 1.2 Growth in numbers of international NGOs and their focus[67]

Issue area (N)	1953 (N=110)	1963 (N=141)	1973 (N=183)	1983 (N=348)	1993 (N=631)
Human Rights	33 30.0%	38 27.0%	41 22.4%	79 22.7%	168 26.6%
World Order	8 7.3%	4 2.8%	12 6.6%	31 8.9%	48 7.6%
International Law	14 12.7%	19 13.4%	25 13.7%	26 7.4%	26 4.1%
Peace	11 10.0%	20 14.2%	14 7.7%	22 6.3%	59 9.4%
Women's Rights	10 9.1%	14 9.9%	16 8.7%	25 7.2%	61 9.7%
Environment	2 1.8%	5 3.5%	10 5.5%	26 7.5%	90 14.3%
Development	3 2.7%	3 2.1%	7 3.8%	13 3.7%	34 5.4%
Ethnic unity / Group rights	10 9.1%	12 8.5%	18 9.8%	37 10.6%	29 4.6%
Esperanto	11 10.0%	18 12.8%	28 15.3%	41 11.8%	54 8.6%

The causal relationship some have discerned between processes of globalisation and the emergence of evidence of a 'global civil society' was noted earlier. The notion that civil society forms alliances to counter the negative impacts of phenomena associated with globalisation has wide credence, and yet, as Scholte points out, although evidence of civil society at the global level is largely unprecedented, many elements of what is understood as 'globalisation' have occurred in earlier periods of history. He suggests that 'internationalisation' ('marked by intense interaction and interdependence between country units'); 'liberalisation' ('an 'open' world where resources can move anywhere'); 'universalisation' ('found at all corners of the earth'); and 'westernisation' ('the imposition of modern

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67 Union of International Associations *Yearbook of International Organizations* (1953, 1963, 1973, 1983, 1993) quoted in Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders op. cit.* p.121.

structures') all have clear parallels with previous circumstances. The only distinct trend is 'deterritorialisation', by which 'global relations are seen to occupy a social space that transcends territorial geography'. Scholte suggests that the existence of global civil society derives in various ways from 'supraterritorial civic activity'.[68]

In more general terms, three further factors support a focus on networks of global civil society in addressing the central question posed earlier: first, the role of civil society in what could be termed the 'globalisation of ideals'; second, the particular challenges and debates which arise from attempts to realise forms of 'self-governance' in the functioning of global networks; and third the broader questions of legitimacy and accountability which accompany the assumption of greater authority and influence in the global polity.

The globalisation of ideals – The following chapter will explore the functions global civil society networks exist to perform. By considering their rationale, their working methods, and the means by which progress towards shared objectives is gauged, it is possible to assess the degree to which such processes aim to contribute to shaping aspects of the global polity at a much broader level than has been widely accepted in academic studies in this area. The elements which do not conform with more conventional approaches can be described as attempts to develop shared concepts and principles which are advanced in a wide range of situations and through various means to achieve change in the contexts in which the much narrower, formal debates occur on policy formulation by governments or in inter-governmental processes.

The International Baby Food Action Network, for example, has worked for over twenty years at multiple levels to challenge the activities of major international infant food manufacturers. This has entailed lobbying inter-governmental bodies and national governments; using consumer boycotts against recalcitrant companies; providing alternative information which challenges the assertions of parts of the industry; and positive advice which assists health workers and parents to make more informed choices. Without the presence of the network, or its involvement at each of these levels, the cumulative impact of ideas at all levels would be diminished and fragmented. Its global character,

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68 Scholte, Jan Aart 'Global Civil Society: Changing the World?' *op. cit.* p.8-13.

allied with strong local and professional ties, has been a prerequisite to achieving change through altering the societal context in which decisions are taken.

Self-governance – The scope for influence in the global polity suggested above necessitates negotiation of acceptable means for management and operation of global civil society networks. There is considerable scope in these deliberations for tensions between organisations to emerge, for differences on issues of principle or tactics to cause difficulties, and for the viability of the network to be considered of less importance than the needs of individual organisations. There is also the danger of large, influential organisations dominating the process and imposing working methods and structures without adequate attention to the needs of other members. Nevertheless, networks also offer the potential for dialogue to establish new understandings and shared agendas for action, which are necessary to realise the opportunities touched upon above.

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's work on transnational advocacy networks provides a useful point of reference for consideration of these issues. They suggest that 'when network actors have different medium- or long-term agendas, networks can become sites for negotiating over which goals, strategies, and ethical understandings are compatible. Because transnational advocacy networks normally involve people and organizations in structurally unequal positions, this negotiation is always politically sensitive.'[69] The ways in which networks attempt to conduct this negotiation constitute a key element in establishing the impact of civil society at the global level.

1.8 Synopsis

This opening chapter began by considering the central question of the thesis as a whole: What is the impact of civil society networks on the global politics of sustainable development? It introduced the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as the principal point of reference for the body of the thesis and went on to explore the elements necessary to address the main question, considering how international relations writers, non-governmental commentators and inter-governmental bodies have conceptualised and contextualised it. This entailed exploring ways in which the term 'global civil society' has been employed from various perspectives and an enquiry into the

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69 Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders op. cit.* p.121.

origins, usage and limitations of 'sustainable development' as a concept. The distinct role played by networks which link non-governmental actors was then put forward as a significant factor in understanding the impact of civil society in global politics.

The main chapters of the thesis will develop the concepts introduced here and will:

- Consider the significance of pluralistic understandings of influence in global politics

- Consider the relevance of international deliberations on the environment and sustainable development to the above

- Explore the capacity of non-governmental actors to influence the development of norms in particular issue areas (focusing on the UNCED process)

- Assess the importance of dialogue and decision-making within NGO networks to a broader understanding of global politics

Chapter 2 reviews theoretical approaches which acknowledge the roles played by non-state actors in inter-governmental process, and considers the criteria used to gauge their effectiveness. Most assessments which acknowledge the activity of such actors at all focus principally on their capacity to affect decisions taken collectively by governments. If a broader understanding of influence is accepted, this challenges us to consider the range of objectives non-governmental collaborations exist to achieve at the international level. These entail attempting to shape the global polity through various means, and lead in turn to a focus on the intrinsic significance of relations between non-governmental actors conducted through global networks to a broader conception of global politics.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed account of the UNCED process, addressing both official perspectives on the significance of engaging a wide range of societal actors and the conceptual struggles and conflicting priorities evident in the work of the principal NGO networks active during preparations for the Rio Summit and at the event itself. It explores tensions between the rationale of sustainable development propagated by the UNCED Secretariat, based on the importance of dialogue and consensus between different actors, and the oppositional politics prevalent among many environment and development

NGOs, who believed that systemic injustices resulting in social inequality and environmental degradation should be identified and redressed.

Chapter 4 assesses attempts to translate the organisational principles established during the UNCED process into new UN procedures and institutions. The establishment of a new body, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the negotiation of new rules governing NGO accreditation to the UN derived directly from UNCED. In both instances, non-governmental actors believed they had played a significant role in achieving change. However, the degree to which these developments subsequently reflected the ethos of the Rio Summit is open to question. During the same period, notions of self-governance and pluralistic understandings of legitimacy and responsibility within international NGO networks deriving from the UNCED period appear to have been marginalised from the mainstream discourse.

The final chapter considers the extent to which the contexts considered provide answers to the questions posed in chapter 1. It explores the inherent strengths and weaknesses, and the internal tensions evident in the functioning of international civil society networks, and reviews ways in which these challenge state-centric, hierarchical understandings of international relations. The concluding chapter also addresses the particular relevance of these issues to the study of global environment and sustainable development issues.

Chapter 2: The Role of NGO Networks in Global Politics

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the principal themes of this thesis, and the contexts and questions to be considered. This chapter presents two elements in more detail: first, the ways in which academic analysis has addressed the participation of non-state actors in international political processes; and second, the functions global civil society networks exist to perform and the tensions and conflicts evident in their activities. These provide necessary contextualisation for the more focused and empirical material presented in the following two chapters.

The chapter argues that most analyses focus primarily on inter-governmental decision-making and regimes as the context for considering the impacts of non-governmental actors in global politics. But success in influencing policy formulation in these contexts is only one achievement which global networks may prioritise. A number of others derive more from the interaction of organisations through the functioning of global networks – notably in discourses on norms, but also the exchange of information – and do not consider governments (individually or collectively) as the most likely agents of change.

'Success' and 'effectiveness' for individual organisations and for networks are thus more fluid concepts and are more contested than many analyses would suggest. They require a consideration of 'trade-offs' between different goals and allow for a range of tensions and divisions within civil society networks.

I have asserted earlier that NGOs operating at the international level on issues of sustainable development do not seem readily to conform to the classifications established by the United Nations for its relations with non-governmental bodies, nor to the categorisations attempted by some of the principal International Relations scholars in their considerations of these matters. The former has been

characterised in large part by attempts to apply the template of the inter-governmental structure which shapes the work of the UN as a whole to the involvement of NGOs. In his response to a set of recommendations on changes to arrangements for NGO relations in 1975, the then UN Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim, stated 'the consultative relationship does not imply the intervention of non-governmental organizations in the decision-making process that is the proper domain of Governments, but rather it provides a channel through which [the]decision-making process can be improved'.[1] The latter have seen NGOs as significant primarily to the extent that they can be understood to have influenced inter-governmental policy formulation or implementation.[2] Common to both is the placement of NGOs as peripheral in a schema which establishes interaction between governments as the crux of international relations, and (implicitly in the first case, explicitly in the second) measures the significance of other actors through their impacts on the activities and decisions undertaken collectively by governments.

In contrast to these well-established perspectives is an accumulation of commentaries which posit the development of a 'global civil society' with the potential to act as a countervailing force to ongoing processes of globalisation and attendant liberalisation of markets and the undermining of cultural diversity.[3] For example, Rajesh Tandon of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) argues that networks, if they strengthen the links among civil societies, could become important to the growth of an 'international civil society'. International civil society institutions will be needed to respond to the increasingly globalised institutions of governance, finance and production.[4]

This juxtaposition is problematic – the imprecise use of the term 'civil society' was explored in chapter 1. In this context it may serve to minimise the diversity and the tensions which exist among and between its constituent parts and lead to unwarranted generalisations which cannot support the conclusions resting upon them. Paul J Nelson's assessment of this body of literature is worth noting here:

1 'Report of the Secretary General in Response to Recommendations of the Committee and of Economic and Social Council' Resolutions 1739 (LIV) and 1740 (LIX) p.2, 11-13 quoted in Chiang Pei-heng *Non-governmental Organizations at the United Nations: Identity, Role and Function* Praeger Publishers, New York USA 1981 p.143.

2 'In general, theoretical approaches to explain international cooperation provide little specific insight into the nature and functions of NGOs. Most are based on the state as the only noteworthy entity in international cooperation, and provide no category for considering the possibility that NGOs are significant actors in their own right.' Gordenker, Leon and Thomas G. Weiss 'Pluralizing Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions' in Weiss, Thomas G. and Leon Gordenker eds. *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* pp.17-50, Lynne Rienner, Boulder USA 1996 p.32-3.

3 See for example *The Human Development Report 1999* produced by the United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford UK 1999.

4 Tandon, Rajesh *Civil Society, The State and Roles of NGOs* IDR Reports 8 (3) Boston Institute for Development Research, Boston USA 1991 p.11.

One of the most important claims widely made for NGOs is their capacity to function within a civil society as institutions of democratization or pluralism. Considering-the importance of the claim, it is somewhat surprising that it is made so widely with such imprecision. Neither the concept of civil society nor the actual performance of NGOs within civil societies is clearly delineated or tested in much of the discussion of NGOs.[5]

This should serve as a challenge to seek precision in dealing with ideas which lend themselves to hyperbole, rather than deflecting our attention from a cluster of issues which warrant further consideration.

A more useful delineation of the context within which we should consider the role of networks of NGOs [6] is provided by Martin Shaw, who emphasises difficulties in relating to the appropriate level of decision-making as an important element in understanding the emergence of a global civil society:

> A particular problem in the definition of global civil society is to specify its relationship with state forms. The emergence of global civil society can be seen both as a response to the globalisation of state power and a source of pressure for it. There is no one, juridically defined global state to which global civil society corresponds, even if a *de facto* complex of global state institutions is coming into existence through the fusion of Western state power and the legitimation framework of the United Nations. The forms of global state power are often inadequate from the point of view of civil society organisations *e.g.*, power can be mobilised to deal with what is seen as a problem for Western strategic interests (*e.g.*, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait) but not coherently to deal with genocide, environmental crises, or world poverty. Civil society organisations often find themselves, at the end of the twentieth century, arguing for a different kind of crystallisation of global state power from those favoured by state élites.[7]

'Civil society organisations' are thus the means by which alternative articulations of 'global state power' or other forms of resolution of international problems are achieved. Yet Shaw's focus here is limited to addressing the significance of civil society as an agent in the globalisation of state power. In what ways can this understanding of the role of non-governmental actors be challenged and broadened? [8]

5 Nelson, Paul J *The World Bank and Non-Governmental Organizations: The Limits of Apolitical Development* Macmillan Press, Basingstoke UK 1995 p.45.
6 I have used the terms 'network', 'coalition', 'alliance' and 'collaboration' interchangeably in this section. Distinctions between these terms are imprecise and probably subjective, so they should be understood as synonymous in this context.
7 Shaw, Martin 'Civil Society and Global Politics: Beyond a Social Movements Approach' *Millennium* vol. 23 No. 3 pp. 647 - 667, London Winter 1994 p.650.
8 As an aside, Shaw's inference that the United Nations provides legitimation for the creation of global state institutions which mask the dominant interest of Western states may be appropriate as an interpretation of certain events but does not apply to the fulll spectrum of UN work - not least the UN General Assembly and the functioning bodies of the UN Economic and Social Council, where the most influential bloc is the G77 group of developing countries. Finding ways to confer greater influence on these more representative international institutions is a challenge to which many NGOs have committed themselves.

The purpose of this chapter is to assess efforts by NGOs to establish ways of working together which do not derive their legitimacy exclusively from the resulting impact on inter-governmental deliberations. In turn, if collaboration occurs for a variety of reasons and with a range of objectives, the measures which could be used to gauge success are commensurately more numerous and more complex. In questioning the primacy of influence over inter-governmental processes as the yardstick with which to assess the impact of NGOs we have to acknowledge a multiplicity of overlapping, at times conflicting means by which we could assess the effectiveness of individual organisations or groups of NGOs. In addition, members of an NGO network may have very different perceptions of the benefits which should accrue to their organisation through their participation – success for some may be understood as failure by others. This suggests a further element of complexity in considering the functioning of an NGO network. Internal tensions deriving from differences in matters of policy and principle on political strategies, or from more prosaic issues such as funding and the division of organisational responsibilities may all have a bearing on the way it operates and on how it is perceived by participants and observers.[9] Although these elements are next to impossible to untangle, it should be feasible to test a few basic premises which represent a distinct point of departure from many considerations of this area:

- Many NGOs prioritise collaboration with organisations from other regions and sectors to an extent not necessary if the sole reason is to increase influence on governmental or inter-governmental decision-making. For a significant minority of NGOs, such associations constitute the principal reason for participation in international processes. What reasons do organisations which do not prioritise lobbying governments have for taking part in international processes? How do they gauge their success?

- One way to approach these questions is to consider whether exchanges between organisations from around the world offer the possibility for the development of coherent responses from 'civil society' to global problems. These could conceivably be formulated with some degree of equality across geographical regions and between various groupings. If such responses can legitimately be attributed to a collaborative

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9 Padbury, Peter 'International Cooperation among NGO Networks: Experiments, Reflections and a Survey on Next Steps'. Statement by Peter Padbury of Alternative Futures Institute, Ottawa Canada at the World Economy and Ecology for Development Workshop *Beyond Rio - Perspectives of International Civil Society Five Years After Rio* Bonn, 21-23 October 1997. Padbury comments that 'NGOs are an independent and highly competitive group so cooperation does not come naturally. The fact that media attention and fundraising dollars go to the groups that get the spotlight can make cooperation harder'.

effort this would constitute strong evidence for the functioning of a 'global civil society' – or at least for transregional co-operation to tackle commonly perceived challenges.

- If the above assertions are accepted, dialogue among different non-governmental groupings (the major groups of Agenda 21, for instance) can have ramifications which are quite distinct from the inter-governmental process. The opportunities to engage with private sector organisations or representatives from local government, for example, can result in agreements to action or the crystallisation of opposing positions which could only be reached given the presence of the relevant organisations but which do not occur through the prism of exchanges between governments.

The above points are not intended to downplay the significance of governments in international decision-making, nor to suggest that collaborative structures along the lines of those discussed here do not or could not occur with the participation of representatives of national governments. The purpose is rather to shift the focus of attention to ways in which international dialogue takes place between principally or exclusively non-governmental actors in ways which are of relevance to our understanding of the conduct of international policy debates and policy formulation.

Common to these various forms of interaction between non-governmental actors is the existence of a mechanism to allow communication to occur. A network may be a loose, ad hoc group of organisations which share an interest in a particular issue for a limited time and devise means to exchange ideas or information when it is felt necessary. Alternatively, it could be a highly structured body with its own staff, established rules for its operations, and the capacity to act on behalf of its members in a variety of contexts. These two extremes – and the gamut of types of networks in between – exist to increase collaboration between their members.

Networks can also act as the conduit for relations between widely disparate organisations: between NGOs operating at local and global levels; between NGOs from different parts of the world; between very small and very large organisations; and between organisations focusing on unrelated issue areas. This linking role places networks in a pivotal position in delivering some of the key elements of legitimacy and effectiveness necessary to NGOs of all descriptions. The sharing of information and strategies contributes to alliance-building and challenges divisions which might exist between

different contexts. The capacity to bring experience and expertise from one level (the local, for example) to inform and shape decision-making at another (say at an inter-governmental meeting or a conference of Northern international development NGOs) is a further instance of the potential that NGO networks hold to broaden the range of perspectives given voice in processes of global governance. Does this principally entail enriching inter-governmental dialogues or can we discern more far-reaching implications for the functioning of governance systems at the global level in the activities of international NGO networks?

2.2 Relevant theoretical constructs

Sociological studies have identified, with various typographies, the emergence of 'new social movements' as actors in the political sphere.[10] Alan Scott refers to social movements as collective actors constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests and, in relevant contexts, a common identity. He draws an explicit distinction between social movements and other collective actors such as pressure groups and political parties in that 'they have mass mobilization, or the threat of mass mobilization, as their prime source of social sanction, and hence of power'.[11] The most significant point to recognise here for our purposes is the reappraisal of relations between institutions of the state and civil society this approach necessitates. Thus Justin Rosenberg suggests that states should be understood as part of 'the empire of civil society',[12] rejecting the separation of institutions of the 'state' or of 'government' from the rest of society which is implicit or explicit in much international relations theory. Krause and Knight's work on civil society and the UN was considered in the previous chapter.[13] As their analysis suggests, if social movements articulate

10 A preoccupation among sociologists with the distinctions between 'old' (principally class-based) and 'new' (concerned with issues which are not class-related) social movements need not concern us unduly here.

11 Scott, Alan *Ideology and the New Social Movements* Unwin Hyman. London UK 1990 p.6. The correlation between social movements and mass mobilisation is modified by Martin Shaw, who suggests that the more decentralised forms of participation evident in the activities of the women's and gay movements should also be acknowledged: 'participation rather than mobilisation ... is the relevant criterion here'. Shaw, Martin 'Civil Society and Global Politics: Beyond a Social Movements Approach' *op. cit.* p.653.

12 Rosenberg, Justin *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* Verso, London 1994.

13 Krause, Keith and W. Andy Knight eds. *State, Society, and the UN System: Changing perspectives on multilateralism* United Nations University, Tokyo 1995.

the perspectives of sections of civil society, then their relations with the state will be interpreted very differently if the traditional state/society dualism is not presumed.[14]

What is the relevance of these approaches to the study of global politics? Social movements theorists start from the assumption that civil society organisations operate principally at the national level, reacting to and initiating change in social, cultural and political structures and interacting with institution and processes. The existence of a global civil society, and consequently of global social movements, is possible primarily through the agglomeration of these national efforts. Martin Shaw distinguishes between global and interstate (international) politics: 'Global politics is the more inclusive and fundamental, and international politics represents an important sub-category, concerned with issues which arise in interstate relations'.[15] However, despite the global linkages of the environment, human rights, and feminist movements in 'making a reality of global civil society', Shaw concludes that civil society is still predominantly nationally framed:

> 'Think globally, act locally' could be seen as a rather neat rationalisation of the current structural limitations of globally-oriented social movements, which are able to mobilise power at local and national levels much more easily than at the global level.[16]

How valid are these inferred structural and psychological limitations on the effectiveness of civil society organisations at the international level? Social movements theory suggests that 'pressure groups' function as adjuncts of civil society, translating general principles into a specific policy context. This relationship becomes stretched at the international level given the plurality of civil societies and of states. Yet if our criteria for gauging effectiveness include the capacity of such organisations to promote dialogue and awareness as well as to achieve mass mobilisation, the conclusions reached may differ considerably. Anne Thompson Feraru's survey of contemporary literature on the subject, written in 1976, is still trenchant:

> We are still wrestling with the problem of how to detect and measure the political influence of INGOs [International NGOs] – how to establish connections between INGO inputs and IGO –

14 Scott's assertion that 'social movements are neither necessarily progressive or regressive' (Ibid p.106) also constitutes a useful addition to consideration of this area. Many UN documents, for example, assume an ideological consistency in the positions of NGOs which may serve to blur distinctions between their stances and implies the existence of value systems shared by governments, NGOs and UN officials without valid corroboration. Patrick McCully proposes a definition of NGOs as 'non-profit group[s] concerned with social justice and/or environmental protection' which suggests a similar presumption - McCoy, Michael and Patrick McCully *The Road from Rio: An NGO Action Guide to Environment and Development* International Books, Den Haag the Netherlands 1993 p.66.
15 Shaw, Martin 'Civil Society and Global Politics: Beyond a Social Movements Approach' *op. cit.* p.655.
16 *Ibid.* p.655.

governmental outputs (and possibly also the reverse influence-flow), and the connections between INGO activities and international integration.[17]

The principal focus for most International Relations theorists who have analysed the roles played by NGOs operating at the international level has been on co-operation with the intention of influencing decisions taken or action initiated in inter-governmental contexts. Established theories of international relations which adopt this perspective, including regime theory models for international decision-making have been addressed in the previous chapter. Yet a similar bias is apparent in the work of many authors for whom the effectiveness of NGOs is the principal subject. A number of detailed studies have been made of the efficacy of NGOs in influencing specific inter-governmental processes. Bas Arts attempts to establish a qualitative means by which to gauge the impact of NGOs collectively on the inter-governmental processes set up to review implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. From the outset, he prioritises 'political influence' as a measure of success: 'political influence ... is defined as the achievement of one's policy goals through one's own, intended, intervention in international politics'.[18] Stairs and Taylor conclude that NGOs have been successful in influencing inter-governmental decisions on the protection of the oceans.[19] Benedick considers the influence of NGOs on negotiation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and concludes that NGO participation contributes to the likelihood of reaching strong agreements.[20] Holmberg, Thomson and Timberlake suggest that NGOs contributed significantly to the texts negotiated at UNCED, most notably sections of Agenda 21 addressing empowerment, citizens' participation in decision-making, and the role of women.[21]

Others conclude that such influence is rare. Jackie Smith et al. acknowledge that '[f]ew social movements are successful if by "success" is meant that they achieved specific policy changes'; rather, the authors suggest three less direct means by which to gauge the impact of non-governmental actors: to focus the attention of global elites and the general public on important global concerns; to help

17 Feraru, Anne Thompson *Transnational Relations: The Study of International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs)* International Studies Association, San Fransisco USA 1976 p.9.
18 Arts, Bas *The Political Influence of Global NGOs* International Books, Utrecht the Netherlands 1998 p.30. Arts focuses on negotiation of and follow-up to the UN Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change. Within this context, defines political influence as 'the achievement of (a part of) one's policy goal with regard to an outcome in treaty formation and implementation, which is (at least partly) caused by one's own and intentional intervention in the political arena and process concerned' [p.58], which further emphasises the pre-eminence of inter-governmental decision-making in his conception of NGOs' objectives.
19 Stairs, Kevin and Peter Taylor 'Non-governmental organisations and the legal protection of the oceans: a case study' in Hurrell, Andrew and Benedict Kingsbury eds. *The International Politics of the Environment* pp.110-141, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1992.
20 Benedick, Richard *Ozone Diplomacy: new directions in safeguarding the planet* Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts 1991.
21 Holmberg, Johan, Koy Thomson and Lloyd Timberlake *Facing the Future: Beyond the Earth Summit* Earthscan, London 1993.

governments learn about a problem; and (through their presence) to enhance government accountability in global political processes.[22] The limitations this imposes are recognised by Elizabeth Voorhees Perkins, who nevertheless restricts her analysis to 'one aspect of transnational relations – the interaction of non-governmental organizations and an international organization, the United Nations'.[23] Perkins also raises (and challenges) assertions that many NGOs regard themselves as 'nonpolitical'; and that 'concerted NGO action is rare'.[24]

Don Hubert acknowledges that 'NGOs have many important influences on a wide range of different actors and outcomes', but concludes that '[a] focus on NGO effectiveness vis-à-vis states is crucial since global governance or social change, regardless of the specific definitions, will depend to some extent on the agreement of states'. Hubert also concedes that a demonstration that 'NGOs are influential in the emergence and consolidation of new norms [in international relations] would be a very strong case for their importance in world politics', but suggests that such research should complement a focus on 'NGO effectiveness in influencing governments'.[25]

John McCormick's history of environmentalism demonstrates a similar supposition that the emergence of inter-governmental institutions and decision-making is a prerequisite for international NGO co-ordination. Writing of the creation in 1974 of the European Environment Bureau (an instrument for co-ordination between NGOs with the European Community), McCormick concludes that its origins can be traced directly to NGOs' experience at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm: 'The creation of the EEB suggested that after many false starts, when international NGOs had lacked international authorities that they might lobby, the emergence of political internationalism and the creation of international governmental organizations had given international NGOs contextual relevance and permanence'.[26]

Philip Lowe and Jane Goyder extend this association to establish a general correlation between inter-governmental collaboration and NGO activity:

22 Smith, Jackie, Ron Pagnucco and Charles Chatfield 'Social Movements and World Politics: A Theoretical Framework' in Smith, Jackie, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco eds. *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State* pp.59-77, Syracuse University Press, New York, USA 1997 pp.19-41.

23 Perkins, Elizabeth Voorhees *Comparative Pressure Group Politics and Transnational Relations - The Case of Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations* University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor USA 1979 p.5.

24 *Ibid.* p.14.

25 Hubert, Don 'Inferring Influence: Gauging the Impact of NGOs' in Ku, Charlotte and Thomas G Weiss eds. *Towards Understanding Global Governance: The International Law and International Relations Toolbox* pp.27-51, Academic Council on the United Nations System Reports and Papers No.2 Brown University, Rhode Island USA 1998 p.43.

26 McCormick, John *The Global Environmental Movement: Reclaiming Paradise* Belhaven Press, London UK 1989 pp. 101-2.

In Western democracies, the pressure-group network forms a system complementary to government institutions. Each tier of government has a corresponding phalanx of groups which help to keep government informed, responsive and in check. Traditionally, the apex of both governmental and pressure-group activity has been the nation state, but since the Second World War new international institutions have emerged either for collaboration on specific issues, or for economic and political coalescence within a geographic area (as is the case of the European Economic Community). It is logical to assume that, as governments agree to form higher levels of decision making, non-governmental organisations will similarly regroup to meet the new level, and indeed international non-governmental organisations have multiplied over the past thirty years.[27]

An alternative perspective is advanced in the 1995 *Benchmark Survey of NGOs*. Drawing on the statistical evidence presented, the report's authors identify two distinct models of international democratic participation. The first they term 'national democratic strategies on the international stage' – this entails the continuation of domestic lobbying efforts at the international level. The second is described as 'global civil governance' which starts from the premise that states are 'unable to solve key global problems'; consequently, 'the international NGO community sees itself – and is increasingly seen by governments – as part of embryonic institutional structures that will define a different form of global governance, a model in which citizen action occurs at a global level'. A key element within this emerging web of global governance is the establishment of norms of behaviour and of principle among non-governmental actors: '[a]ware of this fledgling phenomenon of democratic international decision-making, NGOs often spend considerable amounts of time trying to define the best way to govern themselves democratically at the international event, *even if this process sacrifices their capacity to influence the formal process at that event*' (my italics).[28]

The Benchmark Survey suggests that structures for interaction between NGOs are necessary if they are to promote democracy in international decision-making of all forms. Leon Gordenker and Thomas G. Weiss suggest that networking is central to the functioning of many NGOs – 'the process of creating bonds, sometimes formal but primarily informal, among like-minded individuals and groups across state boundaries'. They argue that new communications technologies allow 'scaling up' of certain types of transnational activities from local levels to the global level and 'scaling down' to involve grassroots organisations. Now that these relations are not logistic impossibilities', they may come to be treated as institutional imperatives. The authors claim that where hierarchy is the natural organising principle of states, and markets

27 Lowe, Philip and Jane Goyder *Environmental Groups in Politics* George Allen and Unwin, London 1983 p.163.

perform this function for business organisations, networking plays a defining role in interactions between NGOs. It is this characteristic in NGOs which confers particular effectiveness to their collaborative efforts at the international level: 'In the international arena, these possibilities are enhanced because effective cooperation among states operating in an anarchic environment often implies precisely the kind of informality and network-building that work well for NGOs'.[29] Andrew Chetley quotes a report from the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) which constitutes an instructive example of differences between the networking capacity of NGOs and of business organisations:

> When it comes to IBFAN decisions which can affect our position on an international level, there are about 10 of us involved and we all trust each other. This is a fundamental asset which industry does not have ... From a tactical point of view, there is a definite advantage in being a loose network of several organizations from all over the world.[30]

The association Gordenker and Weiss draw between the international context and the organising principles of various sets of actors seems questionable – the 'anarchic environment' characterises relations between states on matters of territorial security just as much as on environmental or social issues; yet NGO coalitions of necessity assume very different structures and relations with inter-governmental bodies in different contexts. Formal access for NGOs to participate in and contribute to policy formulation is anathema to bodies such as the UN Security Council, while it is accepted practice for the UN Commission on the Status of Women and is increasingly evident in the work of a range of economic and social institutions, including the World Bank and the UN Development Programme. The point is not that NGOs do not carry influence in international policy formulation on traditional security issues, but that influence is not acknowledged through direct interaction with governments in the relevant inter-governmental forum. This in turn contributes significantly to the form of collaboration and the working practices of NGOs operating in such areas, which must exercise influence by more circuitous means. We cannot minimise the significance of the inter-

28 *Democratic Global Civil Governance Report of the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs* Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo Norway 1996 pp. 3-5.
29 Gordenker, Leon and Thomas G. Weiss 'Pluralizing Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions' *op. cit.* p.35. Keck and Sikkink refer to the work of organisational theorist Walter Powell, who calls networks a third mode of economic organisation, distinct from markets and hierarchy (the firm). 'Networks are lighter on their feet' than hierarchy 'and the particularly apt for circumstances in which there is a need for efficient, reliable information' and 'for the exchange of commodities whose value is not easily measured'. [Powell, Walter W. "Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization", *Research in Organizational Behavior* no.12 pp.295-96, 303-4, 1990.] Keck and Sikkink conclude 'His insights about economic networks are extraordinarily suggestive for an understanding of political networks, which also form around issues where information plays a key role, and around issues where the value of the "commodity" is not easily measured.' Keck, Margaret E, and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1998 p.8.
30 'Report of a meeting of IBFAN' Geneva, 20 September 1980, quoted in Chetley, Andrew *The Politics of Baby Foods: Successful Challenges to an International Marketing Strategy* Frances Pinter, London UK 1986 p.71.

governmental interlocutor in shaping the objectives and the tactics employed by NGOs acting individually or collectively.

Nevertheless, it is legitimate to suggest that the new communication technologies with which NGOs are confronted create new imperatives (as Gordenker and Weiss suggest), and that the implications these have for a reappraisal of notions of accountability and reciprocity in relations between transnational NGO networks and their national or local partners may be considerable.

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) study *States of Disarray*, produced for the 1995 UN World Summit for Social Development concludes that citizenship rights understood in the national context are under threat: '[a] growing number of economic transactions escape the control of any government, weakening the capacity of nations to tax and regulate, and therefore to carry out coherent programmes of economic redistribution and social support. In this sense, some of the basic elements in the "enabling environment" for citizenship are no longer national, but global in scope'. At the same time, in parts of the world where the rights of citizens are not adequately recognised the possibilities for new associations have been expanded considerably by technological advances and social and economic change:

> The new ease of transnational communication creates bonds of co-operation and solidarity that transcend territorial divisions. The defence of human rights in non-governmental forums, as well as through recourse to international agencies, is one important example of this development. Alliances among women across the world are another. Extensive networking on environmental issues could be a third. People interact on a global scale in order to develop new sets of rights and obligations that may or may not be enforced primarily within a national political context.[31]

This dialectic between global economic liberalisation and global social solidarity suggests a role for international networks as the fora within which dialogues on rights, standards and other issues of principle are conducted between organisations which confront problems arising from processes of globalisation. Michael Schechter states that 'globalization contains the seeds for counter-hegemonic forces, including social movements formed by those seemingly most negatively affected by globalization'.[32] Rita Krut also articulates this perspective:

31 *Research Activities 1995/6* United Nations Research Institute for Social Development report, Geneva Switzerland 1996. Available online at http://unrisd.org/engindex/publ/list/progrep/res96/res96.htm. Visited on 1 September 2001.
32 Schechter, Michael G. 'Globalization and Civil Society' p.61 in Schechter, Michael G. ed. *The Revival of Civil Society: Global and Comparative Perspectives* pp.61-101, Macmillan Press Ltd., Basingstoke UK 1999.

there is a view that globalization has not been accompanied by democracy but quite the opposite: globalization has put democracy at stake. In this view, the crucial role of civil society today is to advocate democracy against the rising anti-democratic tendencies of global capital concentration and a new international economic institution [the World Trade Organisation] with a singular commitment to "free trade" as the primary basis for international economic relations.[33]

How can the proposal that NGO alliances are performing this function be tested? If they are, we might expect to find evidence for some or all of the following:

- **Significant increases in the levels of communication** between NGOs working in the issue area under consideration. This could occur for a wide range of reasons, but it is legitimate to conclude that its absence would mean that the hypothesis is invalid.

- **The development of decision-making procedures** to ensure that the network functions effectively. These could include providing facilities and supervision for staff; agreeing ways in which to oversee electronic communications between network members; editing and producing newsletters and other publications and so on. Procedures may also be developed to allow for negotiation of common positions on policy issues but this is by no means a widespread occurrence among NGO networks.

- **The ceding of authority to the network by its members** in certain areas of its activities. At a minimum, we might expect to find evidence of commitments of money or expertise by its members in order to make the network viable. In some instances the positions taken by the network on policy issues may be considered authoritative because they represent the negotiated conclusions of a range of organisations from different geographical regions or sectors of society. On such issues individual NGOs may agree to adhere to the consensus position in the belief that this confers greater legitimacy and more leverage on the participants than would otherwise be the case.

- **Debates on issues of principle.** Even if the network does not oblige its members to negotiate and then be bound by a joint policy position, we can expect it to be the

33 Krut, Rita *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making* United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Discussion Paper No. 83, Geneva Switzerland 1997. Available online at http://www.rrojasdatabank.org/toc83.htm. Visited on 1 September 2001. For further articulations of this perspective see for example Fox, J and LD Brown eds. *The Struggle for Accountability: The World Bank, NGOs, and Grassroots Movements* MIT Press Cambridge MA, USA 1998; Edwards, Michael and D Hulme eds. *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability In the Post-Cold War World* Kumarian Press, West Hartford USA 1995; and Clark, John *Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organisations* Earthscan, London UK 1991.

context within which participating NGOs explore elements of common ground and establish norms and standards to be pursued in their core activities.

- **Links with other networks on issues of common concern.** The work of NGO networks focusing on different issues or contexts can overlap and make collaboration between the networks advantageous. For this to happen would indicate the ability to establish ties of association between groupings of NGOs working in different issue areas, which implies the existence (assumed or negotiated) of common ground on some issues of principle, and also of strategies for achieving common objectives.

- **Targeting rogue actors** and placing pressure on them to conform with widely accepted norms and standards. This would entail using the international network to heighten pressure on transnational companies which contravene internationally agreed procedures, for example, or co-ordinated lobbying of governments which oppose negotiation or implementation of international agreements in key areas.

2.3 Objectives of NGO networks

It is also useful to consider the various objectives international networks of NGOs exist to achieve. Any one network may incorporate some combination of the elements outlined below; by identifying the distinct reasons for collaboration it will be possible to explore the ways in which networks function more fully than a consideration based exclusively on the first two points listed. The aims of NGO networks can be distinguished as follows:

- To strengthen NGO influence over inter-governmental decision-making

- To facilitate dissemination of and access to information

- To promote dialogue between NGOs on issues of principle

- To change the behaviour of an economic actor (most commonly transnational companies)

- To change the behaviour of a social group

- To support or create individual members of the network

2.3.1 Strengthening NGO influence over inter-governmental decision-making

Two distinct forms the relationship between NGO coalitions and inter-governmental bodies can take should be identified at the outset: first, networks which prioritise influencing inter-governmental decision-making; and second, those whose members seek to play a role as intermediaries in delivering services, material or information to a target constituency. My focus is principally on the former, as the role of networks as intermediaries is considered more fully under the second classification. Nevertheless, there is clearly considerable crossover between these two functions which should be borne in mind in considering the role of NGO networks in this context.[34]

Within the former category of networks, it is important to recognise the variety of structures which exist. Those considered below have been chosen to illustrate particular ways in which such networks can function.

The Climate Action Network (CAN) has broad legitimacy among both governments and NGOs in its role, but is not prominent in policy formulation on climate change issues as an entity distinct from its members. CAN prioritises collaboration and communication between its members as an integral part of its work. It could be categorised as an 'insider' network which aims to use its influence to broaden the impact of NGOs on international decision-making.

The coalition of NGOs opposed to the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI Coalition) is widely accepted by NGOs and includes among its participants many of the largest organisations working on issues of environment and development generally (the World Wide Fund for Nature [WWF] International; a large number of national Friends of the Earth organisations; the World Development Movement and so on). However, this recognition has not extended to governments or inter-governmental organisations, which have not welcomed attempts by NGOs to contribute to deliberations on the MAI or the co-ordinating role played by the coalition. The coalition has been the principal context within which both the principles and the strategies for action of NGOs opposed to the MAI have been elaborated. It is an 'outsider' network which aims to articulate the rationale behind opposition to the proposed agreement.

34 Cyril Ritchie effectively conflates the two functions I have distinguished in his analysis of links between the UN and NGO coalitions: 'Whether through formal contacts, standing agreements, or ad hoc arrangements, UN organisations collaborate with and often rely on NGOs to deliver services, test new ideas, and foster popular participation. By belonging to an NGO coalition that has systematic relations with UN organs, an NGO has a certain additional legitimacy and also has the opportunity to join the collective exercise of responsibility and to influence the decision making of that UN body'. Ritchie, Cyril 'Coordinate? Cooperate? Harmonise? NGO Policy and Operational Coalitions' in Weiss, Thomas G and Leon Gordenker eds. NGOs, the UN and Global Governance, pp.177-188, op. cit. p.181.

The EarthAction Network operates as an intermediary between its members (principally small, national NGOs) and governments or inter-governmental organisations. It provides information and strategies for its members which are intended to enhance their effectiveness. EarthAction could be described as a 'vertical' network – it promotes links on a vertical axis from small-scale, local or national NGOs to influential decision-makers rather than on a horizontal axis which would entail promoting exchanges between comparable organisations.

●Table 2.1 Functioning of 3 NGO networks which prioritise influence over inter-governmental decision-making

NGO Network	Status in its area of activities	Level of acceptance by inter-governmental / governmental actors	Role in promoting dialogue between members
Climate Action Network	The principal NGO co-ordinating body on climate change issues	Accepted as legitimate participants by most	Hosts exchanges of information; little role in shaping policy
MAI Coalition	The focus for NGO activity in opposition to the MAI	Participation and perspective contested by many governments and others	Significant role in policy dialogue among NGOs
EarthAction Network	Not the principal network on any of the key issues addressed	Generally welcome; some hostility when critical of individual governments	Little interaction between members through EarthAction

2.3.1.1 Climate Action Network

The Climate Action Network links NGOs working on the range of issues addressed in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and by inter-governmental bodies established and processes occurring as a result of the Convention. Its eight regional offices cover 243 member organisations in 64 countries (November 1997). Members are 'non-governmental, citizen-based organizations with a special interest in climate-related issues'.[35] The objectives of the network are:

- to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels;

- to co-ordinate information exchange on international, regional, and national climate policies and issues;

- to formulate policy options and position papers on climate-related issues;

35 From the Fridjof Nansen Institute's Green Globe Yearbook website: http://www.ext.grida.no/ggynet/ngo/. Visited on 1 September 2001.

- to undertake further collaborative action to promote effective non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) involvement in efforts to avert the threat of global warming[36]

CAN also plays an intermediary role in bringing local and national organisations to international deliberations: 'The development of this network allowed the UN Secretariat to invite, as observers, national NGOs which had no official international status, but had been identified as CAN contacts'. The presence of these members of the network in turn had a beneficial impact on the negotiations on climate change in general:

> This promoted a democratic and decentralized NGO contribution to the process even though several major developing countries, and to a lesser extent some industrialized countries, were at first opposed to NGO participation. As a matter of fact, this direct participation was important because the governments did not feel that their public opinion was fairly represented by the large international NGO groups from the North who had previously attended UN meetings.[37]

Levy and Egan add a further rationale for NGO collaboration through CAN – the additional pressure for action which can arise through international processes, and the particular advantages in this context:

> environmental NGOs advocate for international regulation of greenhouse gas emissions because they recognise that many countries would not take strong action in the absence of an international agreement due to corporate pressures and the high cost of unilateral action. Moreover, they recognise the high status and influence of the international scientific community within UN-based institutions and the relative weakness of corporate pressures.[38]

Many of the participating organisations in CAN (and particularly the larger, more influential ones) have clear positions on the principal issues arising. As a result the Network has much less of a role in shaping the lobbying activities of its members than the collaborative mechanisms constructed by NGOs around the proposed negotiation of a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

36 CAN website - http://www.climatenetwork.org/. Visited on 1 September 2001.
37 Ibid.
38 Levy, David L. and Daniel Egan 'Corporate political action in the global polity: National and transnational strategies in the climate change negotiations' in Higgott, Richard A., Geoffrey R.D. Underhill, and Andreas Bieler eds. Non-State Actors and Authority in the Global System pp.138-153, Routledge / Warwick Studies in Globalisation London 2000 p.150.

2.3.1.2 MAI Coalition

Various overlapping groupings of organisations, operating at local, national and international levels, were established to highlight concerns about the threats posed by the Agreement in the form it has been proposed. These came together in various contexts as the MAI Coalition. The positions of many of the participating organisations have been significantly shaped by the interaction of their representatives with members of other groups.[39]

The Multilateral Agreement on Investments (extracted from 'The MAI and the Clash of Globalizations' by Stephen J Kobrin[40])

For three years, the 29 wealthy nations comprising the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development have been negotiating the terms of this treaty, in the modest hope that it would facilitate international investment by ensuring that host governments treat foreign and domestic firms similarly. Yet, the MAI has sparked a global firestorm of opposition from a coalition of 600 organizations in nearly 70 countries that includes Amnesty International, Sierra Club, the Malaysia-based Third World Network, United Steelworkers of America, and Western Governors' Association.

In large part due to a global grassroots campaign that has made use of World Wide Web sites, newspaper ads, bumper stickers, letter-writing campaigns, and even street protests, the MAI negotiations screeched to a halt in late April. Negotiators called a time-out to allow for consultation among the parties and "with interested parts of their societies" including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), business, and labor.

On one level, the MAI story is a cautionary tale about the impact of an electronically networked global civil society on international negotiations: The days of negotiating treaties "behind closed doors" are gone. The virulent opposition to the MAI, however, is concerned with much more than the provisions of one treaty. It reflects a widespread and deep-seated anxiety over the pace and scope of globalization.

David Henderson, former chief economist for the OECD, suggests that attempts to negotiate the Agreement were abandoned because of two inter-related sources of concern: fierce disagreements within the negotiations and rising anxiety among a large number of NGOs.[41] He argues that it will be

39 For a more detailed account of this process see Smythe, Elizabeth 'State authority and investment security: Non-state actors and the negotiation of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment at the OECD', in Higgott, Richard A., Geoffrey R.D. Underhill, and Andreas Bieler eds. *Non-State Actors and Authority in the Global System* pp.74-90, ibid.; also Ward, Halina and Duncan Brack eds. *Trade, Investment and the Environment* Royal Institute for International Affairs / Earthscan, London 2000.
40 Kobrin, Stephen J 'The MAI and the Clash of Globalizations' *Foreign Policy* no.112 Washington D.C., Fall 1998. Located online at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/best_of_fp/articles/kobrin.html. Accessed on 3 January 2002.
41 Henderson, David *The MAI Affair: a Story and its Lessons* The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London UK 1999.

necessary in future to tackle the pressure coming from outside such negotiations in two ways: first, to

engage directly the arguments of those who believe economic liberalisation threatens democracy, the

poor and the environment; and second, to insist that the claims of NGOs to represent civil society as a

whole to an extent comparable with the role of democratic governments are spurious. Martin Wolf

makes this point robustly, in terms which echo the mainstream IR theories which were noted earlier:

> Only elected governments can be properly responsible for the making of law, domestically and
> internationally. This does not preclude full discussion with all private interests. But a civilised
> society is one in which the state alone has a monopoly of coercive power, exercised, under law,
> by a government responsible to the electorate as a whole. To grant any private interests a direct
> voice in negotiations over how coercion is to be applied is fundamentally subversive of
> constitutional democracy.[42]

I characterised the Coalition as an 'outsider' network earlier. This term encompasses both the relation

with inter-governmental bodies and government departments (generally hostile) and the prevailing

ethos of the Coalition (opposition to the MAI with little flexibility for compromise or negotiation).

Yet many of the individual organisations of the network are clearly 'insiders' in other contexts and

have developed constructive relations with governmental counterparts in which their effectiveness

derives in some measure from the flexibility to argue for incremental gains. Such organisations would

not object in principle to the establishment of an agreement setting out rules to standardise the

conditions under which transnational investments occur – their concerns were rather that the

Agreement in its proposed form undermined existing legislation on environmental and social issues

and threatened local and national autonomy in safeguarding standards in these areas.

Others are unequivocally 'outsiders', for whom opposition to the MAI is consistent with a principled

stance on a wide range of issues which derives from rigorous adherence to a political ethos. For such

organisations, an agreement on rules for multilateral investment should be opposed in whatever form

it is presented. Many more fall somewhere between these two extremes. The uncompromising stance

taken by the Coalition in opposition to the proposed Agreement in any form can be understood to

derive at least in part from the diversity of its members. Thus although the network has promoted

detailed consideration of the effects of the MAI and the means by which opposition to it can be

strengthened, the joint perspective on the Agreement itself has not evolved beyond a fairly simplistic

outright opposition.

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42 Wolf, Martin 'Uncivil Society', *The Financial Times*, London 1 September 1999. This echoes Kurt Waldheim's assertion that the decision-making
process is the 'proper domain of Governments', noted at the beginning of this chapter.

If governments were to begin negotiation of the details of an MAI in some revised form, the insiders would almost certainly become involved in attempts to shape aspects of the Agreement through, at a minimum, achieving specific changes to mitigate its detrimental impact. The outsiders could be expected to maintain their rejection of the Agreement in its entirety, and as a result the Coalition would be placed under severe strain. By marginalising all NGOs from discussions of the MAI at the outset, governments could be understood to have precipitated the creation of an alliance which encompassed a broad spectrum of organisations with little in common but shared or comparable concerns about the implications of the Agreement. Through delays in detailed negotiation of the Agreement, it was possible for the Coalition to coalesce around a stance of opposition to the MAI in its entirety.

Following the rejection of the Agreement in its proposed form it was possible for this opposition to be presented as the articulation of a coherent alternative – a 'different kind of crystallisation of global state power', to use Shaw's term. Thus one organisation involved in this process has concluded that '[t]he failure of the [MAI] demonstrates broad public opposition to the deregulation of the global economy, the increasing dominance of transnational corporations and escalating resource use and environmental degradation',[43] which suggests in turn that the activities of NGOs opposing the MAI will be presented as articulating wider social antipathy towards prevailing economic patterns. Cynical commentators and opponents such as Martin Wolf might suggest that the principal lesson to be learnt by those keen to sustain the neo-liberal economic model will be that engaging non-governmental critics in dialogue is an effective way to lessen their effectiveness in articulating external opposition.[44] Others question the implication that the NGO coalition played a decisive role in undermining the Agreement – Elizabeth Smythe cites disagreements between states over issues including the US investment embargo contained in the Helms-Burton Act, the insistence of the EU on an exemption from national treatment for Regional Economic Integration Organisations and the problems of binding sub-national entities (such as US states and Canadian provinces) along with the cultural exemptions demanded by France and Canada, and concludes: 'Can the changes in the positions of countries, the

43 Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Development (ASEED) website - http://antenna.nl/aseed/. Visited on 1 September 2001.
44 See Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger *The Earth Brokers: Power, Politics and World Development* Routledge, London UK 1994 and Patrick McCully's chapters in McCoy, Michael and Patrick McCully *The Road from Rio: An NGO Guide to Environment and Development, op. cit.*, for comparable analyses of the co-option of NGOs in the UNCED process. WTO Director-General Renato Ruggiero's promise to 'dedicate much of his time in 1999 to formalizing a relationship between the WTO and civil society' (quoted on US National Wildlife Federation's website - http://www.nwf.org/nwf/international/trade/taedcnf.html. Visited on 1 September 2001) could be interpreted as an example of this, although events in Seattle in December 1999 indicate the gulf between the institution and many NGOs.

defeat of the agreement itself and changes to the wording of the draft text be explained solely by the activities and influence of NGOs? Clearly they cannot.'[45]

Nevertheless, Smythe and most other commentators concur that the MAI Coalition represented a significant, and to a large extent a new, factor in determining the fate of the proposed Agreement. This is of particular relevance given the MAI's clear purpose, to introduce global standardisation in regulations governing external investment, and to accelerate capital flows through removing state-centric obstacles. The prospect of a reduced role for the state, and the apparent scope of the draft agreement can be understood to have exacerbated concerns among citizens in many countries over potential costs in jobs and economic disruption. Smythe concludes that '[o]pponents have been able to use the context of inter-state negotiations to begin to redress the shifting imbalance of power between citizens and capital either through shoring up national authority or through transferring it to the global level via international regulation which reflects more than the interests of multinational capital'.[46]

As noted above, Henderson and Wolf also call into question the legitimacy of the Coalition's claims to represent the interests of broader constituencies of civil society. One supposition in these positions is that the coalition of NGOs and the civil society concerns they invoke are predominantly nationally based. Their challenge is to the legitimacy of 'elected governments', and their influence can be questioned in domestic political terms – Wolf comments that '[i]f NGOs were indeed representative of the wishes and desires of the electorate, those who embrace their ideas would be in power. Self-evidently, they are not.'[47] However, if it can be demonstrated that such organisations articulate the views of groupings which span national boundaries, this equation breaks down. International financier George Soros calls into question the presumption that the representation of citizens by their governments constitutes a sufficient guarantee that their interests will be safeguarded: 'The interests of states do not necessarily coincide with the interests of their own citizens, and states are even less likely to be concerned with the citizens of other states. There are practically no safeguards built into the present arrangements to protect the interests of the people.'[48]

45 Smythe, Elizabeth 'State authority and investment security: Non-state actors and the negotiation of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment at the OECD' op. cit. p.87

46 Ibid. p.88.

47 Wolf, Martin 'Uncivil Society' op. cit. It should be acknowledged in passing that this analogy has been widely challenged, most notably by asserting the role of NGOs in maintaining awareness and pressure for implementation of commitments made by governments but not delivered. In a speech to the World Bank in 1993, Wangari Maathai of the Kenyan Green Belt Movement stated 'if governments lack political will to apply laws, regulations and agreements to which they have subscribed, only an informed and involved community can stand for the environment and demand development that is sustainable'. Quoted in Krut, Rita Globalization and Civil Society, op. cit.

48 Soros, George The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered, Little, Brown & Co, London UK 1998 p.215.

A second way in which this diminution of the role of NGOs could be challenged relates particularly to environmental organisations. Concern over the loss of species, the destruction of natural habitats and imbalance of ecosystems through pollution leads many organisations to argue that it is not viable to limit consideration of interests to humans alone. As a result, they assume a *de facto* role as defenders of the environment in its own right. Sustainable development places particular emphasis on the interests of future generations and the actions necessary to safeguard their interests: again, many NGOs invoke these perspectives as part of their overall legitimacy; again, this is not acknowledged in Martin Wolf's narrow schema of representation and legitimacy.

Finally, Wolf and Henderson deflect attention from the range of influences over government's position-forming. It is unsound to suggest that government departments act as conduits for the wishes and needs of their populace in pursuing international negotiations. To do so is to ignore the complexity of internal relations between government departments in establishing common policy; the influence of other actors in formulating positions (investment banks, for example, in this instance); and external pressure (from other states or inter-governmental institutions) to take a particular position. Just as the role of international NGO networks in promoting the influence of their members in decision-making processes cannot be assumed to comply with notions of democracy and good governance, so governments cannot be presented as homogenous channels which do no more and no less than to represent the interests of 'civil society'.

The contested status of the MAI Coalition indicates that an expanded role for non-governmental actors in international decision-making, as elaborated in Agenda 21 and elsewhere, has not established principles which are universally acknowledged. It also suggests that clearly articulated and, where appropriate, verifiable channels of accountability and claims of legitimacy are a necessary corollary to effectiveness in influencing inter-governmental processes.

2.3.1.3 EarthAction Network

The third exemplar in this category is the EarthAction Network, which functions much as many individual organisations do; but includes a network of NGOs around the world among its members. EarthAction produces regular 'Action Alerts', intended to focus attention on particular issues of concern and present a coherent lobbying position and strategy which its members are invited to pursue. Among the organisation's stated aims is to 'mobilise large numbers of citizen groups,

individual activists, journalists and members of parliament around the world to communicate with policy makers on key issues'. The areas where influence is sought are:

- International negotiations, such as those on climate change, biological diversity or debt.

- International institutions, such as the UN or the World Bank.

- A single national government, when the decision has profound global consequences.

- Multinational corporations, whose decisions can sometimes have equally important consequences.[49]

This mirrors the structure of many individual organisations – decision-making is not deferred to the members of the network. Information is disseminated from the central node, but there is little evidence of exchanges between the individual organisations or of communications from members to Earth Action itself being encouraged.[50] Nevertheless, EarthAction claims a membership of 'over 1,800 citizen groups in 143 countries. Roughly 1,100 groups are in the South and 500 in the North'. The organisation's website is punctuated with tributes from these members which are clearly intended to illustrate the range of countries and sectors represented and the enthusiasm with which they receive and use EarthAction's material. Of particular significance is the quotation attributed to Greenpeace International:

> EarthAction has set a new standard for providing top quality, timely and focused campaign materials to non-governmental organisations around the world, at the same time encouraging more concerted and effective NGO action. In so doing, it has provided a potential model for the next phase of NGO evolution.[51]

Jackie Smith has considered the work of EarthAction as a case study in a wider exposition of the roles played by 'Transnational Social Movement Organisations' (TSMOs). She concludes that 'EarthAction's work helps articulate and focus shared interests of its partners, amplifying the needs and demands of local populations and empowering them to act on global issues. These functions of EarthAction help shape the contexts in which national, multilateral, and transgovernmental decisions

49 *EarthAction 's Mission* from the EarthAction Network website: http://www.earthaction.org. Visited on 1 September 2001.
50 Jackie Smith states that '[EarthAction's] communications links with partner organizations foster communication among NGOs and the identification of common interests and possibilities for cooperation', but provides no examples in an otherwise detailed analysis of the organisation's work. Smith, Jackie 'Building Political Will after UNCED: EarthAction International' in Smith, Jackie, Charles Chatfield and Ron Pagnucco eds. *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State* pp.175-191, Syracuse University Press, New York USA 1997 p.177.
51 *EarthAction 's Mission, op. cit.*

are made'.[52] The inference is that the organisation acts as a conduit, bringing the views of key non-governmental actors to bear in inter-governmental contexts. Smith does not address the dynamics of power *within* the network – the means by which decisions are taken on the subjects for Action Alerts; the rationale for allocating 'grants to local partners'; the legitimacy of its role in 'articulating shared interests'. Her focus is on 'empowering', 'educating', and 'informing' local and national organisations, and on creating 'transnational mobilizing frames' to make governments more aware of the importance of environmental issues and place pressure on them to take national and multilateral action.

The effect of this is to marginalise consideration of uncertainty or disagreement within the network by emphasising communication and homogeneity in place of dialogue and diversity.[53] There is also an assumption that the flow of education and information should predominantly be from the international network to its national and local affiliates, and that Northern-based international organisations are benign and constructive in their dealings with Southern associates, establishing mutually beneficial relationships. Such suppositions have been challenged by many authors writing on this area, whose critiques should be acknowledged in this context.[54]

The significance of relations between network members is evident in the first two examples considered, and its apparent absence in the third case has been noted. CAN's stated objectives establish a correlation between its effectiveness in 'promoting government and individual action' and · its capacity to effect a 'democratic and decentralized NGO contribution to the process'. The diversity of organisations participating in the MAI Coalition has contributed to a rich dialogue on the potential impacts of the Agreement whilst limiting collaborative work on its proposed provisions. The apparent lack of horizontal interactions within the EarthAction Network and its emphasis on dissemination of information and education to its predominantly Southern membership suggest underlying tensions in the network's self-governance.

52 Smith, Jackie 'Building Political Will after UNCED: EarthAction International' *op. cit.* p.190.
53 The only reference made to communications from partners to EarthAction is attributed to 'small environment, development and peace groups around the world', who 'repeatedly' state "Thanks for being there. Now we feel less isolated." *Ibid.* p.179.
54 See for example Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger *The Earth Brokers: Power, politics and world development, op. cit.* and Middleton, Neil Phil O'Keefe and Sam Moyo *The Tears of the Crocodile: From Rio to reality in the developing world* Pluto Press, Chipping Norton UK 1993.

These issues are directly addressed by Paul Nelson in his analysis of the work of transnational NGO networks lobbying the World Bank.[55] Nelson argues that NGOs have had 'a measure of influence in policy and funding debates'[56] for the World Bank, raising issues of environmental impact, economic and social justice, political participation and the rights of minorities. The corollary of this success has been 'pressures that reveal tensions and contradictions in the networks' representation, agenda-setting, self-governance and claims to legitimacy'.[57] Thus, despite deeply embedded values of accountability, participation, sustainability and equity, Nelson suggests that informal organisational structures and the broad range of policy issues these networks address make these principles of self-governance elusive.[58] Three particular sources of tension make NGO networks vulnerable to division over issues and strategy:

- The tension between entrepreneurial leadership and participatory, solidarity-driven alliances;

- The need to balance and reconcile local objectives of Southern participants with strategic, global objectives of international campaigners;[59] and

- The diverse and sometimes contradictory claims to legitimacy in international lobbying.[60]

Nelson argues that NGO networks' influence is dependent on trust and at least the appearance of solidarity. Disagreements threaten that trust and weaken the perception of a movement united around a set of principles and values. All networks of non-state actors have to confront this challenge – govern loosely tied global networks that are establishing themselves as political actors. He concludes that

[s]elf-governance may be as significant a challenge for NGO networks as is motivating and monitoring change in official institutions such as the World Bank ... The networks' performance as models of accountability, transparency and broad participation is at the center of their theoretical significance as new political actors, and their impact on future policy and practice.[61]

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55 Nelson Paul J 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Effectiveness: Who Speaks for Whom in Transnational NGO Networks Lobbying the World Bank?' Occasional Paper No. 7 Harrison Programme on the Future Global Agenda October 1996. Located online at http://www.bsos.umd.edu/harrison/papers/paper17.htm. Accessed on 3 January 2002.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Nelson explores divisions between US-based NGOs and others over replenishment of the World Bank's concessional finance window, IDA. He identifies 'fault lines' - North-South and between environment and anti-poverty networks.
59 See also Fairman, David and Michael Ross 'Old Fads, New Lessons: Learning from Economic Development Assistance' in Keohane, Robert O. and Marc A. Levy eds. Institutions for Environmental Aid: Pitfalls and Promise pp.39-51, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA 1996.
60 Nelson Paul J 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Effectiveness: Who Speaks for Whom in Transnational NGO Networks Lobbying the World Bank?' op. cit.
61 Ibid.

In identifying and delineating the activities of NGO networks which aim to influence inter-governmental deliberations, three dichotomies have emerged:

- The insider / outsider distinction

- The vertical / horizontal distinction

- Status among NGOs / credibility with governments

None of these pairs should be understood as mutually exclusive – as noted earlier, organisations which might be considered outsiders in their work on the MAI are clearly insiders in other contexts. An appropriate balance in the second and third distinctions would be considered advantageous by many NGOs. Yet the tensions and contradictions in networks' activities identified by Paul Nelson occur along the fissures which these distinctions indicate.

An understanding of NGO networks as nascent political actors entails rejecting theoretical constructs which suggest they function as 'honest brokers', or play an impartial role in channelling the views of their constituencies to inter-governmental fora. If this is accepted, and the influence of non-governmental actors in certain aspects of global governance is acknowledged, any consideration of the roles played by NGOs in these contexts must give commensurate consideration to relations between organisations and the structures for self-governance that support and validate their participation.

2.3.2 Facilitating dissemination of and access to information, experience, and training

A variety of networks play a service role for participants by providing them with information, facilitating exchanges between organisations, or enhancing input from NGOs to inter-governmental processes. This may entail strengthening access to information or the dissemination of information developed by individual organisations; the provision of training in practical project work or in lobbying governments and inter-governmental bodies; advice and support in obtaining funding or other necessary backing; or linking similar organisations to allow dialogue on problems and solutions for those in comparable circumstances. A distinction was made in the previous section between 'horizontal interaction' and 'vertical communication'. Networks which provide services to their members can operate on both of these axes and will tend to employ some combination of the two.

Service networks have a primary focus on meeting the needs of their members. As a result, it is not surprising to find that many demonstrate a considered understanding of the structures of accountability which ensure that they adequately meet these needs. Potential for conflict arises when the network's role in linking a wide range of organisations in a particular sector and its resultant knowledge of the area lead it to be seen by others as a means by which to control and limit NGO access to inter-governmental decision-making. If a small number of NGO delegates are invited to participate in an inter-governmental working group, for example, the network (or more precisely its central node) may be invited to identify the most appropriate individuals. As a result, the network could be held to have acted as a 'gatekeeper', limiting access to positions of influence and perhaps thereby taking decisions which conflict with its mandate.

The examples considered below illustrate some of the functions of service networks, and explore ways in which the potential for internal conflict described above has been avoided or accommodated.

Networks such as the International NGO Network on Desertification and Drought (Réseau International d'ONG sur la Désertification – RIOD) aim to bring together organisations working at local or national level to enable them to interact: 'The establishment of the network is based on the view that through exchange of information, experiences and ideas NGOs and CBOs [Community Based Organisations] will be more effective in their efforts to fight against desertification'.[62] Two documents shape its activities – the *General Framework of Operation of RIOD* and the *NGO Action Plan to Combat Desertification*, both agreed at an International NGO Planning meeting that was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in November 1994. RIOD functions through a system of focal points at national, sub-regional, regional and global levels. The network's commitment to an open and democratic process requires that each focal point establish the most appropriate means of communication with the organisations it is to serve. Selecting focal points is described as a 'slow process':

> National focal points cannot be self-proclaimed nor appointed by (sub)-regional or global focal points. National focal points need to be selected in consultation with other NGOs/CBOs in the country. This can be done by organising a meeting at the national level to which all NGOs/CBOs that are active in dryland areas will participate. In countries where they exist, NGO Councils or NGO Federations can be very helpful in getting such meetings organised. Once sufficient focal points have been established at the national level also the focal points at

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62 *RIOD - An Introduction* from RIOD's website http://riod.utando.com. Visited on 1 September 2001.

the sub-regional, regional and global level will also be selected through the "bottom-up" approach.[63]

This conscious attempt to build accountability and transparency into the operations of RIOD stands in marked contrast to many other NGO networks which could be considered 'top-down', not structured in ways which best suit grassroots members or equipped to provide them with the information or services they require. However, it should also be noted that the RIOD model would be difficult to emulate without significant levels of funding. The protracted decision-making process may also lead to problems if quick responses to particular challenges are required.

Nevertheless, RIOD constitutes an example of the impact of new communications technologies in transforming what were previously logistical impossibilities into institutional imperatives, as noted by Gordenker and Weiss earlier. Just as it is misplaced to suggest that NGO networks are necessarily able to act as honest brokers in promoting the influence of NGOs in inter-governmental contexts, it would be wrong to imply that information-sharing networks constitute no more than conduits for knowledge and ideas, or that changes in the means of communication do not present profound challenges to prevailing structures of power. Jessica T. Mathews states that '[t]he most powerful engine of change in the relative decline of states and the rise of non-state actors is the computer and telecommunications revolution, whose deep political and social consequences have been almost completely ignored':

> Above all, the information technologies disrupt hierarchies, spreading power among more people and groups. In drastically lowering the costs of communication, consultation, and coordination, they favor decentralized networks over other modes of organization. In a network, individuals or groups link for joint action without building a physical or formal institutional presence. Networks have no person at the top and no center. Instead, they have multiple nodes where collections of individuals or groups interact for different purposes.[64]

Social Watch brings together reports by national or subnational members on implementation by their governments of commitments made at the UN World Summit for Social Development and the UN World Conference on Women (both 1995). Again the legitimacy of the network is closely associated with its ability to access country-based (especially Southern) critiques of domestic activity and present these as relevant additions to international consideration of follow-up to these global conferences.

63 Ibid.
64 Mathews, Jessica T. 'Power Shift', Foreign Affairs vol. 76 No. 1 pp.50-66, Washington DC January / February 1997. Located online at http://www.yale.edu/ycias/stimson/stimson99/africa/power_shift.htm. Visited on 3 January 2002.

•Table 2.2 'The Boomerang Pattern'[65]
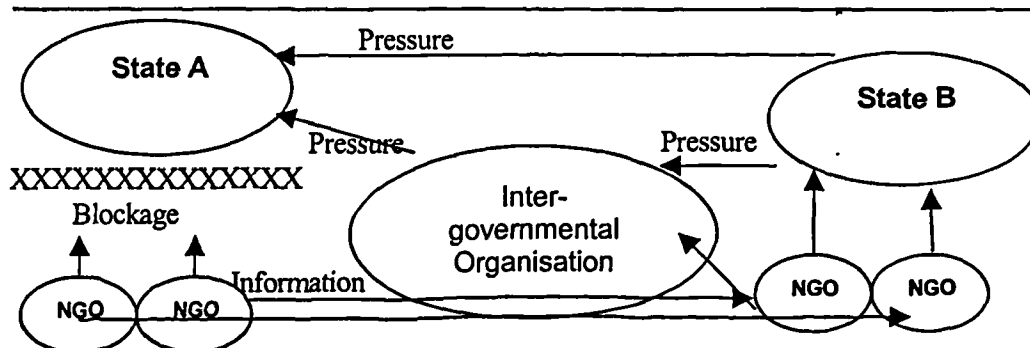
State A blocks redress to organisations within it; they activate the network, whose members pressure their own states and (if necessary) a third party organisation, which in turn puts pressure on State A.

A further significant element in such instances has been described as the 'boomerang effect', whereby NGOs use an international network to engage an inter-governmental audience in the hope of influencing their own government. Social Watch can thus be interpreted in some instances as an attempt to use internationally established norms, focusing explicitly on those recognised at the Beijing and Copenhagen Conferences, to strengthen domestic political influence.

This intermediary function was alluded to in a UN paper on modalities for the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD):

> To enhance and facilitate the active and coordinated participation of the non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission, the Secretary-General believes that it might be useful for the non-governmental organizations themselves to organize or continue organizing in various constituencies and interest groups and to set up non-governmental networks, including electronic networks, for exchange of information and documentation related to the work of the Commission and the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in general.[66]

The Secretary General's suggestion should be placed in context: it was proposed that access to annual sessions of the CSD be extended to include organisations which had been accredited to UNCED (some 1 400 NGOs). Misgivings had been expressed by some governments and various more established NGOs at the practical difficulties this influx might cause given the size of the rooms available, the limited budget for production of documents and so on. As a result, this point was widely

65 Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Without Borders: Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1998 p.13.
66 E/1993/12 'Rules of procedure of the Commission on Sustainable Development' Report of the UN Secretary-General para.18, January 29, 1993.

understood to imply that effective networks might alleviate these problems by allowing NGOs to share information and agree upon spokespersons designated to represent the views of a broader constituency.[67] Thus networks purporting to extend NGO access and strengthen their involvement in international processes are obliged to facilitate decisions on which organisations should be allowed access and which should not.

The difficulty this can cause for NGO networks is particularly apparent when they are placed in the invidious position of having to identify a small number of representatives to participate in the work of an inter-governmental body. In their analysis of relations between NGOs and inter-governmental organisations working on acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), Christer Jönsson and Peter Söderholm report on the establishment by a subsidiary body of the World Health Organisation of a global inter-governmental task force to provide recommendations on global and country-level co-ordination in tackling AIDS, to include strengthening the involvement of NGOs.[68] This new body consisted of three representatives each from recipient governments, donor governments, the UN family and NGOs. The means by which the selection of these three representatives should be conducted was deferred to 'appropriate NGO coordinating bodies'.[69] Despite this, no commonly accepted forum which could play this role existed. Jönsson and Söderholm state that an informal consultation process was initiated which resulted in selection of 'trusted persons rather than organisations as such'. Their conclusion suggests that the *ad hoc* mechanism devised to identify participants in this task force has not obviated the need for means by which to ensure the accountability of these representatives in future; conversely, the means by which three individuals could adequately represent the views of a diverse range of NGOs remain problematic:

> It is still unclear how a few organisations might represent the heterogeneous NGO community – in the task force or in any other contemplated coordination body. Whereas the task force symbolises official recognition of NGO access to decision-making and coordination, difficult questions concerning constituency and representation remain.[70]

67 The Secretary General's Report goes on to state that Non-governmental organizations could organize coalitions/consortiums which could meet annually in advance of the session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to develop positions and designate representatives to attend its sessions and act as their spokespersons' *Ibid*. para. 19 (a).
68 WHO *Report of the External Review of the World Health Organization Global Programme on AIDS* GPA/GMC, Geneva Switzerland 1992 pp.42-43.
69 WHO/GPA 'Extraordinary Meeting of the Management Committee 23-25 November 1992: Conclusions and Recommendations' Annex 2 GPA/GMC, Geneva Switzerland 1992.
70 Jönsson, Christer and Peter Söderholm 'IGO-NGO Relations and HIV / AIDS: Innovation or Stalemate?' in Weiss, Thomas G. and Leon Gordenker *NGOs, The UN, and Global Governance*, pp.121-138, *op. cit.* p.133.

2.3.3 Promoting dialogue between NGOs on issues of principle

Networks can enable NGOs to debate issues of principle and establish commonality, complementary objectives, or areas of fundamental difference. This kind of dialogue is distinct from discussions on common strategies and objectives in influencing governments or other actors, yet it can be a significant precursor to changes in the outcomes NGOs seek to achieve through their lobbying and campaigning work. Discussions on issues of principle can be particularly important when they occur between different types of NGO or between NGOs from different parts of the world. For instance, interaction between environment and development NGOs during the Rio process led many organisations to reframe their overarching principles to take into account perspectives which may not have been acknowledged previously. More structured interchanges between Northern and Southern NGOs took place in many contexts which led to a questioning of the assumptions underlying positions taken previously.[71]

The coalition of organisations campaigning against South African apartheid established associations between widely divergent organisations, linking trade unions, NGOs, and politicians from around the world with the South African resistance movement. Audie Klotz writes of the power of transnational social movements to challenge prevailing norms and initiate change through the general acceptance of new governing principles for global decision-making. She asserts that the anti-apartheid movement successfully replaced the norms of state sovereignty and the right to self-determination which underpinned the South African regime's claims to legitimacy in its international relations with the principle of racial equality. This transition was most marked during the 1980s, when the governments of Britain and the US were ideologically opposed to an extension of sanctions against South Africa and preoccupied with the country's strategic importance in the Cold War. Despite this resistance, Klotz claims, the history of the anti-apartheid movement demonstrates the power of weak and nonstate actors to transform both global norms and the distribution of social power in the international system:

> The international and transnational aspects of South African identity, which I have explored
> here only in terms of race, illustrate fundamental tensions between statecentric and transnational
> social forces. Transnational social movements (including the anti-apartheid movement as well

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71 See for example *Report of the Participation of NGOs in the Preparatory Process of UNCED* produced by the Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations - Issues and Non Governmental Organizations Programme Geneva, August 1992. The Climate Action Network website states that 'Northern NGOs have often reviewed their positions (on forestry, agriculture and population in particular) after discussion with partners from the South who draw their attention to new dimensions of environmental problems (consumption per capita, poverty etc.).' CAN website, *op. cit.*

as missionary societies in the colonial era and a continual flow of immigrants around the globe) are all relevant to our theorizing about international and domestic transformations.[72]

A network of organisations united in opposition to the ideological basis of the South African state was therefore able to change the policies of the most powerful international actors. It also politicised the role of economic actors associated with South Africa and ensured that they were placed under sustained pressure to acknowledge the prevailing importance of racial equality as a principle which should be reflected in their operations, and thereby to withdraw their (implicit or overt) support for the South African regime.

As noted earlier, the UNRISD analysis of the emergence of a global civil society focuses on interaction between people at the global level to develop new sets of rights and obligations as the crux of a shift from a national to a global conceptualisation of citizenship.[73] This echoes Martin Shaw's reference to the role of civil society organisations in 'arguing for a different kind of crystallisation of global state power from those favoured by state élites'.[74] Shaw also suggests that the capacity of such organisations to act in this manner is limited – civil society is still predominantly nationally framed and, despite examples from the feminist, human rights and environment movements, is not effective at mobilising power at the international level. The Anti-Apartheid Movement constitutes evidence of these transformatory processes occurring at the global level, and suggests that their capacity to influence governments or inter-governmental bodies is not the only means by which to assess their effectiveness.[75]

2.3.3.1 The Transatlantic Environment Dialogue

One example which can usefully be explored in this context is the transatlantic environment dialogue (TAED) launched in May 1999 by the European Environment Bureau and its US counterpart, the National Wildlife Federation and disbanded following the 2000 change in US administration. The TAED has been chosen here because it brought together two sets of environment NGOs which in most cases had not previously had close working relations. It also created a new set of criteria for their interaction – contributing and reacting to a broader set of

72 Klotz, Audie Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1995. p.171.
73 Research Activities 1995/6 UNRISD, op. cit.
74 Shaw, Martin 'Civil Society and Global Politics: Beyond a Social Movements Approach' op. cit. p.650.
75 Paul Wapner concludes that '[t]he failure of governments to respond ... does not necessarily mean that the efforts of activists have been in vain. Rather, they influence understandings of good conduct throughout societies at large. They help set the boundaries of what is considered acceptable behavior.' Wapner, Paul 'Politics Beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics' World Politics No.47 pp.311-40, April 1995 p.326.

dialogues between organisations and governments. Thus although a particular focus for the TAED was on the means by which to influence inter-governmental decision-making, we might also expect to find some debate on the establishment of procedures for taking decisions within the network and some consideration of the means by which shared principles which should underly all the network's activities could be agreed. Although the TAED existed for less than two years, it is legitimate to assess the degree to which these aspects of network formation are seen to have *a priori* significance, or whether they arise through the operations of the network as a result of crises in realising the more tangible aspects of the network's agenda.[76]

The Transatlantic Environment Dialogue was one of a set of 'people-to-people' dialogues initiated by officials from the US and European governments. During the June 1995 U.S./EU Summit in Madrid, the US and EU governments drafted the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) which was formally launched in December 1995. The NTA created a series of dialogues between civil society groups on both sides of the Atlantic. The dialogues were intended to provide government officials with citizens' perspectives on the most important issues affected by this effort to strengthen U.S./EU ties. The NTA had four major goals, and the Joint U.S.-EU Action Plan outlined priority action items:

- *Promoting peace and stability, democracy and development around the world*, with a particular emphasis on the challenges to peace and democracy in Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East.

- *Responding to global challenges*, including drug-trafficking, terrorism, environmental protection, combating human disease, and addressing the needs of refugees and displaced persons. Included in the Action Plan is a commitment to coordinate U.S./EU negotiating positions on major global environmental issues

- *Contributing to the expansion of world trade and closer economic relations*, with a particular focus on full implementation of the Uruguay Round commitments,

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76 Parallel fora for dialogue between business organisations, charitable foundations, consumer organisations, and organised labour as well as a multi-sectoral dialogue on sustainable development and a mechanism for information sharing have been established as elements of the NTA. However, a process to facilitate exchange between NGOs on environment issues was not initiated until mid-1998. It appears that the respective government departments believed the credibility of this initiative would suffer if a related process for interaction between NGOs were not started.

64The National Wildlife Federation speculates that President Clinton's 1998 speech to the World Trade Organisation 'sent clear orders throughout the U.S. administration to include NGOs in trade policy development'. In addition, 'The 1997 and 1998 defeats of US "fast track" trade negotiating authority, and the OECD governments' embarrassment caused by universal NGO rejection of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), have helped to create a new political atmosphere surrounding trade and investment negotiations.' NWF website: http://www.nwf.org/nwf/international/trade/taedcnf.html. Visited on 1 September 2001.

strengthening the World Trade Organization, and negotiating greater U.S./EU economic integration by creating a **New Transatlantic Marketplace (NTM).**

- *Building bridges across the Atlantic* to bring together business people, scientists, educators, and others to improve communication and to ensure that future generations remain committed to developing a full and equal partnership. The Action Plan specifically calls for supporting and encouraging the transatlantic business relationship.[77]

Material produced by the secretariat of the TAED emphasised three points of relevance:

- the dialogue is independent of governments and should not be understood as an acceptance of the terms of reference for the NTA or a legitimising of its activities

- the initial focus on issues of trade, investment and related issues should be broadened to incorporate a much broader range of environmental issues

- given the potential significance of a transatlantic axis in these areas the involvement of NGOs from all regions of the world should be sought.

It may be useful to revisit the premise established earlier in this section that the dialectic between global economic liberalisation and global social solidarity suggests a role for international NGO networks as the fora within which dialogues on rights, standards and other issues of principle are conducted between organisations which confront problems arising from processes of globalisation. The TAED had as its remit to conduct dialogue between NGOs resulting in 'a united front when campaigning on global issues such as free trade, climate change and agriculture'.[78] Its stated objectives related principally to influencing governmental decisions and procedures, yet these are framed by an overall aim to '[m]onitor transatlantic negotiations and policy making with a view toward making sustainable development the overall objective in EU-US relations and assessing and preventing the potential negative impact of governmental policies on the environment'.[79] This would seem to support the assertion that it existed to promote a fundamentally different set of principles from the inter-governmental dialogue it purportedly shadowed

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77 *Ibid.*
78 *Ibid.*
79 *Ibid.*

A number of criteria were also established earlier by which the proposal that NGO alliances are performing this function might be assessed. Again, it may be instructive to review some of these briefly here:

The development of decision-making procedures – John Hontelez of EEB stated that the TAED would offer the opportunity for co-ordination on lobbying inter-governmental bodies and negotiations: 'we will use the dialogue to sort out exactly what our positions should be for the benefit of the environment'.[80] This implies consistency in the ideological positions and strategic approaches taken by participants, and does not allow for dialogue on these more fundamental issues should consensus prove elusive.

Links with other networks on issues of common concern – The TAED undertook to 'build upon the already existing co-operation and joint action among EU and U.S. non-governmental organisations and promote further dialogue with NGOs in other regions, including those devoted to consumer, development and labour issues'.[81]

Debates on issues of principle – The lack of emphasis on any means by which participants could negotiate and review common principles is striking in the documents available on the TAED.

Targeting rogue actors and placing pressure on them to conform with widely accepted norms and standards – There is no evidence from the available documentation that EU NGOs planned to use this channel to challenge the US on issues on which it is out of line with the rest of the world. This could have occurred through attempts to make direct representations to US Government officials on matters such as climate change or the regulation of biotechnology. EU organisations could also have tried to persuade their US counterparts to act more as intermediaries for broader global concerns in their domestic lobbying activities than had previously been the case. Both approaches would have required prior agreement on the appropriate uses to which the network should be put – it seems likely that official reports and press releases would not have included information of this kind. Nevertheless, the degree to which this type of norm-setting leading to focused lobbying occurs through networks such as the TAED could be significant in determining their success in achieving their overall objectives. Its absence could provide support for Shaw's claim that civil society organisations are still predominantly nationally framed – in this instance, ideological and pragmatic tensions between European and US

80 EEB website http://www.eeb.be. Visited on 1 September 2001.

NGOs could have been exposed which in turn could undermine achievement of the network's stated policy objectives.

In sum, the TAED is presented by its principal participants as a channel by which the complementary perspectives of European and US NGOs can be brought to bear more effectively than previously in influencing the decisions and actions of other actors, notably governments. Issues of self-governance are marginalised, at least in the material available for public perusal. Where these are acknowledged at all, they are presented as logistical matters rather than of central importance in establishing the credibility of the network[82] or of value to the participants as elements in a broader elaboration of 'embryonic institutional structures that will define a different form of global governance'.[83] By contrast, these issues were central to a meeting convened in Manila in 1995.

2.3.3.2 Manila Meeting of NGO Networks

A meeting of NGO networks which addressed the ways in which global norms could be developed through co-operation was held in Manila in November 1995. Titled 'Meeting the Challenge of the Emerging Global System', the event was organised by the International NGO Forum [see chapter 4], whose members had been elected on a regional basis to promote awareness of the Alternative Treaties negotiated at the Global Forum held during the Rio Summit in 1992. The focus was on forging collaborative mechanisms which could constitute the starting point for coherent resistance to the negative impacts of economic and social globalisation: 'Given the challenges posed by the emerging global system, the need for more effective NGO networks at the world level was recognised'.[84]

Representatives from 77 NGO networks from around the world tackled an ambitious agenda, attempting to initiate a range of collaborative processes intended to counteract globalisation:

81 *Ibid.*
82 See Nelson, Paul J 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Effectiveness: Who Speaks for Whom in Transnational NGO Networks Lobbying the World Bank?' *op. cit.*
83 *Democratic Global Civil Governance Report of the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs, op. cit.* p.3.
84 Manila NGO Conference *Meeting the Challenge of the Emerging Global System* unpublished report on the meeting circulated to participants, January 1996 para. 1.1. Unpublished report on the meeting circulated to participants, January 1996. Participants endorsed a Statement on Globalisation, as the basis for their collaboration:
'Globalisation, by which is understood the world tendency towards economic, social and cultural integration leads to the concentration of wealth, power and knowledge, to increased poverty, both in the South and the North, to environmental degradation, to homogenous ways of life and to destruction of cultures. There are also some positive aspects, but the negative impact is predominant. The undersigned NGOs committed themselves to support the positive aspects (human rights, women's rights, communication, minority rights) and to face the negative economic, political and environmental impacts of globalisation in search for a sustainable development based on justice and equity from local to international levels.'
84 *Ibid.*, para. 1.3
84 *Ibid.*, para. 5.1
84 *Ibid.*, para. 2.2

We have proposed an interim period of two years during which we can work towards stronger co-operation and more comprehensive involvement of NGO networks around the world. During this period we can work together in a number of ways, including the following:

- Enhancing the capacity of regional and national NGOs to work together;

- Identifying gaps where there is no strong international network dealing with a specific issue. It would be very useful for organizations working on such issues to "buy-in" to our process and build links and capacity quickly;

- Building alliances through creating a co-operative structure. We should be able to act together in a more efficient and co-ordinated way than would otherwise be possible. This is another way in which networks outside the arena in which we operate can be brought in.[85]

A number of task groups were created to develop this proposed 'meta-network'. These included groups focusing on capacity-building for networks; international exchanges of staff; comparisons between national legislation for NGOs; advocacy training and lobbying; and a 'think tank' intended to 'define public interest in the context of globalisation'.[86] Participants were invited to sign up to contribute to development of work in these areas. The networks were asked to take the proposal for creation of these processes for interaction to their own decision-making bodies in order to build the necessary commitments of time and money into their ongoing work programmes. Five focal points for each geographical region agreed to promote awareness of the initiative and to liaise in developing the ideas and proposals put forward at the Manila meeting.

This process is particularly significant in that it identifies globalisation as the spur for the development of countervailing efforts. It characterises NGOs as limited in their capacity to make the associational links between disparate issues with common root causes and it presents focused collaboration between NGO networks as the means by which such conceptual and institutional limitations might be broken down. Finally, the Manila documentation emphasises the significance of links between local and global activities, recognising the need for 'decentralisation of power, resources and services'[87]. In all of these respects 'Meeting the Challenges of the Emerging Global System' conforms with the premise that NGO alliances act as the fora within which dialogues on rights, standards and other issues of

85 *Ibid.*, para. 1.3
86 *Ibid.*, para. 5.1
87 *Ibid.*, para. 2.2

principle are conducted between organisations which confront problems arising from globalisation, as suggested earlier. As such, the analysis of the impacts of globalisation advanced and the initiatives proposed for international NGO networks to challenge such developments are particularly relevant.

The limitations exposed by this initiative should also be considered. Despite attempts to establish participation in the Manila process as an integral part of the work of international NGO networks, few if any proved able to incorporate the follow-up into their subsequent work programmes. The principal funder of the Manila meeting (the Canadian Council for International Co-operation) decided not to continue to provide backing for work in this area. Even during the event itself, many delegates expressed reservations about the difficulties in building working relations with a diverse range of organisations from other regions, issue areas or sectors of society.

The above examples suggest that the development of norms by NGO networks to be promulgated more widely in international affairs has occurred in particular instances, such as in the work of the anti-apartheid movement. However, to date attempts to establish more general means by which NGOs can collaborate to translate norms (and strategies for their promotion) from one context to others have had limited success. These limitations derive from practical difficulties (organisational culture; problems with funding and staffing) and from conceptual obstacles. With these qualifications, the output from the Manila meeting suggests that if the pervasive impacts of globalisation are increasingly understood to present a consistent (but multi-faceted) threat to 'principles of sustainable development based on justice and equity', the relevance of effective means by which to span existing barriers to collaboration may become more widely appreciated by NGOs around the world.

2.3.4 Changing the behaviour of an economic actor

Many examples can be cited of networks which bring together individual NGOs with an interest in the activities of a particular company or group of companies. A representative sample might include the International Baby Milk Action Network; the Campaign Against the Arms Trade; co-ordination between organisations opposed to the work of multinational companies such as Monsanto in developing genetically modified crops; and recent collaborative campaigns drawing attention to incidences of child labour in production of consumer goods such as sports shoes and footballs. At the international level, this is perhaps most interesting when the leverage the network has over the companies' activities in one context derives in large measure from its ability to mobilise consumers in

another. In addition to the range of government-sponsored sanctions which were supported, the anti-apartheid movement initiated boycotts of South African produce (to reduce the flow of foreign exchange to the country and reinforce its isolation from international society) and established campaigns against international companies with overt links to South Africa (to put pressure on companies such as Barclay's Bank to sever these associations and to provide individuals who shared the network's principles with accessible targets for their own actions).

The UNRISD report *States of Disarray* asserts that '[s]ince governments often lack the capacity or will, much of the impetus for fostering corporate responsibility has come from citizens' groups'.[88] The report identifies three techniques employed by NGOs in recent years to put pressure on multinational corporations: organising corporate boycotts; formulating codes of conduct; and offering alternative investment strategies. The first two tactics have been extensively pursued at the international level over the past thirty years by NGOs collaborating through the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) to combat the promotion of artificial infant foods by multinational companies and their subsidiaries.

Promotion of and opposition to artificial infant foods both have international origins. Nestlé was operating as a multinational company before the start of the 20th Century, with substantial markets in Europe, North and South America and South East Asia. The response from NGOs and statutory bodies was also initially international: concern expressed by a UN body (the UN Protein-Calorie Advisory Group) in 1970 was followed by preparation of a draft code of practice on advertising by the International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU) in 1972 and publication of *The Baby Killer* by the development NGO War on Want in 1974.[89] It was only subsequently that national boycotts were organised by members of IBFAN and others and that national-level legislation and monitoring was initiated. These efforts continued, in most instances, to be closely associated with the international network. National boycotts also indicate awareness of the international context - with reference to the US boycott of Nestlé products initiated in 1977 Chetley writes: 'Nestlé was genuinely surprised by the boycott, not least because none of its infant formula products was sold in the United States.'[90]

88 United Nations Research Institute for Social Development *States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization* UNRISD Geneva 1995 p.164.
89 Andrew Chetley's authoritative account of the campaign against infant formulas credits two doctors (Derrick Jellife and Bo Vahlqvist) with responsibility for bringing the issue to the attention of the UN Protein-Calorie Action Group at its 1970 meeting - Chetley, Andrew *The Politics of Baby Foods: Successful Challenges to an International Marketing Strategy* Frances Pinter London UK 1986 p.40.
90 *Ibid.* p.53.

The work of IBFAN also provides a number of examples of agenda setting by NGOs at the international level. These encompass influence over inter-governmental fora (through publication of regular *Breaking the Rules* reports on implementation of the marketing code initiated by IOCU and agreed by WHO and UNICEF); national governments (witness the adoption of the code in national legislation and the introduction of other national legal instruments deriving from it – also the *volte face* by the USA, which was the only country to oppose the marketing code in 1981, but had changed this position by 1994); national NGOs and consumers (through the succession of national boycotts initiated throughout the period) and producers themselves (evident in the voluntary agreement to an advertising ban entered into by US companies in the early 1990s). The inherently international nature of the campaign was recognised by participants:

> Dealing with the strategy developed by the TNCs demanded a broad base of support, constantly updated information, and a careful analysis which showed that the events were not isolated incidents, but part of an integrated world-wide pattern of marketing ... The TNCs, meanwhile, were not slow to recognize that they too needed to organize internationally. Nestlé had carried most of the criticism in the early years of the campaign, but an increasing amount was rubbing off on the other companies. They recognized the dangers of being picked off one by one and began building a buffer organization to deflect the growing criticism.[91]

It is significant that the industry network established in 1975 (the International Council of Infant Food Industries [ICIFI]) was unable to exert a comparable influence. Its opposition to the WHO/UNICEF code for marketing in 1981 did not lead to the abandonment of the code. Although Nestlé created its own guidelines and monitoring body (the Nestlé Infant Formula Audit Commission) this body was disbanded after ten years in 1991 after releasing research which was critical of the company's activities in Mexico.

This suggests that John McCormick's assertion that international NGO activity is dependent upon the emergence of political internationalism and the creation of international governmental organisations to give them 'contextual relevance and permanence' could be broadened to include the context provided by the activities of multinational companies. The interaction and mutual reinforcement evident between NGO networks and inter-governmental bodies in this instance also call into question McCormick's premise that the creation of international authorities to be lobbied constitutes a precondition for the emergence of international mechanisms for NGO co-ordination – in this instance, formation of IBFAN in 1979 predated agreement to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-

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91 *Ibid.* pp.46-7.

Milk Substitutes at the 34th World Health Assembly by two years. Instigation of national boycotts and promotion of a code of practice, two of the key techniques for NGOs in attempting to change the behaviour of multinational corporations identified in the UNRISD report, were already established before inter-governmental activity became significant. The *a priori* significance McCormick ascribes to inter-governmental institutions does not seem appropriate here.

Another model for interaction between NGOs and the private sector advances forms of constructive engagement, founded on the principle that 'credibility is a cornerstone of trust':

> NGOs should be supported in various ways to partake in meaningful dialogue and then even negotiation. Companies cannot leave this process to civil society alone, as coalitions of NGOs can marginalise certain issues. Instead, companies should take a leadership role in helping to support systems of independent consultation, which may include efforts to build the organising and negotiating capacity of affected groups. This is a major undertaking for an individual corporation, and so partnership with other companies, major international NGOs and intergovernmental agencies is advisable.[92]

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) was established in 1997 as a partnership between the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Unilever plc. Penny Fowler and John Heap present a cautiously optimistic account of its early activities, deriving from 'the identification of a common objective, the facilitation of intermediaries, the creativity of staff in both organisations and the pre-existence of the FSC [Forestry Stewardship Council]', but qualify this by recognising further work needed 'to bring its stakeholders, particularly fish-workers and development NGOs on board'.[93] The MSC claims to have been able to instigate best practice in various areas of commercial fishing, with much more significant results than UN-sponsored efforts to achieve change in industry practice through international negotiation and regulation. Nevertheless, the degree to which the collaboration is constructive has been questioned by other NGOs, and its replicability in other contexts is unclear.

2.3.5 Changing the behaviour of a social group

Networks may exist to link organisations which share the desire to influence culturally or socially prescribed patterns of behaviour. The benefits of participation in such processes to individual

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92 Ali, Saleem H. 'Shades of Green: NGO coalitions, mining companies and the pursuit of negotiating power' in Bendell, Jem ed. *Terms for Endearment: Business, NGOs and Sustainable Development* pp.79-95, Greenleaf Publishing, Sheffield UK 2000 p.94.
93 Fowler, Penny and Simon Heap 'Bridging Troubled Waters: The Marine Stewardship Council' in Bendell, Jem ed. *Terms for Endearment* pp.135-148, *op. cit.* p.148.

organisations are more diffuse than those which motivate organisations involved in networks designed to increase the influence of NGOs in inter-governmental decision-making.

The campaign against female genital mutilation (FGM) is an example of an international alliance involving a diverse range of organisations aiming to delegitimise a practice still considered socially acceptable in certain places. It includes the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Amnesty International (AI), the FGM Network, and Christian Solidarity International, as well as inter-governmental organisations such as the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNIFEM. The constituent elements of this network include international women's organisations for whom the issue is articulated as a manifestation of patriarchy and a rejection of female sexuality. For example, Caroline Coon uses FGM as evidence of the continuing relevance of feminism, and by implication rejects any suggestion of cultural relativism: 'I need to be a feminist because ... I can't bear to live on earth knowing that, at this moment, millions of girls are having their clitorises cut off. Feminism has grown out of a tradition of supporting other oppressed women across the world.'[94] The rejection of specificity may become problematic if it is thought to undermine local efforts to achieve change. The example of Senegal is instructive in this respect. In January 1999 a decision was taken by the Senegalese Parliament to outlaw FGM. This was applauded by a range of international NGOs and inter-governmental bodies. Carole Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director, said the action reflects African women's resolve to end 'a cruel and unacceptable practice which violates the right of all girls to free, safe and healthy lives'.[95]

The UN Non-Government Liaison Service report on this decision goes on to emphasise the complexity of the issue:

> since the Parliament's decision there has been a backlash from many traditional leaders, especially in northern Senegal. On 11 February InterPress Service (IPS) reported that the new law has undermined local efforts to stop female circumcision; it says women from 31 villages travelled to Dakar to explain why making FGM a crime at this time would not help abolish the practice. The law, according to local activists, is viewed as having been dictated by "outside" forces such as aid organizations and Northern governments, rather than having been presented for local debate. Many opponents of the procedure decline to use the word "mutilation," preferring to look at it as simply a health problem and supporting a strategy of education over criminalization.[96]

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94 *The Guardian* Section 2 London UK August 9 1999 p.7.
95 UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service 'Senegal Bans Female Genital Mutilation' *Go Between* 74, UN NGLS Geneva Switzerland April-May 1999.
96 *Ibid.*

There is clearly a difference between the operations of the international network in this context, and the model for incorporation of local experience and perspectives established by RIOD. Caroline Coon implies that the practice is so abhorrent and repressive that total opposition to FGM should be an intrinsic element of feminism, and indeed that it constitutes the strongest illustration of the continuing relevance of feminism today. Yet if this uncompromising stance were found to be counterproductive (as the IPS report suggests) how could an alternative approach to the issue be negotiated and established? Although the principles underlying the positions taken on FGM by the organisations mentioned are very similar, a concomitant principle of participatory democracy should be identified in this instance as a corollary to achieving societal change.

It is perhaps significant that international human rights networks place a strong emphasis on the practice of FGM as an extreme instance of violations of the rights of women which are evident in many other contexts. AI states that FGM is 'an extreme example of efforts common to societies around the world to manipulate women's sexuality, ensure their subjugation and control their reproductive functions'.[97] IPPF emphasises the need to ensure that international concern is consistent with the priorities of local activists:

> Historically, the issue of FGM has been avoided because of its sensitive nature, but currently there is an international and national momentum to openly address the issue. There is also an increasing recognition of the need to support local activists and share innovative grassroots initiatives which have succeeded in making some impact in eradicating FGM.[98]

Keck and Sikkink explore this tension in detail: they claim that the issue of FGM was particularly contentious around the time of the 1980 Copenhagen UN Conference on Women, but that subsequently attempts to delegitimise the practice were 'resituated within a broader campaign against violence against women', and that as a result 'it was defused and legitimized':

> Critics sometimes argue that transnational networks are vehicles for imposing concerns of Western states, foundations, or NGOs upon social movements in the third world. The violence frame helped women overcome this often sterile north-south debate by creating a new category: when wife battering or rape in the United States, female genital mutilation in Africa, and dowry death in India were all classified as forms of violence against women, women could interpret these as common situations and seek similar root causes.[99]

97 AI website: http://www.amnesty.se/women/289e.htm. Visited on 1 September 2001.
98 IPPF website: http://www.ippf.org/fgm/. Visited on 1 September 2001.
99 Keck, Margaret E, and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics op. cit.* 1998 p.197.

The involvement of AI in work on this issue highlights another factor of relevance. The organisation's work is primarily to identify, verify and publicise violations of human rights by governments, with a particular focus on the incarceration or silencing of political opponents. However, as the following quotation emphasises, the distinction this implies between public and private activities is arbitrary in many contexts:

> Numerous critiques have sought to demonstrate that traditional interpretations of international standards have created an artificial, hierarchical distinction between violations by state forces in the realm of public political activity and similar abuses in the "private" sphere. One of the results has been that the international legal regime has offered scant protection to women from systematic, grave and gender-based abuses inflicted on them by non-state actors. The public/private distinction overlooks the fact that systematic abuse in the "private" sphere has a public dimension, in so far as it arises from more or less officially sanctioned prejudices, discrimination or intolerance. It precludes these abuses from being considered as a human rights issue.[100]

If human rights violations can be located in the 'private sphere', and the international legal system offers little protection to individuals abused by non-state actors, clearly AI's mandate necessitates its involvement. Yet by challenging the activities of such non-state actors, AI could be understood to have exceeded its remit by taking a partisan position on a domestic political issue. This issue is particularly problematic for AI, in that its reputation depends to a large extent on rigorous application of a well-established set of procedures to maintain the credibility of its interventions. If the public/private distinction is blurred, does this necessitate some renegotiation of the organisation's activities? Krause and Knight describe such cases using what they term 'the umbrella of a "state/society perspective," signalling that the basic unit of analysis is not the state but the complex of social relationships that coalesce within and across states and are projected into the international dimension'.[101]

2.3.6 Supporting or creating individual members of the network

It could be considered self-evident that networks exist to support their members, but even so this constitutes a distinct objective from those outlined above. The extent of this support may be limited to provision of useful information or contacts. In other instances, participation in an international network confers considerable legitimacy and influence on national affiliates – members of the World

100 AI website *op. cit.*
101 Krause, Keith and W. Andy Knight eds. *State, Society, and the UN System: Changing perspectives on multilateralism* United Nations University Tokyo, Japan 1995 p.261.

Federation of United Nations Associations, for example, have recourse to an extensive list of organisations in pursuing their work and can appeal for more direct support if their own existence is threatened by a hostile government.

Networks may also create (or promote the creation of) members at local or national levels. Peter Wahl suggests that Oxfam International has taken this approach, supporting the creation of national affiliates in Germany and Québec, while Greenpeace has established new national partners based in Moscow and Beijing.[102] This serves to demonstrate the relevance of the issue(s) addressed, and by inference the relevance of the network itself, to a growing and diverse audience; it increases the capacity of the network as a whole to claim to articulate the views of members from around the world; and it meets the needs of participating organisations to have points of contact in an increasing number of countries.

2.3.7 Overlaps

The preceding section has outlined distinct objectives NGO networks exist to pursue, and sketched out some of the principal issues of contention arising for practitioners and academics in achieving or analysing collaborative mechanisms in these various contexts. Of particular significance in the elaboration of these objectives is the difficulty one would have in establishing any coherent schema for assessing the effectiveness of NGO networks. In place of the narrow formula for gauging political influence advanced by Bas Arts, we are confronted with a multiplicity of ways in which NGO participants, inter-governmental bodies, grassroots organisations and any other prospective beneficiaries of the networking process might measure its success. The examples cited also substantiate Nelson's emphasis on the *a priori* significance of negotiations on self-governance within NGO networks if any of the functions outlined are to be performed effectively.

It should also be acknowledged that considerable overlap is evident in practice between the different archetypes identified above. All of the networks cited as examples perform activities which could place them in at least one of the other categorisations. Again, this lends credence to the idea that

102 Wahl, Peter 'Globalisation From Beyond: Elements for a Future Strategy of NGOs in the Post-Rio Age' Paper presented at the World Economy and 'Ecology for Development Workshop *Beyond Rio? Perspectives of International Civil Society Five Years After Rio* Bonn 21-23 October 1997 [Available on the internet at http://www.comlink.apc.org/weed/env_dev/beyond1.htm - visited on 1 September 2001] See also the expansion of the network of national Friends of the Earth organisations - in 1982, Tom Burke wrote: 'Recruitment of new national bodies is not the specific responsibility of any part of FOEI and it is a clear policy of the organization that initiatives must originate from the country in question. In practice, FOE UK and FOE US have played the largest part in developing initial inquiries through to the point of formal application. FOE UK has recently played an important part in helping groups of people in Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea acquire the necessary confidence and expertise to found new organizations.' Burke, Tom 'Friends of the Earth and the Conservation of Resources' in Willetts, Peter ed. *Pressure Groups in the Global System: The Transnational Relations of Issue-Orientated Non-Governmental Organizations* pp.15-30, Frances Pinter London 1982 p.20.

measures of success for NGO networks resemble a complex web rather than a linear scale gauging external influence. If this revision to more prevalent models for assessing NGO effectiveness is conceded, one dimension which merits further consideration is when organisational limitations preclude pursuing multiple strategies simultaneously. The 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs suggests that time constraints for organisations participating in international meetings oblige them to strike a balance between lobbying governments and negotiating adequate systems for self-governance.[103] Similar choices may arise through decisions on the allocation of funding or staff expertise. Pursuit of one objective over another may arise as a result of deliberate strategising to determine the most promising means to an end (the work of RIOD, for example) or it may be determined by the wider context in which the network's activities take place (the MAI Coalition). It is unclear how these types of trade-offs are calculated, in that they require comparison between very different organisations and contexts. It is relevant to note here that precedence is by no means always given to influence over inter-governmental decision-making.

The anti-apartheid movement provides an illustration of overlaps between attempts to influence economic actors and activities intended to challenge social norms. Achievement of each of these two objectives may necessitate quite distinct strategies. For example, members of the Climate Action Network share the overarching objective of achieving a reduction in emissions of substances which disrupt the global climate to the point where long-term climatic destabilisation has been avoided. To this end, they may focus on the roles of different actors who contribute in some way to the problem. This may entail putting pressure on governments, individually or collectively, to enact legislation to ban particularly harmful activity or place a prohibitive cost on it. It may mean initiating public awareness campaigns, designed to educate the public and persuade them to alter their behaviour accordingly. NGOs may attempt to persuade companies to provide more environmentally friendly alternatives through pushing for more widespread availability and standardisation (the introduction of alternatives to chorofluorocarbons in aerosols, for example) or even through demonstrating that products which companies are reluctant to take up are economically viable (Greenpeace's 'Green Fridge', or various prototype electronic cars, for example).

The significant point is that these elements are not necessarily mutually reinforcing. Efforts to achieve change through public education may conceivably be undermined by the suggestion that alternative

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103 Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs *Democratic Global Civil Governance Report of the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs, op. cit.* p.5.

products or services could become available which would require no alteration in behaviour by consumers. Similarly, proscriptive legislation by governments may exacerbate hostility towards the environmental movement from the general public and from decision-makers in industry, and thereby adversely affect attempts to achieve societal change. In attempting to find the right mix, NGOs are confronted with conflicting pressures: on the one hand to co-ordinate in order to ensure that there is some coherence in their work in these different contexts; on the other to establish a clear profile for their own work by distancing the organisation from collaborative structures.[104] This can in turn result in an excessive emphasis on one particular aspect of achieving change to the detriment of others because this bolsters the individual organisation's standing.

2.4 Conflicts within International NGO Networks

The development of a broader conception of NGO influence in processes of global governance and the significance of networks in realising these diverse objectives have been the subjects of this chapter. We should now recognise that a diversity of aims, strategies and principles pursued or held by members of an NGO network also entails scope for divisions. The instances cited below illustrate tensions which can arise within NGO alliances:

2.4.1 Tension between Northern and Southern NGOs

The Norwegian ForUM (Forum for Environment and Development) held a seminar in 1995 on *NGOs' Role in Civil Society – Common or Opposing Interests?* Rita Krut summarises the conclusions from the event by emphasising structural tensions within the international NGO community:

> The view from the South presented at this seminar was clear: that Northern attitudes to the South and to Southern development issues and Southern civil society organizations are characterized by a mixture of sensationalism and romanticism designed to provoke feelings of guilt and charity. Neither the image nor the reaction are based on any understanding of the conditions of the South, and Northern interventions therefore simply perpetuate structural Southern underdevelopment and dependency.[105]

It should also be noted that in various contexts Southern NGOs play the leading role in determining positions taken by a larger body of organisations. Paul Nelson suggests that in negotiation of the

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104 Greenpeace International provides an example of the latter stance - see for example Krut, Rita *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making op. cit.* 'Historically ... Greenpeace has not favored coalitions and networks with other NGOs, is highly campaign driven, and highly effective at different times and at all points along the decision-making spectrum'.

replenishment of IDA 11 (the World Bank's International Development Association), Northern NGOs, particularly US-based organisations, which had been hostile towards the World Bank as a whole and had opposed the previous IDA round, deferred to their Southern colleagues' strong views on the need for support in replenishment.[106] Despite this, Southern NGOs have had to confront difficulties in gaining access to information; lack of access to their own government officials, and to those from donor countries; and preconceptions that their principal input relates to their domestic circumstances rather than deriving from their legitimacy as participants in international policy dialogues.[107]

Michael Edwards *et al.* suggest that, in certain contexts, this tension derives in some measure from the underlying competition between NGOs over limited funding available in the form of foreign aid from donor countries. The projected decline in official aid may be beneficial in creating the conditions for more constructive relations: 'The gradual replacement of foreign aid by a wider agenda of international co-operation makes it easier for NGOs and other civil society organisations to work together, without the distorting effects of contracts, conditions and unequal access to funding'.[108] Others have pointed to ideological distinctions which may prove more resilient, citing the charitable perspective of some Northern development organisations as inimical to the evolution of collaborative relations intended to empower the Southern partners to play an effective role in international policy deliberations.

2.4.2 Tension between local and global organisations

Tensions arise between organisations operating at different levels in two principal ways: first, if the 'macro' goal pursued by those focusing on 'global' issues is thought have adverse consequences at the local level by those working there; and second, if 'global' NGOs claim legitimacy through their role in representing broader groupings of NGOs but do not adequately communicate with this constituency. As noted earlier, changes in communications technology have rapidly altered notions of what is acceptable. It is now possible for geographically disparate organisations to consult extensively and exchange information and views almost simultaneously with their partners. As Gordenker and Weiss suggest, this makes possible a 'scaling up' of certain types of transnational activities from local levels

105 *Ibid.*
106 Nelson, Paul 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Effectiveness: Who Speaks for Whom in Transnational NGO Networks Lobbying the World Bank?', *op. cit.*
107 *Ibid.*

to the global level and 'scaling down' to involve grassroots organisations.[109] This may lead to the emergence of new institutional imperatives, changing the balance of influence within some international NGO networks to mirror the growing capacity of local or grassroots members to bring their perspectives to bear in international processes.

2.4.3 Tension over issues of principle

Increasing influence in inter-governmental deliberations may exacerbate differences on issues of principle not previously brought to the fore in relations between NGOs. US 'pro-life' organisations circulated leaflets during the 1996 Habitat II Conference in Istanbul which attempted to establish links between general statements of principle made during international conferences (notably the International Conference on Population and Development [1994] and the Fourth World Conference on Women [1995]) and specific legislation by US States and elsewhere on access to abortion services.[110] The inference was that the 'pro-choice' lobby had exerted undue influence over these international fora and that this had contributed to introduction of legislation which the authors opposed.[111] In effect, a domestic ideological dispute had been translated to the international level through the perceived influence of the UN in setting national agendas.

A similar process is evident in the leading role played by the US National Rifle Association (NRA) in the establishment in 1997 of an international umbrella organisation, the World Forum on the Future of the Sports Shooting Activities. A spokesperson for the NRA stated 'The hope of this organisation is that it will have the united voice of the shooting community, the gun-owning community. We're hopeful we can have influence at the UN and some influence with our own government and preclude some kind of treaty that might clamp down on firearms.'[112] The NRA has gained UN ECOSOC consultative status, and NRA delegates have been active in meetings of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. This has in turn led to discussions on the role of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO).

108 Edwards, Michael, David Hulme and Tina Wallace 'NGOs In A Global Future: Marrying Local Delivery To Worldwide Leverage' Conference Paper, Birmingham UK 1999. Available online at http://www.soc.titech.ac.jp/ngo/g-future.html. Visited on 1 September 2001.
109 Gordenker, Leon and Thomas G. Weiss 'Pluralizing Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions' op. cit. p.35.
110 Reported to the author by Felix Dodds, UNED-UK.
111 See for example Wilkins, Richard G. 'The Transformation of the Habitat II Agenda', Brigham-Young University Salt Lake City 1996. Available online at http://nauvoo.byu.edu/TheArts/Exhibitions/Habitat/main.cfm. Accessed on 3 January 2002.
112 'National Rifle Association is Turning to World Stage to Fight Gun Control' The New York Times, New York USA 2 April 1997. The NRA website states "While the actions of the UN do not have direct impact on U.S. law unless passed as a treaty by the UN General Assembly and ratified by the U.S. Senate, it is important to note that the UN can do a great deal to interfere with gun owners' rights by lending an appearance of legitimacy to oppressive anti-gun measures. It is clear that one of the goals of this effort is to demonize civilian ownership of guns and make strict regulation of firearms appear as the only acceptable alternative." NRA website: http://www.nraila.org. Visited on 1 September 2001.

Although CONGO is ostensibly a non-partisan alliance,[113] the fundamental differences which exist between the NRA and many of CONGO's members have led to discussions on the purpose of CONGO itself and whether it is possible to act impartially in dealings with such disparate organisations.[114]

2.4.4 Tension over strategies to achieve common ends

NGOs may take diametrically opposed positions despite having broadly compatible objectives. In 1997 a number of governments, most notably from the EU countries, supported negotiation of a global convention on forests. Some NGOs supported this objective, arguing that the process of negotiation would allow NGOs to have substantial influence over the commitments to be entered into. The Environmental Investigation Agency committed itself to 'ensure the rapid negotiation of a Global Forests Convention that will strictly regulate timber companies and protect forests'.[115] The majority of NGOs lobbying on these issues opposed negotiation of a Convention, which they feared would 'enshrine weak standards, favour commercial interests over conservation, and distract attention from the real action needed'.[116] Attempts to agree a common position on the proposed Convention during preparatory meetings for the UN General Assembly review of outcomes from the Rio Summit met with little success, and as a result there was no coherent lobbying position taken by NGOs as a whole.

2.4.5 Tension over relations with other actors

Although in some instances difficulties have occurred in relations between NGOs and trade unions or the scientific community, by far the most contentious interaction is with the private sector, and transnational corporations (TNCs) in particular. In a global survey of 133 NGOs conducted between October 1997 and January 1998, the nature of this relationship was clear:

113 'CONGO was set up in 1948 as a co-ordinating body, as a watchdog of NGO interests in the consultative system and as a framework for NGO co-operation in a number of fields of common interest' - Rice, Andrew E. and Cyril Ritchie 'Relationships between international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations: A Research and Policy Paper' pp.254-265, *Transnational Associations* vol. 47 No. 5 1995.

114 It is worth noting in passing that both the NRA and its principal opponents seek to portray the other as 'undemocratic', failing to comply with principles of accountability in their operations: Robert Lawson of the Non Proliferation and Disarmament Division of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs has ̶̶̶̶i̶d̶e̶n̶t̶i̶f̶i̶e̶d̶ ̶t̶h̶e̶ ̶N̶R̶A̶ ̶i̶n̶f̶l̶u̶e̶n̶c̶e̶ ̶o̶f̶ ̶o̶f̶f̶i̶c̶i̶a̶l̶s̶ ̶i̶n̶f̶l̶a̶t̶e̶d̶ ̶t̶h̶e̶ ̶v̶o̶i̶c̶e̶s̶ ̶a̶n̶d̶ ̶t̶a̶k̶e̶ ̶a̶d̶v̶a̶n̶t̶a̶g̶e̶ ̶o̶f̶ ̶w̶h̶a̶t̶ ̶i̶s̶ ̶a̶ ̶l̶e̶g̶a̶l̶ ̶e̶l̶e̶c̶t̶i̶o̶n̶ ̶s̶t̶r̶u̶c̶t̶u̶r̶e̶ ̶t̶o̶ ̶i̶n̶ ̶e̶f̶f̶e̶c̶t̶ ̶b̶r̶i̶b̶e̶ ̶c̶a̶n̶d̶i̶d̶a̶t̶e̶s̶ ̶t̶o̶ ̶g̶o̶ ̶a̶l̶o̶n̶g̶ ̶w̶i̶t̶h̶ their views' - NGO Committee on Disarmament Conference 'Civil Strife: Light Weapons and Land Mines' 1997. By contrast, the Champaign County Rifle Association has published a document entitled 'The NGOs' Secret Agenda' on its website which documents discussions between NGOs and governments to initiate a global campaign to criminalise ownership of small arms. The author claims that this 'shows you how the governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work hand-in-hand together behind the scenes. However, this collusion does not become overt until public ceremonies are held signing new gun-control bills into law.' CCG website: http://www.chambana.com/~CCG/ngoagenda.htm. Visited on 1 September 2001.

115 EIA website: http://www.eia-international.org/Campaigns/Forests/index.html. Visited on 1 September 2001.

116 Osborn, Derek and Tom Bigg *Earth Summit II: Outcomes and Analysis* Earthscan, London UK 1998 p.44.

- 41% thought that the current relationship between TNCs and NGOs was antagonistic. 47% did not even think a relationship exists. 64% of participating NGOs felt powerless in their dealings with TNCs.

- 62% believed that global companies do not care about ethical standards of corporate conduct.

- 64% thought that global companies do not play by the rules of fair competition under existing legal and social constraints.[117]

This level of concern is evident in the work of international environmental NGOs. The Environment Liaison Centre International drafted a document entitled 'How to Develop a Code of Conduct for Voluntary Organizations' following the Rio Summit in 1992 which was constructed around distinctions between NGOs and other actors:

> A VO Code of Conduct will raise awareness on the function and responsibilities of Voluntary Organizations in society which diverge from those of business, industry and governments. Industry is driven by the principle of profit and sees people as consumers whose purchasing power is to be tapped for the remuneration of invested capital. The modern state is driven by governmental control and people are perceived as citizens with democratic rights whose votes are needed to legitimize the exercise of state power.[118]

Debates within the UN Commission on Sustainable Development NGO Steering Committee on the role of industry are addressed in Chapter 4. Follow-up to the Rio Summit poses a particular definitional problem in that the private sector is designated as one of nine 'major groups' of civil society, which places industry as equivalent to NGOs, trade unions, local government and other sectors. The inference that all these groups share broad objectives in attempts to achieve sustainable development have been challenged in various instances. The Women's Environment and Development Organization reports that women's health organisations participating in a preparatory meeting for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women adopted a resolution banning the participation of transnational corporations from their caucus meetings and asked that those organisations representing the infant formula, pharmaceutical, tobacco, pesticides and other industries meet in their own caucus in order to ensure that public interest NGOs were free to

117 Enderle, Georges and Glen Peters *A Strange Affair? The Emerging Relationship Between NGOs and Transnational Companies* Price Waterhouse London 1998 p.23.
118 *Environment Liaison Centre International* 'How to Develop a Code of Conduct for Voluntary Organizations' paper prepared by ELCI, post-Rio 1992 [undated]. Reproduced in Appendix 2.

meet, reach consensus, set policy, plan and strategize without the presence and influence of organisations formed to protect the financial and business interests of their members. One NGO stated 'it is unconscionable that people-centered groups should have to share their one channel to policy makers with profit-making concerns'.[119]

NGOs may also stigmatise development of working relations with governments, which is sometimes characterised as 'co-option'. Tatsuro Kunugi contrasts the lack of consultation by governments in the formulation of Programmes of Action at international conferences and elsewhere with subsequent attempts to engage NGOs:

> When it comes to the implementation of the programmes of action ... governments tend to rely on the cooperation of NGOs whether directly or through the UN or other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). This tendency often entails the risks of co-optation and the loss of NGOs' special characteristics, comparative advantages and autonomy.[120]

Because of their role as intermediaries between inter-governmental bodies and NGOs, networks have frequently been the context in which debates on the form and extent of relations with other actors have taken place. Differences between members of international networks on these issues may reflect their distinct origins or understanding of their role in opposing or working with representatives of industry or government. National affiliates to Friends of the Earth International have divergent views on such questions, and increasing disquiet has been expressed by Southern organisations at the more collaborative stance taken by their Northern partners.[121]

2.4.6 Tension over organisational issues

Divisions may also occur over pragmatic aspects of the network's activities. This might include the siting of headquarters, responsibilities and supervision of staff, the production of newsletters or other publications by the network, and matters of internal accountability and representation.

119 Women's Environment and Development Organization 'Transnational Corporations in the United Nations: Using or Abusing their Access?', Primer No. 2, New York USA 1995. Quoted in Krut, Rita *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making, op. cit.*
120 Knight, W. Andy, Martha Schweitz, Kaoru Kurusu and John McLaughlin 'World NGO Conference - Report of the First Preparatory Meeting Held at UNU Headquarters', Tokyo Japan 23-24 September 1996. Introduction by Tatsuro Kunugi. Available online at http://www.unu.edu/unupress/ngo-conference.html. Accessed on 3 January 2002.
121 Based on a conversation with a leading FOEI representative.

• Table 2.3 Problems which limit co-operation among NGO networks

Problems which Limit Co-operation Among NGO Networks (From Peter Padbury 'International Cooperation among NGO Networks'[122])
There [are] a number of problems that limit the capacity of NGOs and their networks to work together: Competition: NGOs are an independent and highly competitive group so cooperation does not come naturally. The fact that media attention and fundraising dollars go to the groups that get the spotlight can make cooperation harder. Limited Capacity: Most NGOs are over-committed and over-worked. They have limited capacity for cooperation. Funding: Limited financial resources are a fact of life for most NGO work and a factor in many of the problems outlined here. Unprepared: NGOs are unprepared and ineffective players in the policy dialogue. Often, we do not do the research, analysis, or policy proposals or built the constituency – to take advantage of opportunities in an effective and timely fashion. Accountability: Weak accountability and other 'networking diseases' are problems that can cascade through many networks. Many networks are not as strong as they could be because the member NGOs do not put time and resources to make the network work effectively. When the capacity or the commitment of the members is low, the capacity of the network to collaborate with other networks is low. Networks with low accountability are a liability for everyone who works with them. Identity: Numerous differences (language, culture, history, values, issues, budget, and access to technology, etc.) make cooperation difficult at the best of times. Often all that unites NGOs is we are reacting to different aspects of the same global forces. When we are unclear about our analysis and our own identity, it is hard to work together. No constituency: In many countries, particularly in the North, NGOs and their networks have lost (or not built?) the public and political constituency to validate and support their work. Limits on human rights: in some countries these limit network possibilities to cooperate nationally and internationally.

In his analysis of relations between NGOs and the World Bank, Manuel Chiriboga emphasises the differences between community-based groups, NGO networks, transnational alliances or coalitions, and liaison and support organisations.[123] Having established the distinct roles played by each of these groupings, Chiriboga suggests four sets of variables which should be assessed when considering the work of international NGO alliances:

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122 Padbury, Peter 'International Cooperation among NGO Networks', op.cit.

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- an adequate balance among the different arenas in which global campaigns are held: local, national and international, with adequate information flow among the said arenas and with shared guidance.

- an adequate balance between action from the masses and specialised influence by specialised NGO groups. Not giving adequate attention to this can lead to a dependence solely on NGOs' technical capacities, normally those from the North.

- a balance between confrontation and negotiation perspectives with the Multilateral Development Banks, in which both perspectives help achieve the desired reform objectives. Experience shows that negotiation tends to be more successful when there are more radical campaigns with more inclusive agendas.

- balance is also required between the short, medium and long term objectives, where special attention should be given to the need for creating more stable alliances; to develop the capacity of groups at other levels so that they can understand and undertake this type of action; and, above all, to build a base of social support to achieve a more democratic and inclusive vision of development.

2.5 Conclusions

The functioning of NGO networks has considerable significance to existing and emerging systems of global governance. This extends well beyond their role as channels by which information and lobbying positions are channeled from constituent groups to inter-governmental institutions, or as the means by which the decisions and priorities established in these contexts are disseminated to a broader audience for whom they are of some relevance. These two broad functions could be understood as the 'lowest common denominator' which are accepted in assessments of this subject. This more restrictive interpretation of the impact of NGO networks is apparent in analysis by a number of international relations theorists, and is evident also in UN documents which establish the terms for NGO participation in UN processes such as the Commission on Sustainable Development. However, as demonstrated in the earlier consideration of the objectives NGO networks exist to achieve, even those

123 Chiriboga, Manuel 'NGOs and the World Bank: Lessons and Challenges' paper prepared for the Montreal International Forum, Montreal Canada September 1999.

networks which could reasonably be characterised as established to perform one or both of these accepted functions also confront questions of self-governance. I have suggested that success in tackling these challenges is a critical determinant of their capacity to function as networks in any of the ways essayed earlier.

A further modification to the prevalent model of networking therefore opens the internal operations of the network as a relevant area for analysis. Tensions that exist between different 'nodes' of the network can only be resolved through an effective system of self-governance, which in turn can be the impetus for a re-evaluation of shared principles, and of the strategies and objectives which participants in the network agree to pursue. This capacity to respond to the collective concerns of its members is also the network's principal claim to legitimacy. To the extent that NGOs are recognised as credible representatives of civil society as a whole, networks such as the MAI Coalition can be understood as a forum for dialogue between a wide range of perspectives which results in the articulation of the common concerns of a much broader swathe of society in international deliberations.

To what extent do international NGO networks depend upon the existence of formal systems of governance for their contextual relevance? A number of the examples cited earlier indicate that external determinants of relevance may be found in the activities of private companies (the International Baby Food Action Network) or of sectors of society (the campaign against female genital mutilation). In these instances the absence of a fixed inter-governmental context did not hamper development of effective international NGO alliances. Yet it is also valid to identify limits to the capacity for networks to function without a clear external focus. The 1995 Manila meeting of networks attempted to elaborate principles for collaboration and develop a 'meta-network' which could link work underway in a range of areas, providing practical advantages to participants (access to information and expertise; ability to reach a large number of diverse organisations) and the capacity to extend debate on issues of principle by linking the contexts in which such dialogue was occurring. Peter Padbury's analysis of 'Problems which Limit Cooperation Among NGO Networks' [see Table 2.3] derives in large measure from difficulties in establishing an effective network after the Manila meeting.

Exposing the internal workings of international NGO networks to scrutiny also reveals conflicts which cannot readily be resolved through negotiation. Divisions on issues of principle or on relations with governments or the private sector may constitute an unbridgeable schism which could undermine the

integrity of the network. For example, a procedure for establishing a code of conduct for voluntary organisations was developed by the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI) in part as a result of a disagreement with the International Facilitating Committee (IFC) which was established to guide non-governmental preparations for the Rio Summit.[124] ELCI rejected the organising principles of the IFC, that voluntary organisations and industry could be considered as elements of the 'independent sector'. This led to a split within the network which had a significant impact on the role played collectively by NGOs in the Rio Summit. This dispute will be explore more fully in the next chapter, but it is relevant to note in this context that ELCI's production of principles for a Code of Conduct suggests that the IFC had violated widely understood ethical or procedural givens, and that a formalisation of these shared principles would lessen the likelihood of similar conflicts arising in future.

Conflicts within NGO networks are also evident between organisations operating in different contexts, or at different levels. This is most apparent in divisions between Northern and Southern NGOs, and between local, grassroots and global NGOs. Whilst inequality within the network, favouring global and Northern organisations, may be readily acknowledged, this does not necessarily result in action to remedy the problem. Edwards, Hulme and Wallace present this as a threat to the wider credibility of networks, and as a pertinent test of their legitimacy:

> Channels of communication and networking are far more open to those in the North, and to well-resourced NGOs in the South. Few are prepared, it seems, to back their support for broader participation with the financial resources required to promote the voices of smaller organisations and marginalised groups. Unless this changes, public questioning of NGO legitimacy and accountability will continue to mount, fatally undermining the credibility that NGOs will need if they are to play a part in global debates.[125]

Again, this constitutes a shift in the means by which to assess the validity of a network. According to Edwards et al. credibility is dependent upon evidence of efforts to achieve greater equality in communication and interaction between NGOs and thereby ensuring a voice for marginalised groups in international fora. Notions of equity in relations between NGOs operating at the international level must be understood to constitute a counterpoint to prevailing inequalities. As such, actions which demonstrate these principles in practice are promulgating new norms, with much wider applicability. The obverse is also true – by promoting the removal of inequalities in theory, but neglecting to pursue

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124 Environment Liaison Centre International 'How to Develop a Code of Conduct for Voluntary Organizations' op. cit.
125 Edwards, Michael, David Hulme and Tina Wallace 'NGOs in a Global Future: Marrying Local Delivery to Worldwide Leverage' op. cit.

these objectives where it is possible, NGO networks undermine their capacity to achieve change in the norms governing international affairs.

It was suggested earlier that international NGO networks might act as the fora within which dialogues on rights, standards and other issues of principle are conducted between organisations which confront problems arising from processes of globalisation. The following were among the means proposed by which to gauge the extent to which NGO networks were playing this role:

- The development of decision-making procedures

- The ceding of authority to the network by its members

- Debates on issues of principle

- Links with other networks on issues of common concern

Each of these elements is evident to some extent in the examples considered. By demonstrating the range of associational structures established by NGOs, and the benefits and conflicts which derive from or arise within these, it should now be apparent that NGO networks often play a countervailing role to the negative impacts of globalisation. However, it should also be noted that in most instances, NGOs have not invested international networks with extensive authority to pursue the above activities beyond a narrow application in a particular policy context. As the aftermath of the Manila meeting demonstrates, organisational and conceptual limitations impede more comprehensive collaboration, · even when the benefits of strengthening and formalising mutual commitments are widely acknowledged.

Chapter 3:

NGO Networks and the Rio Summit

I think that my visceral reaction against the name 'Earth Summit' comes from the series of images that the phrase recalls. ... The shape that 'summit' brings to mind for me is a triangle or pyramid: the few at the top and the masses at the bottom. In the case of the 'Earth Summit', my mind's eye displays a picture of several dozen heads of state all gathered on the last several metres of a mountain peak. The slopes are littered by exhausted diplomatic 'bearers' carrying boxes full of conference documents and briefing papers. Further down the slopes you have the gathered representatives of the civil society, waiting for the decisions to be made and revealed to us below.[1]

3.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the relevance of the issues presented in the previous chapter to the activities of civil society organisations in the Rio Summit process. It presents an extensive range of empirical materials and considers the functions, the effectiveness and the limitations of the principal NGO networks active in the preparations for UNCED.

As a detailed 'case study' exploring the principal themes of the thesis as a whole, this chapter and the next address official perspectives on the significance of engaging a wide range of societal actors and the conceptual struggles and conflicting priorities evident in the work of the principal NGO networks active during preparations for the Rio Summit and subsequently. They explore tensions between the rationale of sustainable development propagated by the UNCED Secretariat, based on the importance of dialogue and consensus between different actors, and the oppositional politics prevalent among many environment and development NGOs, who believed that systemic injustices resulting in social inequality and environmental degradation should be identified and redressed.

In the current chapter, I argue that all of the principal NGO networks began by prioritising influence over inter-governmental decision-making, and came to place an increasing importance on dialogue

and interaction between civil society actors. This is particularly evident in the negotiation of 'Alternative Treaties' at the Rio Summit, which are presented not as a critique of the official UNCED agreements, but rather as a set of commitments to actions which could be achieved by NGOs acting in collaboration. There is also evidence of the limitations of these activities, which suggest that there are inherent problems for international NGO networks attempting to facilitate agreement on ideological issues.

Opinion on the value and the legacy of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)[2] is sharply divided. The Ecologist's scathing critique of UNCED characterises it as a manifestation of 'free market environmentalism', evident in efforts to place economic value on the environment and in the use of development policies as the means by which to achieve further enclosure of previously common resources.[3] By contrast, former Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers claims that 'Rio and Brazil have become milestones on the path of men to one world',[4] while Lawrence Arturo of the Baha'i International Community Office of the Environment goes even further:

> The Earth Summit and the Global Forum represented a discernible shift in conceptualizing the interrelated problems of environment and development. A new global vision can be seen emerging from this process. The need for the unity of the peoples and nations of the world has begun to be discussed by governments, NGOs and others. Many now see this as the foundation for the creation of a sustainable future. Ultimately, this will prove to be Rio's most significant contribution to world civilization.[5]

Statements by some of the principal architects of the Summit indicate frustration at the lack of progress in certain key areas which is tempered by the sense that significant change has been achieved. Thus Gro Harlem Brundtland writes 'We owe it to the world to be frank about what we have achieved here: Progress in many fields, too little progress in most fields, and no progress at all in some fields ... But the direction of where we are heading will have been set'.[6]

1 Goree VI, Langston James ("Kimo") 'Summiteers, Sherpas – and the Rest' *Crosscurrents* PrepCom2: No. 02, 26-28 March, 1991. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM produced by The Third World Institute, Montevideo 1995.
. 2 I have used the terms UNCED, the Earth Summit and the Rio Summit interchangeably throughout.
3 The Ecologist *Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons* Earthscan, London 1993. See also Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger *The Earth Brokers: Power, Politics and World Development* Routledge, London 1994: 'the outcome [of UNCED] is a new push for more environmentally destructive industrial development' p.10.
4 Quoted in *One Country, newsletter of the Baha'i International Community* vol.2 issue 4 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
5 *Ibid.*
6 Quoted in El-Ashry, Mohammed 'Reflections on UNCED' in Centre for Our Common Future *Rio Reviews 1992* COCF, Geneva 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*

The Rio Summit has also provoked strong differences of opinion on the value of attempts by NGOs to

create or strengthen collaborative mechanisms at the global level. Tony Gross of the Brazilian NGO

Forum presents these alliances as 'fundamental' to the achievement of progress:

> The search for sustainable development in any one country cannot be made in isolation. What happens at a global level affects and conditions the opportunities for the resolution of each country's individual situation. For this reason citizens' alliances at a global level are fundamental. The building of equitable, transparent and mutually supportive relations between different networks in the run-up to 1992 will not only maximize input in the UNCED process, but will be the foundation for a new era of cooperation.[7]

This perspective is supported by Chip Lindner of the Centre for Our Common Future:

> we have to find a way to move from confrontation through dialogue to cooperation; and we have to get all the players at the table. It is no longer good enough to be critical. Each of us has to accept a share of the responsibility to do something. And we all have to have the humility to recognize that our solutions are not necessarily the only ones or ultimately the right ones. The world works inter-relatedly and we have to work inter-relatedly.[8]

By contrast, Chatterjee and Finger consider that the imposition of a working structure which obliged

NGOs to form alliances lessened their impact and made it easier for their concerns to be marginalised:

> NGO coalitions ... organized NGOs to speak with one voice, applying the rationale that since we are all in the same boat, everybody should make his or her contribution to global management. And in order to achieve this, money was willingly provided by business and foundations. As a result of this 'facilitating' process, business and industry, which do share a common culture and working methods, came out strengthened, while the culturally diverse environment and development movement diluted its inherent strength stemming from its very diversity and unique approach to local situations.[9]

Four principal areas of contention emerge from these assessments which are of relevance to a

consideration of collaboration between NGOs at the global level:

- First, whether UNCED should be understood as a justification for 'business as usual',

  a radical reappraisal of established practice by governments and others, or something in

7 Gross, Tony member of the Executive Secretariat of the Preparatory Forum of Brazilian NGOs for UNCED 'Guest Editorial' in Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.3 COCF, Geneva December 1990. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, op. cit.

8 Interviewed in Lerner, Steve *Earth Summit: Conversations with Architects of an Ecologically Sustainable Future* Common Knowledge Press, Bolinas USA 1991 p.242.

9 Chatterjee and Finger, *op. cit.* p.170. UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong provided a clear example of this perspective at the UNCED PrepCom's organisational session in March 1990: 'The broad challenge of the Conference is to promote acceptance and fulfilment by all countries - by their governments, their citizens, by business and industry - of their respective responsibilities to work for a sustainable future and to modify accordingly their patterns of production and consumption in the interests of present and future generations.' Quoted in Centre for Our Common Future *Brundtland Bulletin* No.7, COCF Geneva March 1990 p.1.

between. If the former is accepted, then NGOs with transformative agendas and progressive norms could be construed to have had insufficient impact on the process;

- Second, whether the work of international NGO coalitions and networks (which undoubtedly increased in number and profile at the time) is central to future efforts to solve some of the problems addressed at the Summit or whether these should be considered at best irrelevant, at worst a further barrier for others with more radical agendas to scale;

- Third, whether NGO networks in this context have functioned as 'horizontal' equitable structures or as hierarchical systems of management;

- Finally, whether alliances between NGOs strengthen or weaken their individual and cumulative ability to transform systems of global governance.

One striking example of these distinct perspectives is in a book jointly authored by Michael McCoy and Patrick McCully entitled *The Road from Rio: An NGO Action Guide to Environment and Development*. The two wrote separate sections of the book and reach fundamentally different conclusions about UNCED: McCoy states that the Summit's remit 'was to prove to be the most comprehensive social and economic agenda ever set before the UN in its 47 year history',[10] while McCully concludes that '[t]he success of the corporate lobbyists in blocking any attempt within the Summit to criticize their role in environmental destruction, or to subject them to international regulation, provides a vivid illustration of where power lies in the New World Order'.[11] Their assessment of the significance of NGO involvement is equally divergent. McCoy writes '[The] development of an embryonic, independent, international "movement for sustainability" was in evidence throughout the Earth Summit in Rio'.[12] McCully has a rather different interpretation:

> most environment and development groups got involved in the Summit in the hope that it would give them a part in future decision making. But they failed to think about whose interests the process would serve. The lack of analysis over the relative power and interests of the different players – governments, international agencies, corporations and NGOs – led to many

10 McCoy, Michael and Patrick McCully *The Road from Rio: An NGO Action Guide to Environment and Development* p.10, International Books, Den Haag the Netherlands 1993.
11 *Ibid.* p.89.
12 *Ibid.* p.17.

holding naive hopes that as all shared a supposed "common future" all would be equal in the decision-making process.[13]

The schism indicated by these differences is broadly between sceptics and enthusiasts – those who question both the ideological underpinning and the transformative capacity of the Rio Summit and its outcomes, and those who accept these as valid and effective. In considering the events and ideas developed in the UNCED process it will be necessary to refer to both analyses. It is therefore useful to develop these two perspectives further at the outset.

3.1.1 Sceptics

In his 1981 assessment of the 'identity, role and function' of NGOs at the United Nations, Chiang Pei-heng identifies an NGO élite which played a restrictive role in relations between NGOs and the UN:

> The tendency of many among the [NGO] leadership to distort, ignore, or suppress minority opinions perhaps underscores an unarticulated view that democratic processes are too time consuming, inefficient, incoherent, and even an obstacle to the performance of the "real" work of NGOs (and the UN). This tendency, moreover, assumes that NGO (or other) leadership élites, like governments, do not themselves need what, in the earliest and still a major school of thought within the democratic tradition, has been considered necessary for the health of the body politic: the provision and protection of legitimate means for dissent, opposition, alternative views, and minority opinions, in recognition that the majority, though it must prevail, may not be necessarily right.[14]

Chiang also emphasises that a functional approach to international affairs was pushing NGOs to consider their role as non-political:

> There seems to be a real danger that NGOs will be pressured into assimilation into the gigantic, monolithic, and technocratic world administration run by a coalition of technocrats and experts consisting of members of IGOs and NGOs, from Western, socialist, and developing countries, who claim to be the collective repository of the truth (nonpolitical and nonideological) and keepers of a new universal morality based on technological imperatives.[15]

Some of these concerns are also evident in analyses of the interaction of NGOs and the United Nations in work on sustainable development issues in the period preceding, during and following the Rio Summit in 1992. Chiang suggests that broad consensus existed between officials (from both the UN and governments) and NGO leaders over the appropriate course of action in given circumstances. Recognition of opposing perspectives or of ideological challenges to the prevailing apolitical ethos

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13 *Ibid.* p.95.
14 Chiang Pei-heng *Non-governmental Organizations at the United Nations: Identity, Role and Function* Praeger Publishers, New York USA 1981 p.246.

governing the operations of the UN became increasingly tokenistic. Comparable criticisms have been made of relations between NGOs and the UN in the UNCED process. Juan Jose Consejo's analysis provides a clear echo of Chiang's concerns:

> The voices that were most clearly heard were those of reformers, from both North and South. In the speeches of these global technicians and administrators, the Earth was turned into a spaceship, living beings into natural resources, areas of wilderness into parks and reservations and rural communities into marginal populations. Thanks to them, development was rejuvenated by the mask of sustainability, and was even joined in holy matrimony with environmentalism.[16]

Peter Doran adds that the 'ascendant ideology of global environmental management' is not value-free, but reproduces 'the values and interests of existing international institutions and their most powerful members'.[17] This has the further effect of marginalising and disenfranchising 'diverse and competent communities of knowledge which embrace numerous ways of understanding, perceiving, experiencing and defining reality, including relations between people and their environment'.[18]

The Ecologist's assertion that UNCED should be understood as 'free market environmentalism' was noted earlier. The principal resistance identified in this analysis comes from local communities reclaiming and defending the 'commons' which are theirs by right and which are undermined by new global models of environmental management and economic development.[19] 'Environmental groups' operating at the global level, by contrast, were generally positive about UNCED: 'credibility has been achieved (some even having seats on government delegations) and their concerns are no longer marginalized. They are now recognized as major players themselves.'[20] As in Chiang's analysis, this constitutes assimilation. International NGOs were satisfied that their own credibility had been enhanced and did not challenge the fundamental precepts of UNCED. Patrick McCully differs in that he concludes that 'most environmental activists left Rio with a strong sense that the Summit had

15 *Ibid*, p.284.
16 Consejo, Juan Jose 'The Twilight of the Environmentalist Era' Instituto de la Naturaleza y la Sociedad, Oaxaca Mexico. Posted on electronic conference ngonet, July 1992. This and subsequent references to electronic conferences can be found on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM produced by The Third World Institute, Montevideo 1995.
17 Doran, Peter 'Earth, power, knowledge: towards a critical environmental politics' in Macmillan, John and Andrew Linklater eds. *Boundaries in Question: new directions in International Relations* pp.193-211, Pinter Publishers, London 1995 p.193.
18 *Ibid*, p.201.
19 The Ecologist *Whose Common Future?* pp.172 - 195, *op. cit.* Norwegian activist Gunnar Album's analysis should also be noted: 'They [Governments] should be discussing the roots of what is leading us to these problems. But they are not. All they are talking about is monitoring and managing. This notion of global management is based on a mistaken understanding of how the world functions. It is based on a mechanical model where you can foresee the results of everything you do. This model expects that if you have a good monitoring system you can compensate for problems by turning a little wheel here and pushing a lever there. But nature and human societies do not function like that. So over the last 50 years we have been able to see that these managing and monitoring systems have not been able to foresee the results of what they are doing.' Gunnar Album, interviewed in Lerner, Steve *Earth Summit: Conversations with Architects of an Ecologically Sustainable Future* Common Knowledge Press Bolinas USA 1991 p.79.
20 *Ibid.* p.1.

failed'.[21] However, the straws of comfort they are able to take away are found in 'the fact that they were granted the right to participate in official global environmentalism'.[22]

3.1.2 Enthusiasts

Significant differences between the period considered by Chiang and the early 1990s should also be recognised. Michael McCoy suggests that the dominance of Northern NGOs in international conferences and in the regular work of the UN had been challenged by involvement of Southern organisations in two Special Sessions of the UN General Assembly to address the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) over four years from 1986 to 1990.[23] The links and expertise developed by Southern NGOs through this work were subsequently channelled into the preparations for UNCED.[24] McCoy presents this as an example of significant change in the relative influence of Northern and Southern NGOs, which in turn had a beneficial impact in the UNCED process:

> At UNPAAERD African NGOs spent four years monitoring their own governments and the UN development bureaucracies. This helped them develop an extremely active contingent of Pan-African representatives, which then went on to play an important leadership role among international NGO activists in the two-year Summit process ... During UNPAAERD African NGO travel funds and other costs for NGO participation were raised from UNDP, the Canadian and European governments and administered by the UN Non-Government Liaison Service (NGLS). This pattern foreshadowed similar arrangements made among Southern NGOs, NGLS, UNDP, and Northern government funders during the Summit preparation process and at the Earth Summit itself.[25]

Thus the Rio process brought new types of organisations to a working relationship with the UN system, and further developed the expertise and the influence of those which had previously been peripheral. Although previous summits and conferences had established rules of procedure which allowed the accreditation of NGOs not in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social

21 McCoy, Michael and Patrick McCully *The Road from Rio, op. cit.* p.95.
22 *Ibid.* p.95.
23 The 13th UN General Assembly Special Session, May - June 1986, generated the UNPAAERD.
24 In the aftermath of UNPAAERD, the UN Economic Commission for Africa organised the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, in Arusha, Tanzania from 12 to 16 February 1990. Writing three years after the event, Salime Lone emphasised its significance for a broader understanding of relations between the UN and NGOs, and between Northern and Southern organisations: 'The [Arusha] conference ... was unique for a United Nations meeting, its proceedings jointly chaired by the RGA and the non-governmental organization (NGO) community, and indeed dominated in large part by the latter, who sat under the banner of "The People" in the central part of the conference hall. This provided the first clear indication of how far indigenous African NGOs have come in asserting their presence as a force for change and progress. For decades, when people talked of NGOs in Africa, the names that automatically came to mind were Oxfam, Save the Children, CARE, etc. But with the help of Nordic and Canadian NGO partners in particular, African grassroots groups have been able to become more active players at both the national and international level.' Lone, Salime 'New Directions in Africa' *People First* vol.2 no.1 UN Economic Commission for Africa Addis Ababa, Ethiopia January 1993 p.1.
25 *Op. cit.*, p.19.

Council (ECOSOC), those organisations accredited to participate in preparations for UNCED were subsequently granted the right to ECOSOC recognition. This constituted a significant break with previous practice. The consequences of these changes are considered in the next chapter.

The contemporary analyses cited above recognise changes which had occurred in the years preceding UNCED but differ in attributing significance to these. Examples of developments which may be construed to have affected the work of NGOs in the international context during this period include the following:

- The overall number and the proportion of NGOs from Southern countries in consultative status with ECOSOC was significantly higher by 1993 than it had been a decade earlier. Did this reduce the likelihood of a small clique of developed country NGOs dominating structures for interaction with the UN?

- Rapidly improving means of communication became widely available during the period in question. Did these make organisations with representatives in New York or Geneva more accountable to their broader constituencies, or are other factors more significant in these relationships?

- An influx of environmental NGOs and local and national organisations onto the ECOSOC NGO roster occurred as a result of the opportunity offered to them after the Rio Summit. What impact did this have on global environmental governance?

- New associational structures were created and existing ones revised to meet the particular requirements generated by the official Summit and by parallel NGO activities. How should the work of these coalitions be assessed, and what lessons can be drawn which are more generally applicable to the work of NGO networks operating internationally?

These questions are addressed more fully in the next chapter, which considers events after the Rio Summit. At this point it is relevant to note their emergence during preparations for UNCED.

3.2 The Rio Summit in brief

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3-14 June 1992. It has been estimated that the Rio Summit was attended by 103 Heads of Government and State;[26] official Government delegates from 178 countries;[27] 761 officially accredited non-governmental organisations (516 from developed countries and 230 from developing countries);[28] and 8 749 from the mass media (roughly half from Brazil).[29] Approximately 15 000 NGO representatives were present in Rio during the Conference, most participating in the parallel Global Forum.[30] At the conclusion of the two weeks of the Summit the assembled dignitaries were invited to sign the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and to acknowledge the agreed text of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Statement of Forest Principles, and Agenda 21 (forty chapters intended to serve as a blueprint for the achievement of sustainable development). Behind the scenes, last-minute negotiations were still underway to finalise text in certain particularly contentious areas while horse trading over institutional arrangements for follow-up to UNCED and over other issues to be tackled in the aftermath of the Summit took place in the margins of the official events. NGO participants were present (some as members of official delegations, others in their own right), although their capacity to follow the more contentious negotiations were strictly limited.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Rio a parallel series of events was taking place. The NGO Global Forum was separated from the official negotiations in the Rio Centro conference centre by 40 kilometers and by Brazilian traffic which meant that the journey typically took over two hours. Thus although there was some interaction between the inter-governmental process and the NGO events in Flamengo Park, there was significantly less cross-over than the Forum organisers had envisaged. The organisations present at the Forum ranged from the World Bank to the International Baby Food Action Network, from the Brazilian Centre for the Defence of Children's and Adolescents' Rights to the Global Heart Project. The majority of delegates and visitors to the Global Forum were Brazilian. Yet despite this diversity and the confusion it

26 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Concludes at Rio de Janeiro' UN Information Centre Press Release, 14 July 1992.
27 Chasek, Pam 'NGO Strategies on the Road from Rio' in *Network* '92 No.18 *op. cit.*, June / July 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
28 Figures from Alvaro Santos, Co-ordinator of Works and Transportation of the Brazilian National Work Group, quoted in 'Facts and Figures on UNCED', UNCED / DPI Press Release, 12 June 1992.
29 *Ibid.*
30 UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service 'Briefing for NGOs on UNCED' *E & D File* No.30, NGLS Geneva July 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM *op. cit.*

inevitably caused, there was a focus for organisations willing to discuss shared concerns and negotiate common positions on these issues. The International NGO Forum (INGOF) was established in the preparations for the Summit to provide the space within which dialogue between NGOs could take place. Thirty-two Alternative Treaties were negotiated under the auspices of INGOF.[31] These were intended to provide an analysis of problems and some concrete ideas of actions NGOs could take to remedy these. Discussions also took place on ways in which dialogue and collaboration between NGOs could be strengthened following UNCED, using the Alternative Treaties as the focus for attempts to build trust and solidarity between organisations. It is useful to outline the framework of events leading up to and including UNCED at the outset in order to contextualise the issues addressed subsequently.

3.3 Official Preparations for UNCED

Both of these showpiece events should be understood as the culmination of a formal preparatory process lasting two years and of a sequence of meetings and less formal discussions and exchanges of ideas stretching back further still. The World Commission on Environment and Development, more commonly referred to as the Brundtland Commission, was convened by the UN General Assembly in 1983 and produced its report *Our Common Future* in 1987. This included recommendations to hold regional follow-up conferences within an appropriate period after presentation of the report to the UN General Assembly. These would be followed, some time before the end of the century, by an international conference to review progress and to 'set benchmarks and to maintain progress within the guidelines of human needs'.[32] In 1989 UN General Assembly Resolution 44/228 initiated preparations for UNCED. Four Preparatory Committee sessions (or PrepComs) were held:

- PrepCom I – Nairobi, August 1990

- PrepCom II – Geneva, March 1991

- PrepCom III – Geneva, August 1991

- PrepCom IV – New York, March 1992

31 Centre for Our Common Future *Brundtland Bulletin* No.16 *op. cit.* July 1992 p.7.
32 World Commission on Environment and Development *Our Common Future* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1987.

PrepCom I set the terms of reference for UNCED. At PrepCom II the extensive documentation provided by the Secretariat was designed to assist governments to address key issues and to prioritise the areas where action was needed. The first indications of the shape of the official UNCED agreements came at the second PrepCom. At PrepCom III governments debated the best ways to approach the problems and commenced negotiations, for the first time, on Agenda 21. Finally, at the fourth PrepCom delegates met to negotiate and finalise the technical portions of Agenda 21 and the other political instruments that were expected to be signed in Rio de Janeiro.[33]

Substantial disagreements between governments emerged during these preparatory meetings. These included a number of divisions between groupings of Northern and Southern countries on the relative importance given in preparations for UNCED to environmental protection and economic development, which was evident in fractious discussions on the need for increased financial flows and transfer of technology from North to South and in repeated assertions of the principle of national sovereignty to counter what was perceived as 'environmental imperialism'. Southern governments maintained, with some justification, that attention to the symptoms of environmental degradation was inadequate if prior consideration were not given to the causes of that degradation. Foremost among these was the unequal international system which resulted in over-consumption of resources in the North and poverty through the lack of basic requirements in the South. The most notable casualty of this friction was the proposed convention on forests, which was interpreted as an attempt to impose environmental standards on Southern countries without providing additional financial support to compensate for the loss of earnings and additional costs these new commitments would impose. Divisions were also apparent between the USA and other developed countries (particularly in the European Community) on the substance and the scope of the Rio agreements, most notably on the proposed conventions on biological diversity and climate change.

By the end of PrepCom IV, 85 per cent of Agenda 21 had been successfully negotiated. Major issues to be resolved were finance (including all of the 'Means of implementation' paragraphs in each chapter of Agenda 21); technology transfer; atmosphere; and forests, among others. Thus government officials and ministers in Rio had to conclude in two weeks what hundreds of diplomats had not resolved over the previous two years. What had been expected to be a two-week photo opportunity quickly evolved into the most critical negotiating session.

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33 See *The Earth Summit Bulletins* from PrepCom IV and UNCED for a more detailed account of this sequence of events.

In Rio, the Conference itself was divided into two main bodies: the Plenary and its subsidiary body, the Main Committee. The Plenary was the forum for the 'General Debate', which consisted of country statements delivered at the Ministerial level. By contrast, the Main Committee was site of the actual political negotiations, in essence a 'PrepCom V'. The mandate of the Main Committee was to finalise the products of UNCED: Agenda 21, the Statement of Forest Principles and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. When the Main Committee ran out of its allotted time at 6:00 am on Thursday, 11 June, three issues still had not been resolved: forests, finance and atmosphere. These issues were forwarded for further negotiations at the ministerial level where, at the eleventh hour, agreement was finally reached.

3.3.1 The Role of NGOs in the UNCED process

The role of non-governmental organisations in the official UNCED process was also contentious. The initial UNGA Resolution 44/228 had not made clear the extent of NGO involvement envisaged. In particular, it did not establish whether organisations not in consultative status with ECOSOC would be able to participate in PrepComs and the Summit itself. In May 1990 the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) held a regional conference to review the Brundtland Report in Bergen, Norway. Similar events were held in other UN regions as part of the formal process of considering and acting upon the conclusions of the Brundtland Commission. These regional meetings also served as the first opportunities for countries to discuss priorities for the Rio Summit. The Bergen Conference was significant in that NGOs organised themselves for the first time to contribute to the UNCED process. The conference was at ministerial level, but included a structured attempt to promote interaction between non-governmental organisations and government delegations. In official conference documents the term 'independent sector' was used, and defined for this context as industry, trade unions, the scientific community, youth, and environmental NGOs. A number of commentators have asserted that a new model of NGO involvement in international negotiations was tested during the Bergen process. The *Brundtland Bulletin*, produced by the Centre for Our Common Future (of which more below), stated that:

> [F]or most observers, what really mattered about Bergen was that it saw the emergence at an international level of a new and unique participatory process in which bodies representing the 'independent sector' (i.e. industry, trade unions, the scientific community, youth, and Non-Governmental Organizations concerned with environmental issues) not only conducted their own parallel conferences, but participated with the ministerial delegations in the quest for the

broadest possible consensus. The 'Bergen Process' of consensus-seeking between independent and official channels had been evolving over the two years in which Bergen was in preparation, and seems set to become the model for 'the 1992 process', as we now move towards the all-important UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil.[34]

At Bergen the various non-governmental groupings were required to organise themselves into coalitions to negotiate common positions which would then be presented to the other sectors, including governments. Two significant organisational principles were therefore established, which would be evident throughout the UNCED process: first, that the involvement of a wide range of actors would help to legitimise the decisions reached by governments; and second, that non-governmental organisations should be involved as a set of distinct interest groups and encouraged to reach compromises within and between these groups in order to maximise their cumulative effectiveness. The correlation implicit in the *Brundtland Bulletin* report quoted above between broad participation and broad consensus should also be noted. The report goes on to note dissent from one NGO grouping in distinctly pejorative terms: 'Alongside the Ministerial Conference and the conferences of the independents, the clamorous Popular Forum of the SEED (Solidarity for Equality, Ecology and Development) exercised their democratic rights by hectoring mainstream participants, complaining of inaction'.[35] While complaints and attacks on the 'mainstream' may have their place in a democratic process, these are clearly not viewed as constructive contributions, likely to lead to greater consensus among participants.

The model for non-governmental participation advanced in Bergen drew on precedents from previous UN processes, most notably the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment and the rationale established in the Brundtland Report for the involvement of civil society in efforts to realise sustainable development.[36] UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong had played the same role at the 1972 Stockholm Conference and had been a prominent member of the Brundtland Commission. In the former context in particular he had supported involvement of a wide range of NGOs, including organisations without UNECOSOC accreditation.[37] The extent of Strong's role in planning the Bergen Conference is not clear, but the arrangements for NGOs undoubtedly fit within the broader

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34 Centre for Our Common Future *Brundtland Bulletin* No.8 *op. cit.* June 1990 p.1.
35 *Ibid.* p.2.
36 See Chapter 1.
37 See Willetts, Peter 'From Stockholm to Rio and beyond: the impact of the environmental movement on the United Nations consultative arrangements for NGOs' *Review of International Studies* no.22 pp.57-80, UK 1996.

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pattern for extending access and extending the understanding of the role played by non-governmental actors which Strong had previously advanced and would subsequently develop further.[38]

Strong met with representatives from the 'independent sector' following the Bergen Conference and 'stressed his support for the principle of broad representation and participation'. Strong had prepared 'guidelines for NGO participation that he will present to the PrepCom in Nairobi [which] recommend that NGOs, as well as groups from a broad spectrum of society, be brought into the official process. He also urges governments, when drafting their national reports, to generate dialogues with and encourage input from all sectors of society.'[39] The organisations meeting with Strong put forward further proposals on the involvement of NGOs in the UNCED process: 'These range from creating 30 seats for independent sector representatives at the PrepCom to granting observer status to various NGOs at ECO '92 [UNCED] to placing representatives of the independent sector on all national delegations to ECO '92 as full and equal members'.[40]

By the time the first PrepCom in Nairobi started, Strong's position on incorporation of the procedures established in Bergen had shifted. In his opening address, he stated that the Bergen arrangements for NGOs would not be 'realistic or applicable' given that numbers of government and non-governmental delegates would be much greater in Brazil. However, he did advocate that the Bergen principles should be applied, suggesting that NGOs could have their 'principal impact' at the national level.[41] Compromise was subsequently reached on these issues in Nairobi, establishing the arrangements which would apply to formal NGO involvement throughout the UNCED process. Reporting on the first PrepCom, Stephen Collett of the Quaker United Nations Office outlined the shift in stance which led to the acceptance of participation by such organisations:

> That NGOs have an important contribution to make is now generally accepted; the question under debate is how to channel contributions into the intergovernmental process, and particularly how the invitations to and statements of non-consultative NGOs will be handled. While a majority of statements in this debate were rosy on the role of NGOs – the USA, for example, read a list of important US national organizations which would not have consultative

38 See also UN doc A/CONF.151/PC/102 'Report on Institutional Proposals prepared by the Secretary General of UNCED' for an account of recommendations put forward by governments on these issues - most notably para. 177 in which the Canadian representative advocates 'encouragement to other negotiating fora and to UN specialized agencies to develop consultative processes and regularised mechanisms for non-governmental input; the broadening of CONGO membership and changes in criteria for membership; use of hybrid government / non-government fora; ... and the use of permanent or ad hoc advisory bodies of eminent environmental scientists'. Also para. 181, in which the Norwegian position is set out: ' mechanisms and procedures should be established which would facilitate and strengthen the participation of constituencies outside government ... in the work of the UN in general and in the follow-up and implementation from the 1992 Conference in particular.'
39 Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.1, *op. cit.*, July 1990. , Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
40 *Ibid.*
41 *Ibid.*

status but have useful expertise – the greatest shift is in the G-77. From having been somewhat discomfited by the whole idea, the mainline G-77 statements now called for formulas to bring 'broad-based and balanced' NGO participation to the Conference and its preparatory process, laying weight on the need for equal representation of groups from their regions with those of the North. This marks something like a 170 degree shift from their strict stand of earlier discussions, aimed at limiting participation to those they couldn't keep out – those in consultative status.[42]

Debate on the issue continued for almost four days before an acceptable compromise was found. Despite protracted opposition from a small number of G77 countries, most notably Mauritania and Tunisia, after four days of negotiation agreement was reached for the purposes of the first PrepCom that NGOs with Consultative Status and those without such status could attend working group sessions and ask for permission to speak but would have no negotiating role. Additional resources would be sought to guarantee the participation of NGOs from the developing world. The principle of 'broad-based involvement by relevant non-government organizations' was accepted, as was the principle of balance, both between developing country and developed country NGOs and between environmental and development. This compromise was referred to the forty-fifth UN General Assembly session and became the basis for subsequent arrangements for NGO participation. At the second PrepCom the UNCED Secretary General presented guidelines for determining NGOs' competence and relevance to the work of PrepCom, which were adopted with no significant changes. Throughout the UNCED process, almost all organisations which applied for accreditation were accepted.[43]

Is there any correlation between large numbers of NGOs and increased influence over the decision-making process? Princen and Finger conclude that the opposite may be true in this instance: 'Large numbers served the organizers' purposes well but may have actually hindered the NGO community, especially that segment of the community which tried to address underlying causes and to propose meaningful solutions'.[44] Contemporary accounts from the second PrepCom suggest that these misgivings were widely felt. Langston James Goree VI (Kimo) reports unease at the gulf between the rhetoric on NGO involvement and the lack of access to contentious negotiations:

There is a growing sense of frustration from many NGOs who believe that the process wants our nominal participation so that they can claim legitimacy but that a commitment to real involvement has not materialized in time to allow input during critical periods. To date,

42 Collett, Stephen 'Memo to the NGO Development Committee' posted on the electronic conference en.unced.general, August 1990.
43 Princen and Finger claim that only four applications for accreditation were denied. Princen, Thomas and Matthias Finger Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global Routledge, London 1994 p.199.
44 Ibid. p.199.

everything regarding NGO involvement has happened too late in the process to allow anyone to claim that NGOs have been involved throughout the PrepCom process.[45]

These concerns were echoed by NGOs barred access to key meetings of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), despite the principles established for the Bergen Conference:

> At the ongoing Annual Session of the ECE (46th session) in Geneva, several ECE countries — notably the USA, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands — have shut the doors on NGO participation. At that meeting the ECE decided to exclude NGOs from participating in the forthcoming ad hoc meeting on the document of environmental rights and obligations to be held in the Hague in July 1991. This document is to address, among other things, the rights of groups and individuals to participate in decision-making processes which do, or which could have a significant impact on the environment. Having followed the cumbersome process on including NGOs in the UNCED process, the recent decision taken by the ECE annual session can be seen as a serious setback. We just can't help asking ourselves, 'Are we to be left out when substantive matters are discussed?'[46]

One interpretation of this contradiction is that different government officials were present at the two meetings, and reached different decisions on the presence and significance of NGOs. Whether this sort of organisational discontinuity led to this situation, or a more coherent strategy to exclude NGOs from sensitive meetings, there are clear grounds for cynicism from NGOs. This in turn affected other relations between officials and NGO representatives in the UNCED process.

In addition to the above, relations between governments and NGOs assumed particular importance during preparations for UNCED in two further ways:

NGOs on delegations A number of countries included NGOs on their official delegations. At the first PrepCom, Norway, Canada and the UK were among the few to do so; at UNCED the number was considerably higher. A shift also occurred during this period in the nature of the organisations represented. Initially, non-governmental members of government delegations were principally from established NGOs with a broad remit. Subsequently, governments also included scientific experts, representatives from industry, youth organisations, local authorities and other sectors.[47] The responsibilities of these delegates were often unclear and contentious. Should they, for example, divulge sensitive but useful information to their NGO colleagues? Were they used as go-betweens by

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45 Langston James Goree 'E-mail Briefing Note on PrepCom II of UNCED' Geneva, 25 March 1991.
46 Enge, Elin 'ECE excludes NGOs' in Centre for Our Common Future Network '92 No.6, op. cit., April 1991. Available on Earth Summit: The NGO Archives CD ROM, op. cit.
47 The UK, for instance, gave observer status to fourteen non-governmental delegates at UNCED: '2 from environmental groups, 2 from development groups, 2 from local authorities, 2 from industry, 1 from unions, 1 from the scientific community, 1 from youth, plus representatives from UNEP-UK, United Nations Association and the Labour Party.' Hill, Julie 'Green Alliance Report on UNCED', Green Alliance, London July 1992. Reproduced in Appendix 3.

their governments, or were they able to contribute to the work of the delegation? What responsibilities did they have to NGOs in their country? In many instances NGO representatives on the official delegation were required to sign formal undertakings not to pass on any privileged information, or to take a public stance which contravened the position of the delegation. For others, to have an NGO as a government delegate was seen as 'politically correct', given increasing pressure from the UNCED Secretariat to do so, but of little wider relevance.

Despite these general criticisms, inclusion of NGOs was considered beneficial by many organisations which were able to cement relations with government delegates and enhance the credibility of their own preparations for UNCED. Opportunities to present the priorities of broader NGO networks in this context were also significant developments for many.

National Reports: Guidelines for production of National Reports to UNCED were agreed at the Nairobi PrepCom, with a deadline for completion of July 1991. While the guidelines suggested broad public participation in drafting, the method of production was to be determined by individual governments. Countries were requested to provide a sophisticated assessment of the state of natural resources as well as information on environment and development policies, their effects on the natural resource base, and a listing of the country's most pressing needs in terms of environment and development issues. More importantly, however, the guidelines asked that each country analyse the effect of the international situation on its environment and on its development as well as the effects of its local situation on the international environment and on international development.

The scope of these requirements placed considerable strain, particularly on developing countries. While limited assistance was provided by the UN Development Programme in certain cases, the huge variation in detail, quality and focus evident in the reports eventually submitted suggests that many countries were not able to deliver the material outlined and were not clear on the purpose of the reporting process. The UK was widely criticised by NGOs for submitting an existing Government White Paper on the environment, 'This Common Inheritance', as the UK Report to UNCED without further consultation on its contents, although the UNCED Secretary General was said to be 'delighted' with it.[48] Koy Thomson of IIED, writing in February 1991, suggested this pointed to wider questions about the overall focus of UNCED:

48 Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.4 *op. cit.*, February 1991. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*

Is it designed to promote specific and detailed improvements in national, domestic environmental policy around the world, or is it about global ecological interdependence, cooperation, and the development of the environment as a key international policy determinant? If it is the latter (green diplomacy or green foreign policy) this casts a completely different light on how we judge National Reports. ... Strong must provide rapid and convincing guidance on these questions if he wants constructive and effective preparations for the conference and not an early collapse of national dialogues. If no such guidance emerges, environmental NGOs might be tempted to use the Earth Summit as yet another high-profile media event at which to push their own domestic policy agenda or expose the dirty hands of their governments.

If Strong wants all sectors of society to come together to rigorously examine what they can offer in terms of expertise, experience, training and resources to protect the world environment and secure a sustainable livelihood for all, he must make it very clear now. To persuade all sectors of society to do this he must inspire an unprecedented sense of shared responsibility, accountability and confidence in the conference itself.[49]

The questions raised here are relevant to a critique of UNCED as a whole and will be returned to later.

3.3.2 The Earth Council

One final initiative should be considered at this point, although its significance in preparations for UNCED is unclear and its status (as NGO or government body) is questionable. The Earth Council was first formally proposed in the Costa Rican National Report to UNCED. The format outlined would comprise '12 to 18 persons from different countries known for their scientific reputation and international prestige in global assessments'.[50] Costa Rica advocated that the members of the 'Planet Earth Council' would be elected at UNCED and would meet two or three times per year. Its main responsibility would be 'to assess, as objectively as possible, the state of the Earth, concerning the conservation of the environment in the light of present uses of planetary resources as well as the aspirations of developing countries in reaching a fair and dignified standard of living in the socio-economic context'.[51] The Council would function outside the UN 'to enhance its objectivity and transparency',[52] but would draw on the expertise of UN agencies, NGOs with a global approach, and other institutions. Ways in which the deliberations of this body would be disseminated were not clarified, but it 'should receive the widest publicity and should hopefully become a powerful instrument to strengthen or otherwise actions of UN agencies as well as multilateral, bilateral

49 *Ibid.* Thomson, Koy 'The Two Faces of the UK National Report'.
50 A/CONF.151/PC/102 'Report on Institutional Proposals prepared by the Secretary General of UNCED' para.163, March 1992.
51 *Ibid.*
52 *Ibid.*

governmental as well as non-governmental organizations involved in scientific aspects and field work'.[53]

Maurice Strong's close association with this initiative was soon evident. Discussions on reform of the UN Trusteeship Council to focus on UNCED follow-up during PrepCom IV were caustically linked with the Earth Council initiative by one observer: 'An NGO pundit wondered if [Strong] was planning to re-name it the Earth Chamber where the Earth Team, that make up the members of the Earth Council, would meet to take the Earth Pledge after the Earth Summit'.[54]

Further references to the Earth Council suggest that it would be 'like Amnesty International, only concerned with issues of the environment',[55] and that it should be located in San José, Costa Rica: 'just as it made significant progress towards peace, Central America is willing to confront the challenge of achieving peace with nature', as Jorge Cabrera, Executive Secretary of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, put it.[56] The concluding paragraph of the Agenda 21 chapter on 'International Institutional Arrangements' also refers to 'the proposal to establish a non-governmental Earth Council',[57] remarkable recognition for an organisation which, in Strong's own words, did not hold the first meeting of its organising committee until September 1992.[58]

The close association between Maurice Strong and the Earth Council will be considered in subsequent chapters. In the build-up to UNCED, it is significant to note that discussions on the creation of a new body with the potential to play an influential role in the implementation of the Rio agreements took place with little or no consultation or discussion. The inclusion of the Agenda 21 reference seems principally to be at the instigation of the UNCED Secretariat. It is also worth noting the shift in emphasis from a body comprising scientists from around the world to the more general 'non-governmental Earth Council' anticipated in Agenda 21.

53 *Ibid*.
54 International Institute for Sustainable Development *Earth Summit Bulletin* from PrepCom IV vol.1 No.11, Manitoba Canada 15 March 1992.
55 Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.18, *op. cit.* June - July 1992.
56 InterPress Service 'Central America Seeks Creation of Earth Council' 23 March 1992.
57 *Agenda 21* The Regency Press London 1992 para.38.45.
58 Earth Council Organising Committee Press Release 'Earth Council Opens its Doors' San José, Costa Rica 3 September 1992. Maurice Strong was confirmed as inaugural chairman of the Organising Committee.

3.4 Non-Governmental Preparations

Great numbers of NGOs were involved in preparations for UNCED and in the event itself. Some participated in local meetings or campaigns; others were actively following the international inter-governmental negotiations. Organisations representing a diverse range of constituencies and from all parts of the world engaged in a multiplicity of activities intended to influence the formal decisions reached or to use the widespread interest in UNCED to project their more general concerns and priorities. Numerous reports, position papers, critiques and analyses were produced, reflecting a rich diversity of views and proposals. While acknowledging the importance of these initiatives in providing the substance for the transformative influence of NGOs in the Rio process, my principal concern is with the structures created to promote dialogue and collaboration. Even this leaves a considerable number to be considered – issue networks such as the Climate Action Network, the Rainforest Action Network and EarthAction International; national and regional networks, including the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), the Alliance of Northern Peoples for Environment and Development (ANPED), the US Citizens' Network, and the Brazilian NGO Forum; and global co-ordinating bodies such as the International Facilitating Committee and the International Steering Committee.

The previous chapter explored the influence of such networks in global politics, considering the proposition that networking constitutes an 'organising principle' of NGOs and exploring the range of functions NGO networks exist to achieve. Some tentative conclusions were also reached on the obstacles to the effective functioning of such networks and the conflicts which can arise in their work. Finally, consideration was given to norm-setting by international NGO networks in global politics and to the significance of effective systems for self-governance within such networks. To develop these points further, the principal focus here will be on the NGO networks which played a particularly significant role in promoting interaction and dialogue between organisations in the UNCED process.

Only a handful of NGOs were present at the first PrepCom in Nairobi; their number had grown to almost 1 000 by the time the final PrepCom took place in New York. During this period a complex series of dialogues between NGOs took place, addressing issues of principle (establishing common ground among participants); tactics (how to influence the inter-governmental process; how to interact more effectively with each other); and communication (sharing information and ideas). While these

discussions were unavoidably fragmented, in that different individuals attended the various meetings, it is possible to present a sequence of events and extract from this some of the principal issues of relevance for the chapter as a whole.

3.4.1 The Centre for Our Common Future

One of the key organisations was the Centre for Our Common Future (COCF). The Centre had been established in October 1987 as a charitable foundation to promote awareness and debate about the findings of the Brundtland Commission, as set out in its final report *Our Common Future*. Its founder and Executive Director Chip Lindner described its mission as broadening the understanding, debate, dialogue and analysis around the concept of sustainable development, involving as many sectors of society and as many countries as possible:

> The Centre for Our Common Future also established a network of working partners around the world. Originally we targeted 100 key global networking groups such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the Global Tomorrow Coalition etc. We got them to associate with the Centre for Our Common Future publicly as working partners by way of making a public commitment to further the concept of sustainable development.[59]

A significant, though little publicised meeting of NGOs took place in March 1990 in Vancouver. This had been intended as a review by COCF of its preparations for UNCED. However, after a meeting between Lindner and Maurice Strong, newly appointed as Secretary General for UNCED, it was . agreed that the structure of the meeting should be altered. Lindner later recalled: 'I went to him and said we would be happy to provide our assistance and support to mobilize in the broader constituencies, but we could not work solely from an NGO point of view'.[60] The Centre brought together 152 of its working partners from 60 countries, representing the broader constituencies they had endeavoured to involve in dialogue on the Brundtland Report. These included industry, trade unions, women, youth, media, and NGOs. Half of those present were from developing countries, half from developed.

This Vancouver meeting endorsed the COCF call for broad participation by all sectors of society in the UNCED process and gave the Centre a mandate to extend its work in this area. It is worth noting the close correlation between Lindner's account of the conclusions reached and the positions subsequently taken on these issues by Maurice Strong and the UNCED Secretariat:

At the time the whole question of who could participate in the UNCED process had not been established. First, out of the meeting came a very strong call for broad participation. There was also a recognition that we had to find new mechanisms for resolving problems. Second, participants in the Vancouver conference called for at least 50 percent participation from developing countries and women in all strategizing and planning for the UNCED conference at all levels – national, regional, and international. Third, it was recognized that the development side of the environment / development nexus was extremely weak in the proposed agenda for 1992; and that the inter-sectorial or cross-cutting issues, as they are now called, were elementary issues that had to be seriously addressed. And fourth, it was decided that the Centre for Our Common Future should call a meeting of heads of institutions to get a mandate to play some kind of focal point role in 1992.[61]

Lindner's account suggests that the Vancouver event merely endorsed the role for COCF which had already been defined by him and Maurice Strong. The second meeting called for in Vancouver was held in Nyon, Switzerland in June 1990. Again, all sectors and geographical regions were represented – in total, 100 people were present. Lindner asserts that COCF did not take 'a directive role' in this meeting,[62] yet the conclusions again correlate closely with the original blueprint. An International Facilitating Committee (IFC) was established to 'serve as a focal point for independent sector efforts for ECO '92 [UNCED]'. Its remit was to 'facilitate and-or organize:

- communications within the independent sector in the run up to ECO '92;

- access to the UNCED process for the independent sector;

- selected meetings and interactions among the various components of the independent sector;

- a parallel forum at ECO '92;

- facilities for the independent sector in all official preparatory committees for UNCED and at ECO '92 itself; and

- a donor education campaign to encourage the availability of funds for independent sector preparatory activities for UNCED'.[63]

The Secretariat for this new body would be separate from the Centre, but located in the same office and relying on support provided by COCF. The distinctions between the two were not made any

59 Interviewed in Lerner, Steve *Earth Summit: Conversations with Architects of an Ecologically Sustainable Future op. cit.* p.240.
60 *Ibid.* p.242.
61 *Ibid.* p.243.
62 *Ibid.* p.243.
63 'International Committee Forms to Push Independent Sector Issues, Agenda' Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.1, *op. cit.* July 1990.

clearer by the production of a bi-monthly newsletter, *Network '92*, published by COCF 'in collaboration with' the IFC. Since the IFC had no staff or secretariat support other than those provided by COCF, its role resembled that of an advisory group rather than an independent entity.[64]

Thus by the time the first PrepCom for UNCED took place in August 1990 the Centre for Our Common Future had already instigated the creation of a cross-sectoral body whose self-defined role would make it a key channel for non-governmental organisations to communicate and interact with governments, the UNCED Secretariat and other NGOs. The IFC had also discussed the terminology available to denote its constituent groups. Although 'NGOs' in the UN context would include all the types of organisation to be involved, this was deemed inadequate. This was in part because, outside the UN, 'NGO' is widely understood to denote a campaign or advocacy organisation and its use to refer to the range of those involved with the IFC would cause confusion. In its place, the term 'the independent sector' was adopted. The COCF report on the Nyon meeting makes clear that infighting between members of the independent sector would be detrimental – a resolution passed by those present stated that 'the independent sector should strive for some degree of unity to increase its political leverage'.[65]

Although the UNCED Secretariat was restricted to use of 'NGOs' in official documents, the COCF newsletter highlights the close correlation between the concept it has advanced and the position adopted by the UNCED Secretary General in the 'NGO Guidelines' ('Suggested Arrangements for Involving Non-Governmental Organizations in the Preparatory Process' A/CONF/151/PC/9) prepared for the first PrepCom: 'In referring to NGOs, the Secretary General points out that the term "non-governmental organization" includes groups from industry, science, trade unions, environment and development, youth and women, as well as those NGOs with and without consultative status with ECOSOC'.[66] The Secretary General's paper also notes the positive recommendations from the Vancouver and Nyon strategy meetings on the need for the broad participation of the independent sector in UNCED preparations. The *Network '92* report omits the distinction made in the 'NGO Guidelines' between the 'broad based preparatory process' advocated at national and regional levels[67] and the much more restrictive formula proposed for the global level: 'At the global level, non-

64 Chatterjee and Finger state that 'the Center for Our Common Future practically took over the IFC.' Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger *The Earth Brokers: Power, Politics and World Development op. cit.* p.87.
65 'Final Report of the Nyon Strategy Meeting for UNCED, 3-6 June 1990.' Centre for Our Common Future, Geneva Switzerland, June 1990.
66 'Guidelines for NGOs Drafted by Secretariat' Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.1, *op. cit.* July 1990.
67 A/CONF/151/PC/9 'Suggested Arrangements for Involving Non-Governmental Organizations in the Preparatory Process' New York 1992 paras. 8 – 10.

governmental organizations may contribute to the preparatory process by providing information and counsel on matters of special relevance to the non-governmental community'.[68]

3.4.2 Creation of the Business Council for Sustainable Development

Following the Nairobi PrepCom, Maurice Strong took it upon himself to initiate a more coherent preparatory process among private sector organisations for UNCED. He appointed Stephan Schmidheiny, a Swiss industrialist, as his Principal Adviser for Business and Industry. Among Schmidheiny's responsibilities was to challenge global business leaders to take a personal interest in the UNCED process. This led to the establishment of the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) in late 1991. Executive Director of the BCSD J Hugh Faulkner spelt out the UNCED Secretary General's intentions: 'Mr. Strong requested that the mandate be carried out well in advance of the Earth Summit so that the input of the Business Council's members could be taken into consideration during the consultative process that the UNCED Secretary-General is carrying out prior to Rio'.[69] There is no evidence of Strong taking a similar interest in fostering direct input from other sectors, nor of his willingness to accept it when proffered.[70] Faulkner's outline of the BCSD's mandate emphasises increased efficiency in the use of resources and increased economic growth to combat poverty as the constructive contribution of the business sector to UNCED to help 'solve the single most urgent problem that faces the human race today – that of preserving the environment for ourselves and for the generations to come'.[71]

Strong also provided support to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), which held the Second World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM II) in Rotterdam in April 1991. The ICC produced a Business Charter for Sustainable Development which was endorsed at the Conference. Signatories to the Business Charter were under no obligation to enact any of the commitments it set out; nor were the objectives quantified with any independently verifiable measures or targets. A further criticism of the Charter was that it did not focus sufficiently on social issues and was in essence a set of general environmental principles. Nevertheless, despite these apparent

68 *Ibid.*, para. 11.

69 Faulkner, J Hugh 'Business' Mandate for the Earth Summit' Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.6 *op. cit.*, April 1991. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*

70 See, for example, the official response to *Agenda ya Wananchi*, the NGO document agreed at the 'Roots for Our Future' conference organised by ELCI in December 1991. In accepting the conference documents, Maurice Strong undertook to 'integrate them into the real world' (Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.13 *op. cit.*, January 1992). No reference is made to *Agenda ya Wananchi* in Agenda 21, in stark contrast to acknowledgement of BCSD and ICC initiatives.

71 Faulkner, J Hugh 'Business' Mandate for the Earth Summit' *op. cit.*

shortcomings and the dearth of other significant undertakings by the private sector, the Business

Charter for Sustainable Development was cited in Agenda 21 as a valuable code of conduct,

'promoting best environmental practice'.[72]

Thus from an early stage in UNCED preparations there was a common perception among NGOs that,

although all independent sectors were considered equal, some were more equal than others. Given

deep-rooted misgivings over the efficacy of treating the private sector as a constructive contributor to

environmental protection shared by many NGOs, the appearance of preferential treatment served to

heighten antipathy towards industry representatives and concern at the ideological perspective of the

UNCED Secretary General. As we shall see, these misgivings were voiced increasingly in the period

preceding the Summit.[73]

3.4.3 Problems in Nairobi

Some of the NGOs attending the first PrepCom were not happy with the activities of the COCF or

with the underlying ideological stance. The Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI) was

established after the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment to promote NGO awareness

and involvement in the work of the UN Environment Programme, based in Nairobi. ELCI had devised

a programme of work in preparation for UNCED which assumed that its role as the principal co-

ordinating body for NGOs working on environmental issues in the UN context was still valid. Its

response to the activities of the COCF was to launch a vituperative attack.[74] A paper titled 'Green

Pollution' was given to all delegates on the third day of the Nairobi PrepCom:

> The world knows many forms of environmental pollution. A new, more insidious form is
> developing; green pollution. Based on false propaganda consumers are sometimes asked to buy
> certain products falsely claimed to be environment friendly. But for ELCI the strategy
> developed, now known as the 'independent sector strategy', is yet another form of this green
> pollution.
>
> This strategy implies two objectives, both denounced by ELCI:
>
> to promote the idea that everyone is working for the protection of the environment – implying
> there are no more polluters;

72 *Agenda 21 op. cit.* para.30.10 (b).
73 For an analysis of this tension in negotiations for the Framework Convention on Climate Change see Levy, David L. and Daniel Egan 'Corporate political action in the global polity: National and transnational strategies in the climate change negotiations' in Higgott, Richard A., Geoffrey R.D. Underhill, and Andreas Bieler eds. *Non-State Actors and Authority in the Global System* pp. 138-153, Routledge / Warwick Studies in Globalisation London 2000.
74 Friends of the Earth International and a consortium of Scandinavian organisations, the Nordic Societies for the Conservation of Nature, had also released statements criticising the 'independent sector' approach, although these were not circulated as widely as ELCI's.

to effectively disempower the environmental movement by forcing NGOs to bargain directly with the polluters and arrive at common viewpoint before being heard by public authorities, in this case governments.

For ELCI, NGOs are non-profit, non-party political organizations including groupings such as environment and development, youth, indigenous people, consumer and religious. Organizations of industry, trade unions, parliamentarians, academics and local authorities are not NGOs.[75]

Many Government delegates must have been bemused by this first introduction to internecine struggles between civil society organisations. For the NGOs present its target was clear. However, although the paper sets out clear concerns over the implications of the IFC's work, the principal reaction among non-partisan NGOs seems to have been embarrassment at so public a display of disunity. Thus Elizabeth May of the Canadian Environmental Network suggests that the appearance of conflict – 'washing our dirty linen in public' – compromised the ability of NGOs to present a united front in the critical debate on terms for the involvement of NGOs in the preparatory meetings: 'The appearance of a public indictment of the Centre for Our Common Future the day before the debate on involvement of NGOs struck all the non-ELCI NGOs as particularly badly timed – a criticism the ELCI board members failed to understand'.[76] According to May's account, an open meeting was organised by the IFC at which the concerns of ELCI were resolved by a decision to refer to 'independent sectors' in future. In his account of the same meeting, Stephen Collett suggests that the steps taken by the IFC to counter the accusations levelled at it were rather more substantial:

> Most significant was the agreement reached on a clear set of guiding principles and objectives (mandates) for the IFC, and a formula for its composition. Regarding the purpose of the IFC it is most important to note that the body will serve a facilitating function rather than one of representation for the global NGO community. To this end it will develop a communications strategy to support the flow of information between the UN and the independent sectors, it will facilitate the submission of oral and written statements to the official UNCED process and, if requested, will assist organizations and networks to define their roles vis a vis the UNCED.[77]

This assessment indicates a more limited role for the IFC as a facilitator, acting to enhance the involvement of all NGOs in the Summit. There is no mention of the Committee's previous

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75 'Green Pollution', unpublished ELCI paper circulated at the first PrepCom for UNCED, Nairobi August 1990. The full text is in Appendix 1. While the distinction drawn between organisations considered to be NGOs and industry has been well rehearsed, and local authorities and parliamentarians are presumably categorised as elements of government, it is less clear why trade unions and academics should be excluded in this context.

76 May, Elizabeth 'News from Nairobi' posted by on en.unced.general, 25 August 1990.

77 Collett, Stephen 'Memo to the NGO Development Committee', op. cit. The communiqué released by the IFC following this meeting states that 'There was general agreement that the independent sectors represented differing and at times opposing constituencies. The purpose of the IFC was not to attempt to facilitate the emergence of consensual positions regarding UNCED amongst these different constituencies, but rather to promote dialogue amongst them with a view to determining what common ground might exist, whilst recognizing that there would be positions on which consensus would be unlikely to be found.' Minutes of the first meeting of the IFC, Nairobi 10 August 1990.

undertakings to organise a parallel NGO forum at UNCED or to conduct a 'donor education campaign' to solicit financial support for independent sector activities. Nevertheless, such activities continued. The principal lesson learnt by the IFC and COCF would appear to have been the need for more tact and circumspection in their dealings with other organisations.

ELCI had also established its own International Steering Committee, which met for the first time on 4 August 1990. This new body had committed the organisation to hold regional consultations in preparation for UNCED, and to prepare an NGO report, 'The Brazil Document', in collaboration with a number of other NGOs. The overlap between this co-ordinating role and the functions of the IFC clearly fuelled tensions between the two. A further area of contention was the IFC's stated intention to hold a meeting involving all sectors six months before UNCED.[78] An internal COCF memo from this period states that 'the ELCI board members felt that the ELCI, and not the IFC, should organize such a pre-Brazil meeting and that the IFC should play only a facilitating role'.[79] By late 1990, it was evident that the French Government was willing to host and fund a global NGO preparatory event.[80] The event itself (held in Paris from 17 to 20 December 1991) will be considered later in this chapter. At this point, it is useful to note that rancour between ELCI/ISC and COCF/IFC was evident in both ideological divisions over objectives and methods of working and in more prosaic differences over which group could claim to be the focus for NGO co-ordination in preparation for UNCED.

A contemporary account from the second PrepCom in Geneva the following April by Langston James Goree VI (Kimo) suggests that the evident ill-feeling between the IFC and ELCI reflected more deep-seated divisions between NGOs on some of the key elements of their collaboration.[81] A meeting held by the IFC to clarify its mandate 'to facilitate those who wish to be facilitated' highlighted a number of particularly contentious issues:

Holding an alternative event in Rio: Kimo's record states that 'there was no consensus on the value of the proposed parallel NGO conference'. The IFC proposed to play a leading role in organising this event, suggesting that it would offer the opportunity for consensus-building within and between different constituencies. This was supported by a number of organisations which held that the

78 See Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.1, *op. cit.* July 1990.
79 Undated memo, quoted in Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger *The Earth Brokers op. cit.* p.87.
80 The December 1990 issue of *Network '92* includes a report from the IFC proposing to hold an independent sectors meeting in early 1992 with French support; the same issue contains an update from ELCI confirming that an offer from the French Government had been accepted, and that the event would be organised by ELCI for December 1991. Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.3 *op. cit.* December 1990. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
81 Goree VI, Langston James (Kimo) 'PrepCom II Chronicles' posted on en.unced.general, April 1991.

opportunities for co-ordination and interaction would be valuable. Others opposed the initiative, arguing that it would deflect attention from involvement with the core business of UNCED itself, and lessen the overall impact of NGOs on the Summit.

Relations with host organisations: Kimo quotes the IFC chairman saying 'there would have to be a certain amount of work with the Brazilian NGOs'. However, most of the groups present rejected this approach and insisted that the IFC must give support to the Brazilian NGO Forum in their organization of the alternative events. The assumption by the IFC that it should play the leading role in these preparations appears to have been challenged. Kimo also reports that 'ten developing country NGOs decided to boycott the meeting because of its domination by northern groups'. Such concerns would not have been eased by the apparent disagreement over the centrality of the host NGO coalition in the organisation of a parallel event.

Legitimacy and accountability of the IFC: There was open criticism of the accountability of the IFC representatives to the sectors that they represented and the legitimacy of their positions as representatives, due to a lack of democratic processes within the sectors in their selection. If the internal operations of the IFC did not stand up to scrutiny, the positions it was taking in attempting to shape NGO structures for collaboration were also open to question..

These are three key areas which challenge the assertion that the IFC could play an apolitical, facilitating role 'for those who wish to be facilitated'. In each instance, the *a priori* significance of effective structures for self-governance by which to address divisions between NGOs and to resolve conflict is evident.[82] It may be useful here to invoke some of the general points raised in the previous chapter on the work of NGO networks and consider their validity in this context.

3.4.4 Elusive Principles of Self-Governance

In the previous chapter Paul Nelson's analysis of transnational NGO networks lobbying the World Bank was considered. Nelson suggests that a measure of influence in policy and funding debates leads

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82 Kimo's conclusions suggest that this view was not widely held by IFC members: 'In so many ways the IFC has been a great help to us here at PrepCom II, setting up briefings and really facilitating our substantive work. On the other hand the heavy-handed approach by some of the IFC members toward plans for Rio 92 is disturbing. The idea that the IFC should negotiate directly with the Brazilian government for space in RioCentre or that the IFC would start unilateral plans for communications at the Rio alternative conference smacks of NGO neo-colonialism. This inadvertently un-empowers the Brazilian NGO Forum in their delicate national negotiations with the Brazilian government and overlooks national NGO projects already underway, like the IBASE telecommunications project for June 1992.' *Ibid.*

to problems within networks. Three sources of particular tension were noted, and merit repetition here:

- the tension between entrepreneurial leadership and participatory, solidarity-driven alliances;

- the need to balance and reconcile local objectives of Southern participants with strategic, global objectives of international campaigners; and

- the diverse and sometimes contradictory claims to legitimacy in international lobbying.[83]

These constitute a useful framework for consideration of tensions and divisions apparent in the collaborative mechanisms established by NGOs prior to UNCED.

3.4.4.1 The tension between entrepreneurial leadership and participatory, solidarity-driven alliances

'Green Pollution', ELCI's attack on the IFC, represented an attempt to reclaim the principal role in co-ordinating NGO preparations for UNCED. As we have seen, this focused on the ideological distinctions embedded in two different organisational models: privileging non-governmental organisations or adopting a broader conception of 'independent sector(s)'.

ELCI's understanding of its own role clarifies these divisions still further:

> The organization's objectives include helping empower grassroots environment and development organizations; influencing policy that impacts on the environment through a strong NGO involvement in the planning and policy-making processes; promoting and facilitating South-South and North-South dialogue.[84]

'Green Pollution' makes clear that ELCI is prepared to enter into dialogue with organisations from other sectors if they are recognised as the representatives of their constituencies, but without any prior commitment to negotiate common positions unless it is clear that there is enough common ground to warrant their development. This constitutes a clear commitment to 'participatory, solidarity-driven

83 Nelson, Paul J. 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Effectiveness: Who Speaks for Whom in Transnational NGO Networks Lobbying the World Bank?'
Occasional Paper No. 7 Harrison Programme on the Future Global Agenda, October 1996. Located online at
http://www.bsos.umd.edu/harrison/papers/paper17.htm. Accessed on 3 January 2002.
84 Profile of ELCI, 'Organisations Participating at the Global Forum', Proutists International, USA 1992.

alliances' which is also evident in the stance taken by the International Steering Committee (ISC) established by ELCI and others to oversee preparations for Rio. Princen and Finger state that

> The main focus of the International Steering Committee was to identify local solutions to global problems that can contribute, in particular, to changes in lifestyle and consumption patterns ... The focus was on grass-roots and people-oriented initiatives, much of which would be in opposition to governments. The approach was, therefore, also much more confrontational than the International Facilitiating Committee's.[85]

The IFC was created after due consultation but, as we have seen, with a strong steer from the Centre for our Common Future and the UNCED Secretary General. While its publications state the importance of 'the broadest, most representative possible involvement of ... the independent sector and individuals at all levels' in the 'ideal of a sustainable future',[86] its actions suggest considerable pragmatism in the interpretation of this dictum.[87] A mandate was secured prior to the first UNCED PrepCom for the IFC to 'mastermind arrangements for the independent sector's participation in the run-up to UNCED and the conference itself'.[88] Attempts to persuade NGOs involved in the preparatory committee meetings that this role was legitimate and useful proved contentious, as considered earlier. Accusations of 'heavy-handedness' and 'neo-colonialism'[89] illustrate the concerns of many mainstream NGO activists over the role played by the IFC.

Yet the IFC, in collaboration with the Centre for Our Common Future, did exhibit some of the more positive attributes of 'entrepreneurial leadership'. It was able to anticipate the debate on NGO access at PrepCom I and hold a meeting with the UNCED Secretary General in advance to discuss these issues. As a result, many of the IFC's concerns were reflected in the initial guidelines drafted by Maurice Strong. This demonstrated the IFC's ability to act on behalf of its broader constituencies and its capacity to influence the official UNCED deliberations. Because it had no strong critique of specific issues in the negotiations, or coherent ideological positions to defend (other than promoting the involvement of the independent sectors in UNCED), the IFC was able to function as an intermediary between different organisations and sectors, culminating in its role in the organisation of the parallel NGO Global Forum in Rio in 1992. It also organised an extensive series of information

85 Princen, Thomas and Matthias Finger Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global op. cit. p.205.
86 Centre for Our Common Future Brundtland Bulletin No. 8 op. cit. June 1990. p.1.
87 For example, the conclusions of its inaugural meeting in Nyon in June 1990 included the assertion that 'representatives of the various components of the sector should be granted observer status to the entire UNCED preparatory process; and that representatives of the independent sector should be included in the national delegations to UNCED as full and equal members' (reported in Brundtland Bulletin Number 8, ibid. p.5.) There is no evidence that the IFC took any concerted steps to push for realisation of these ideals after they had been considered impractical by Maurice Strong at the start of PrepCom I.
88 Ibid. p.5
89 Goree VI, Langston James (Kimo) 'PrepCom II Chronicles', op. cit.

briefings for NGOs before and after PrepCom meetings and held dialogue sessions involving key figures in the official UNCED proceedings.

Despite these successes, which increased the IFC's profile and (superficially at least) demonstrated its usefulness to all sides, its inability to present strong and coherent positions can also be construed as a weakness. Princen and Finger's analysis illustrates this:

> the IFC was a coalition or, maybe better, a patchwork, or various independent sectors, themselves represented by particular organizations, such as IUCN, EEB, ICC, CNN, ICSU, the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC) and so forth. Consequently, it was very difficult for the IFC to agree on anything substantive except, perhaps, the call for sustainable development and the active participation of independent sectors in the UNCED process. It is, therefore, not surprising that some NGOs – in particular, the more social movement oriented ones – were unhappy with the IFC and created their own alternative [the International Steering Committee].[90]

This analysis seems somewhat unbalanced. If the IFC's difficulty in formulating substantive positions constitutes a weakness, so surely does the inability of ELCI and the ISC to assume an impartial position from which they could support the greater involvement of all NGOs (using the UN's broader definition) in the UNCED process. While the participatory approach taken by ELCI may have served to build legitimacy at the local level and among Southern environment and development NGOs, the IFC was able to initiate dialogue between sectors and gain the ears of the most influential individuals, including the UNCED Secretary General. The two could be considered complementary, except that they clearly provoked mutual antipathy.[91] Nevertheless, for many NGOs they constituted two separate networks which each offered distinct benefits and were used in this way throughout the UNCED process.

A further NGO grouping which does not figure prominently in the literature of the Centre for Our Common Future, the Environment Liaison Committee International, nor of the UNCED Secretariat is the steadily expanding group of organisations which followed PrepCom negotiations closely and shared information and ideas. This self-styled 'NGO Strategy Group' was constituted initially by the

90 Princen, Thomas and Matthias Finger *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global op. cit.* p.204. Chatterjee and Finger go further still: 'Overall, the IFC is certainly not a success story: important environmental and developmental NGOs refused to play along with the terms outlined by the IFC; the IFC itself became bogged down in procedural questions, and in Rio there were even some questions raised about its financial management.' Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger *The Earth Brokers: Power, Politics and World Development op. cit.* p.87.
91 To pick one example from many, Chip Lindner's critique of NGOs participating in the third PrepCom for UNCED illustrates this: 'the traditional environment / development constituencies .. are very vocal, anti-government and critical of industry. They don't want to be co-opted under any circumstances by governments or industries. There is also a new breed of organization, which is open to input from a variety of sectors be it from industry, the trade unions, professional associations, NGOs or whomever ... The IFC is very much in that group that sees the need for every sector to be represented at the negotiating table. And if you cannot deal with each other at the table in a cooperative, contributory, objective way, then you are going to be out of the ball game.' Interviewed in Lerner, Steve *Earth Summit: Conversations with Architects of an Ecologically Sustainable Future op. cit.* p.244.

small number of organisations represented in the Nairobi PrepCom and drafted the final NGO

statement there. By the second PrepCom this informal group had reconstituted itself and held daily

NGO Strategy Sessions

> briefing each other on the events from the day before, sharing collected bits of information
> gleaned from the corridors and sharing ideas on the substantive discussions. This group was
> open to all NGOs and we had more than one hundred and fifty different NGO representatives
> circulating in and out of the meetings over the three weeks. Although the majority of the NGOs
> were from the environment and development sectors we also had youth, religious, business and
> others in attendance. The group never pretended to speak as a single NGO voice but it was a
> forum where many coalitions were formed and subsequently wrote collective interventions.[92]

The NGO Strategy Group established task groups to follow issues on the UNCED agenda and used

the newsletters and other means of communication created by other more structured networks. At the

third and fourth PrepComs its significance as the locus for strategising among NGOs had been

established, and the production of information reports, analysis, and position papers as well as the

continuation of task groups which communicated between sessions and the daily NGO strategy

sessions cemented the position of the NGO Strategy Group in the UNCED procedures. At UNCED

itself, funding was secured for production of a daily *Earth Summit Bulletin* which provided detailed

information and analysis of the negotiations for an extensive audience. The Group proved adept at

using new electronic means of communication to continue regular exchanges between PrepComs, and

provided a framework within which organisations with common perspectives or concerns could

collaborate effectively. Thus issue groups addressing forests, climate change, biological diversity and

others were able to meet, and caucuses for women's organisations, indigenous peoples and other

sectoral groupings could also function effectively.

This loose coalition shared some of the characteristics of the two high profile NGO networks focusing

on UNCED preparations: it shared some of the ELCI / ISC's ability to identify issues not on the

official agenda, though not its more radical critique of the proceedings; it was able to bring together a

wide range of organisations, though its capacity to disseminate information was more limited than the

COCF / IFC; it provided a structure for NGOs to interact with each other and with the official

92 Goree VI, Langston James (Kimo) 'PrepCom II Chronicles', *op. cit.* Johannah Bernstein of the Canadian Participatory Council for UNCED outlines her own role in these developments: 'On the second day of PrepCom II, I mobilized a core group of NGOs to form an NGO Strategy Group which would meet daily to debrief each other on the meetings and events of the preceding days; to coordinate lobbying strategies; to jointly prepare NGO interventions; and as well, to provide a forum for ourselves for general discussion of the key issues of the day. ... As well, during the first week I compiled Reference Books for each of the Working Groups. Each Reference Book contains NGO reports on the substantive issues addressed by each of the Working Groups; relevant position papers, briefs and copies of the NGO interventions made in each of the Working Groups.' Bernstein, Johannah 'NGO Activity at the Second Substantive Session of the PrepComm - Executive Summary' Environment Canada UNCED National Secretariat, June 1991.

proceedings, which was widely used and appreciated by NGOs and by governments and UN officials. Despite this, the relationship between the NGO Strategy Group and the two more established NGO networks appears to have been rather fraught. Despite its evident usefulness during the second PrepCom, Kimo comments:

> It remains unclear the exact role of the International Facilitating Committee in relation to the NGOs that were here at this PrepCom and participated in the NGO Strategy Sessions. In my very personal opinion, I don't think that the IFC yet recognizes the NGOs who came to this PrepCom and met in the NGO Strategy Sessions as an important part of their constituency.[93]

These tensions, and the ideological and pragmatic divisions they suggest, will be considered more fully in the conclusion to this chapter.

●Table 3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of UNCED International NGO Networks

Network	Strengths	Weaknesses
Environment Liaison Centre International / International Steering Committee	Articulating the shared concerns of environment and development NGOs, grassroots and Southern organisations Challenging the unsustainable practices of key actors Presenting viable alternative policies and ways of living Introducing issues otherwise excluded from the official agenda	Taking extreme positions which have little bearing on the official debate Difficulty in relating effectively with other sectors, particularly industry Participatory work methods hampered ability to take decisions quickly or anticipate opportunities
Centre for our Common Future / International Facilitating Committee	Promoting dialogue between all sectors Providing information and advice to increase the extent and the effectiveness of NGO input to UNCED Close relations with the Secretariat and other key actors Working methods allow it to act quickly and take advantage of opportunities	Lack of credibility with many NGOs Inability to reach strong, coherent policy positions Weak articulation of principles beyond what is already in the Brundtland Report Difficulty in holding together the various coalitions involved Perceived as part of the UNCED 'establishment'
NGO Strategy Group	Promoting dialogue between sectors Providing information and advice to NGOs interested in official proceedings	Limited capacity to inform wider debate on sustainable development issues Unclear relations with more established

93 Goree VI, Langston James (Kimo) 'PrepCom II Chronicles', op. cit.

	interested in official proceedings	NGO networks and international NGOs
	Introducing issues not addressed by others in official proceedings	Insufficient 'institutional memory' to build consistently on previous successes
	Formulating joint positions and statements among like-minded organisations	Perceived as predominantly made up of Northern NGOs
	Informal structure allows quick responses and ad hoc joint activities	
	Regular presence in PrepComs allows good relations to develop with governments and the UNCED secretariat	

3.4.4.2 The need to balance and reconcile local objectives of grass-roots organisations with strategic, global objectives of international campaigners

In the context of UNCED, this issue raises both general ideological tensions and particular organisational difficulties. The former have been touched upon earlier and form the basis of the Ecologist's critique of the UNCED process as a whole – that global NGOs are at best an irrelevance and at worst impede the efforts of community groups to reclaim control over their own environments from the destructive processes of industrial development. The latter is most evident in relations between global NGOs and networks and Brazilian organisations, themselves collaborating in an uneasy alliance named the Brazilian NGO Forum.

Ideological tensions between global (principally Northern-based) organisations and local (often Southern) groups can be cited in many aspects of NGO collaboration in the UNCED process. The emphasis placed in *Our Common Future* and the draft text of *Agenda 21* and the other Rio agreements on devolving decision-making and involving communities in policy processes was understood by many critics to be at odds with the system for global management of the environment being developed.[94] From this perspective, references to the important roles to be played by NGOs and other 'major social groups' in achieving sustainable development would have very different implications if they referred to the direct involvement of local communities in these processes. However, the greatest beneficiaries are the influential but tiny international NGO elite, whose accountability to grass-roots organisations is often negligible, but who claim to represent the poor and marginalised, and gain funding and prestige through this association.[95]

94 For example, see Consejo, Juan Jose 'The Twilight of the Environmentalist Era', *op. cit.*
95 See for example Roy, Bunker 'Open Discussion on an NGO Code of Conduct' posted on en.unced.dialogue, April 1992.

The Brazilian NGO Forum (BNGOF) was created by three Sao Paulo-based NGOs, in response to

issues raised at the Vancouver and Nyon meetings held by the Centre for Our Common Future.

Following the example of the newly established International Facilitating Committee, it was decided

that the Brazilian Forum should be a:

> broad-based, representative grouping of Brazilian NGOs around the issue of UNCED, in order
> to
>
> a) meet the need felt by those outside Brazil (NGO networks, the UNCED Secretariat, other UN
> bodies, sympathetic member-country governments and others) for a representative and
> legitimate NGO reference point in Brazil for liaison on both practical and substantive questions
> involving UNCED (understood as including the official preparatory process and Conference, as
> well as parallel processes and events in 1992); and
>
> b) stimulate and coordinate NGO activities within Brazil around the Conference, including the
> formulation of positions on the substantive issues under discussion as well as pressing for the
> adoption by the Brazilian government of the UN recommendations in respect of NGO
> participation in the official processes and the elaboration of national reports.[96]

BNGOF was thus created in large measure as a result of external pressure; the focus for its activities

was split between providing services and a 'reference point' for those outside Brazil and co-ordinating

domestic NGO preparations for the Conference. Its relationship with the IFC is also significant – one

of the Forum's first acts was to elect a representative to participate in IFC meetings. Further

ambivalence is evident in the frame of reference the BNGOF adopted in establishing its activities. Its

inaugural report presents a critique of the issues on the agenda for UNCED, proposing revisions and

additions; however, no position is taken on the 'independent sector' debate which was ongoing at the

time. Strong emphasis was placed on finding out what other national and international networks were

doing in preparation for UNCED:

> We see the conference not in terms of the event itself, but as a stimulus to dialogue and
> networking. The establishment of the conference has provided us with the requirement to act
> and a deadline to meet, but other than this it should not be seen as other than a point on a
> continuum. This continuum stretches long beyond June 1992, and involves the strengthening of
> the ability of citizen's groups internationally to establish networks and identify priorities and
> strategies for preserving and enhancing life on the planet, with all that this implies for the
> · establishment of new, equitable and sustainable development paradigms.[97]

96 'Preparatory Forum of Brazilian NGOs' Bulletin 1, Sao Paulo Brazil October 1990.
97 *Ibid.*

However, the Forum also stresses the need for 'a grassroots perspective on environment and development issues'.[98]

In all of this, the BNGOF would seem rather uneasily to straddle the divide between the IFC and ELCI explored above. Internal divisions between environmental groups and organisations focusing on social issues occurred repeatedly in the work of the Brazilian Forum. In part, this can be attributed to the domestic context within which these organisations had been created. Bill Hinchberger's analysis of the increasing influence of third world NGOs in global environmental politics emphasises these elements:

> [A]s the discussions advanced, Brazilian NGOs began to discover that their heterogeneous make-up, often a source of enlightening debate, could also prove a hindrance to the pragmatic goals of preparing logistics for the parallel gathering and lobbying the official one.

> Conflicts in Brazil often mirrored those stirring up in other parts of the world. Despite moves towards sometimes similar agendas during the late 1980s, the classic duel between 'social developmentalists' and traditional environmentalists loomed again. The growing role of mass-based social and labour organizations in preparations for the Earth Summit became increasingly polemical. Ecologists complained that NGOs with strictly environmental concerns gradually lost their early majority in the NGO Forum. Those sympathetic to 'popular' NGOs predictably believed that 'Ecological issues – and organizations – are overrepresented'.[99]

A militant labour federation, the Unified Workers' Central (CUT), had a seat on the BNGOF seven-person directorate and was involved in a number of disputes with environmentalists over the policy direction the Forum should take. Tensions were also evident within the Forum between large, influential organisations and grass-roots groups – Hinchberger quotes Green Party member of the Brazilian Congress, Sidney de Miguel:

> In Brazil there are two types of NGOs. The salon groups, that are good at raising funds, and the small, local, thematic groups. The rich groups, those connected to the CUT and the church, controlled the NGO Forum. ... Our position is that the most representative groups are the small, self-sustaining ones. The five-star NGOs are linked to the ecological programme of the rich

98 *Ibid.*

99 Hinchberger, Bill 'Non-Governmental Organizations:.The Third Force in the Third World' in Bergesen, Helge Ole and Georg Parmann eds. *Green Globe Yearbook 1993* pp.45-54; Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993. Available on *Earth Summit:The NGO Archives* CD ROM *op. cit.* See also Aimt Ricardo Azambuja 'The Inside Out, The Outside In: Pros and Cons of Foreign Influence on Brazilian Environmentalism in Bergesen, Helge Ole, Magnar Nordehaug and Georg Parmann eds. *Green Globe Yearbook 1992* pp.15-23, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992. Arnt suggests that international pressures and environmental campaigning on multilateral funding agencies have contributed to changing the development model adapted by Brazil. However, 'foreign influence has little chance of success if separate from the dynamics of Brazilian civil society and local organizations which screen and root out external influence and create culture. When foreign campaigning surpassed national efforts it lacked society's support, generating distortions, cosmetic changes, and opportunism' (p.15). This represents an important consideration in assessing relations between international and Brazilian NGOs in the UNCED process.

countries, sustainable development. They ignore potential solutions that would reduce production but guarantee life.[100]

Difficulties also arose through conflicts between the different responsibilities placed upon the Forum. In its relations with the Brazilian authorities, it articulated the views of national and international NGOs on arrangements for NGO participation; it also acted as the forum for efforts by NGOs to influence positions taken by the Brazilian Government. In both contexts relations were further complicated by the fact that government and NGOs were also attempting to use an international audience to establish their credibility, sometimes by denigrating the other.[101] The BNGOF was obliged to negotiate with the Rio State authorities and national government officials to make arrangements for the promised parallel NGO Conference. The location for the event proved contentious – although the Jacarepagua racetrack was considered, as it would give delegates relatively easy access to the official meetings in the Rio Centro conference centre, the venue was eventually fixed as Flamengo Park in central Rio, which would effectively separate the NGO events from the inter-governmental proceedings. These discussions coincided with attempts by the BNGOF to have its input adequately reflected in the Brazilian National Report to UNCED. The problems inherent in conducting these related but separate negotiations are clear, and demonstrate the invidious position in which the Forum was placed in attempting to meet (or reconcile) the needs of Brazilian and international NGOs.

A further challenge for the BNGOF in its role as host was to find financial backers and in-kind support for the NGO Global Forum. This was resolved to some extent by entering into partnership with the IFC in organising the Global Forum. While the Brazilian Forum undertook to organise a 'Social Movements event' within the Forum, the IFC would co-ordinate other aspects of the preparations, including negotiations with potential funders from countries other than Brazil. Kimo's comments from PrepCom II, noted earlier, suggest that the Forum's stated intention to act as the 'principal host of all parallel events that will take place in Rio in 1992'[102] was not always respected by the IFC.

Tensions within the host NGO network can thus be attributed to four principal causes:

100 Ibid.
101 Network '92 published an article titled 'Brazil: A model of Public Participation' in July 1991 which described government-led consultation on the report as a model for other countries participating in UNCED – Centre for Our Common Future Network '92 No.8 op. cit., July 1991. The following month it was obliged to print a retraction, and the Brazilian NGO Forum's detailed criticisms of the consultation process (Network '92 No.9 op. cit., August 1991. Available on Earth Summit: The NGO Archives CD ROM, op. cit.)
102 Quoted in Centre for Our Common Future Network '92 No. 5 op. cit., March 1991.

- domestic political divisions, exacerbated by the previous repressive regime which continued to polarise Brazilian political perspectives.

- just as the IFC was formed before other interested organisations had prepared coherent positions and strategies, so the Brazilian NGO Forum was created at the instigation of external actors and struggled to gain wider acceptance in Brazil for the 'independent sectors' model it had adopted.

- the BNGOF had difficulty reconciling the interests and principles of its two principal constituencies – Brazilian NGOs on the one hand and foreign organisations on the other.

- the Forum attempted to combine a facilitating role (information dissemination, making arrangements for meeting venues and so on) with an advocacy role (both in the domestic context and in international processes).

Tensions between the local objectives of Brazilian organisations and the global objectives of the principal international NGO networks are evident in the above analysis. The BNGOF attempted to combine the inclusive, essentially organisational role of the IFC with the more radical critique adopted by the ISC and ELCI. Other national and regional networks were obliged to align themselves with one or other perspective or to endeavour to reach an uneasy compromise similar to that of the BNGOF. In each instance, the position taken would have been shaped in large measure by the domestic context in which these coalitions operated. Despite this, there is little evidence that these particular concerns were acknowledged by the IFC or the ISC, or that attempts were made to balance them with the global strategies they pursued. All of these factors are significant in the structure and the substance of the Global Forum, considered more fully below.

3.4.4.3 The diverse and sometimes contradictory claims to legitimacy in international lobbying

Disputes over the legitimacy of positions taken by NGOs in the UNCED process have been touched upon earlier. Among the principal international non-governmental networks, two broad perspectives are apparent:

- legitimacy is derived principally from close relations with and accountability to local, Southern and grass-roots organisations, which ensures that positions taken by the network reflect their experience and priorities.

- legitimacy is derived from other regional and international networks representing a diversity of perspectives. The network plays a necessary role in bringing together these groupings and can help them to interact effectively with the official proceedings and with each other.

We have already considered how the latter understanding of legitimacy was challenged and redefined by critics of the International Facilitating Committee. At the Paris NGO Conference organised by ELCI, the efficacy of the first definition was also called into question.

The ELCI NGO Conference, titled 'Roots for the Future', took place in Paris from 17 to 20 December 1991.[103] Representatives from 862 organisations, three-quarters from Southern-based NGOs, considered two principal documents: 'Justice Between Peoples – Justice Between Generations', a 'synthesis of citizens movements' responses to environment and development challenges' and *Agenda ya Wananchi* (Swahili for 'Sons and Daughters of the Earth'), a 'draft action plan for the 1990s', produced as an NGO response to the official Agenda 21. *Agenda ya Wananchi* included:

- descriptions of what were considered to be the most pressing problems facing the Earth, including: 'systems of governance that subjugate the individual', 'a world market system that largely brings benefits to a small minority... and discounts the future or passes the costs on to the world's poor', and 'a global culture in which the world's cultural diversity is getting subjugated and destroyed by the dominant economic and technological processes'.

- a set of requests made to governments: a request for participatory democracy; a request to develop a powerful and effective UN; a request to reduce military spending by at least a half; a request to Northern governments to reform the world's trading system; and a request to Northern governments to increase financial flows to the South and East.

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103 Information from 'NGO Conference held in Paris', Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.13 *op. cit.*, January 1992 (available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*), and from *FOE Link* Friends of the Earth International Issue 47, Amsterdam Jan / Feb 1992.

- a set of commitments made by participating NGOs: a commitment to build up global NGO alliances for working together in the 'struggle for global justice and sustainability'; a commitment to 'campaign against all those national and international organisations and interests who disregard the imperatives of justice and sustainability'; a commitment to 'the development of equitable and sustainable natural resource management systems and technologies'; a commitment to educate the public; a commitment to 'a struggle for the empowerment of the socially and ecologically marginalised people'; and a commitment to 'a struggle for women's empowerment and equal status in society'.[104]

Despite the vague but worthy tone of much of the documentation, dissatisfaction was expressed by a number of delegates with the conference as a whole. This was reflected in a declaration that was prepared and endorsed by regional workshops from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, as well as representatives of indigenous peoples. The statement criticised the conference for being too 'rigid and inflexible'. The structure of the meeting and logistical problems did not allow for discussion and production of joint statements on important structural issues such as 'the international economic order, the dominant models of development, the homogenisation of cultures and identities', among others. 'Having let this opportunity pass us by,' the declaration concluded, 'we have failed to achieve one of its objectives, to influence the UNCED process'.[105]

Friends of the Earth International's newsletter described the Roots for the Future Conference as 'a disaster',[106] although the final text of *Agenda ya Wananchi* was 'paradoxically, quite good'. Such criticisms must have been chastening for ELCI and its International Steering Committee, which had undertaken to 'strengthen the NGO movement by helping groups to combine their efforts, rather than simply to produce another new declaration'.[107] Tension between the objectives of the global coalition and the priorities of its Southern partners is evident in these statements. As noted earlier, ELCI's self-proclaimed role included: 'helping empower grassroots environment and development organizations; influencing policy that impacts on the environment through a strong NGO involvement in the planning and policy-making processes; promoting and facilitating South-South and North-South

104 Environment Liaison Centre International *Agenda ya Wananchi*, agreed at the 'Roots for Our Future' conference organised by ELCI in Paris in December 1991, ELCI Nairobi, 1992.
105 Quotes from *Centre for Our Common Future Network '92* No. 13, *op. cit.* Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
106 *FOE Link* Issue 47, *op. cit.*
107 'Global NGO Document for 1992' ELCI Paris, posted on en.unced.general, 25 September 1991.

dialogue'.[108] Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of those attending the Paris Conference would appear to have concluded that ELCI had failed to perform these functions-to their satisfaction.

To some extent, it seems reasonable to conclude that ELCI and its International Steering Committee had been 'hoist by their own petard'. By attempting to build consensus and partnerships among participants, the organisers had limited the likelihood that any radical critique(s) of the UNCED process would be formulated. By involving a broad range of organisations and ideological perspectives they had exacerbated the problem. And by establishing an agenda which prioritised the development of common positions they had drawn attention to these structural difficulties. In all of this the parallels with earlier criticisms of the International Facilitating Committee are clear. In this instance, reaching global consensus in order to present coherent NGO positions at UNCED seems to have taken precedence over the negotiation and articulation of a more complex and contradictory web of regional and issue-specific concerns. It is less clear whether, with hindsight, the organisers could have avoided any of these problems.

Despite these organisational and conceptual flaws, the Roots for the Future Conference did initiate collaboration among a group of NGOs which was subsequently termed the 'International NGO Forum' (INGOF). In the six months leading up to UNCED, INGOF developed some of the issues raised in *Agenda ya Wananchi* into the initial drafts of a set of Alternative Treaties to be negotiated further in the Global Forum. Although these NGO Treaties addressed the responsibilities of governments, their primary purpose was to articulate common principles and shared commitments agreed by a group of like-minded organisations. In this respect, *Agenda ya Wananchi* can be understood as the final attempt to present an overarching critique of the UNCED process. Its failure to deliver this to the satisfaction of many of the participants, and the failure of the Paris Conference to crystallise an effective NGO agenda for the official UNCED proceedings may have led to more deliberate analysis of the ideological and practical factors necessary for more effective collaboration in future. Alternatively, the lack of a coherent overview may have led to development of numerous partial analyses and proposals for action which had a negligible impact on the inter-governmental decisions.

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108 Profile of ELCI, 'Organisations Participating at the Global Forum', *op. cit.*

3.4.5 Fragmentation in the Run-up to Rio

Attempts by the IFC and ELCI to create effective NGO coalitions led to considerable ideological and practical difficulties, as we have seen. Nevertheless, other collaborative activities gained momentum. In the months preceding UNCED a large number of other initiatives assumed increasing importance as appreciation of the significance of the Rio Summit grew more widespread. International conferences were held by women's organisations, scientists, youth NGOs, indigenous peoples' organisations and many others. National and regional preparatory events took place around the world as media attention and public awareness increased.

• Table 3.2 Preparatory Conferences organised by various sectors

April 1991	Rotterdam Second World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM II). A non-binding Business Charter for Sustainable Development was launched, signed by over 200 business associations and corporations.
November 1991	Miami World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet included drafting of Women's Action Agenda 21 ; organised by the International Policy Action Committee formed for the purpose by the Women's Environment and Development Organisation.
November 1991	Vienna International Conference on an Agenda of Science for Environment and Development into the 21st Century (ASCEND 21) organised by the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) together with the Third World Academy of Sciences.
December 1991	Paris 'Roots for the Future' NGO Conference organised by the ISC / ELCI.
February 1992	Berlin 'Promotion of Environmental Protection at Municipal Level – Strategies and Approaches for Action' two-day meeting of 115 experts from cities, national governments, international and interlocal organizations, NGOs and the scientific community.
March 1992	Caracas, Venezuela World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
May 1992	Kari-Oca, Brazil International Conference of Indigenous Peoples on Environment, Development and Territories organised by the International Indigenous Commission and the Intertribal Committee in Brazil.
May 1992	Rio de Janeiro International Chamber of Commerce Industry Forum (27 – 29 May) followed by Council meeting of the Business Council for Sustainable Development (29 – 31 May).

May 1992	Curitiba, Brazil World Urban Forum in preparation for UNCED, organised jointly by UNDP and Curitiba City Hall.

As drafts of the Rio texts took shape, NGO networks also became increasingly focused on influencing negotiations of particular relevance to them. For example meetings of the international negotiating committees established to prepare the conventions on climate change and biological diversity were obviously of interest to members of the Climate Action Network and the Rainforest Action Network, respectively. Similarly, deliberations on specific sections of Agenda 21 (addressing issues such as oceans, agriculture, human settlements and health) became of increasing interest to individual organisations and alliances focusing on these areas. This more detailed work frequently required considerable knowledge and expertise. In many instances, close collaboration between government officials, UNCED secretariat staff and NGOs was cemented through these negotiations.[109] By the same token, issues on which there were fundamental differences were exposed and exacerbated tensions between the various sectors.

One factor which had united NGOs attending the first three PrepComs and negotiations on the draft conventions was the desire to secure access to informal negotiations.[110] Although this had been possible in a number of the working groups functioning during the first three PrepComs, this had been at the discretion of the Working Group chair and could be vetoed by any government. At the third PrepCom, NGO representatives had been removed from Working Group 1 at the request of a number of governments. Thus by March 1992 questions of access to PrepCom IV, and the precedent these would set for NGO access during UNCED itself, remained contentious issues. The NGO Strategy Group assumed a central role in efforts to challenge these restrictions and discuss ways in which access could be made more secure.

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109 See for example the International Institute for Sustainable Development *Earth Summit Bulletin* from PrepCom IV vol.1 no. 27, IISD Manitoba Canada April 1992: 'After two years of working closely together, it became increasingly clear that close interactions and the exchange of ideas created a very productive and positive work environment for both entities. NGOs realized that many government delegates were deeply committed but were limited by their negotiating instructions. On the other hand, governments grew to see beyond the conventional stereotype of NGOs.'

110 UN jargon distinguishes between 'formal' sessions, where officials generally make statements 'for the record' (these are open to NGOs); 'informal' sessions (sometimes termed 'formal-informals'), in which detailed negotiations on proposed text take place with translation facilities but without transcription; and 'informal-informals', where the most sensitive discussions between governments occur - these range from open-ended meetings without translation but otherwise similar to informal sessions to meetings of a small number of country delegates in the chair's office. This typography is adapted from Bernstein, Johannah, Pamela Chasek, Langston James Goree VI, and Richard Jordan 'PrepCom III Week 2 Report' UNCED NGO Strategy Group, August 1991. The distinctions drawn are necessarily imprecise, since an informal session by definition can be conducted according to the wishes of the Chair and government participants.

Whilst interactions of these kinds became increasingly elaborate and involved, a growing number of organisations with little or no prior experience of UN procedures were granted accreditation to attend UNCED preparatory meetings.[111] Many brought considerable expertise and were able to articulate the concerns of under-represented groups and perspectives. Nevertheless, there were clearly discrepancies between the needs and expectations of those who had participated from the outset and those who had become involved much later in the process.[112]

Given its focus on the official UNCED preparations, the NGO Strategy Group assumed a particular significance in this complex scenario. Morning strategy sessions took place daily during PrepCom IV and were complemented by a growing number of NGO caucuses and working groups. In addition, the Strategy Group liaised with the UNCED Secretariat and others to organise discussions with key officials from the UNCED Secretariat and governments. It was also the focus for debate on issues of access to meetings during the PrepCom and to official sessions at UNCED itself. Funding had been obtained from three US charitable foundations to produce *Earth Summit Bulletin* daily during the session. Although not formally linked to the Strategy Group, the publication was written by individuals closely associated with it at previous PrepComs and articulated the perspectives of NGOs closely involved in the negotiations while providing an authoritative and influential account of the proceedings. As we have seen, these are all activities which the IFC and ELCI had previously identified as key elements in a broader programme of collaboration between NGOs. Both had also endeavoured to provide these services in their attempts to act as the central node in NGO preparations for UNCED; yet both appeared to have retreated from these efforts prior to the Summit.

It is striking that, in accounts of the final PrepCom for UNCED, activities of the IFC/COCF and ISC/ELCI do not feature prominently, even in their own newsletters. While the IFC organised some briefings for NGO representatives new to the process and dialogue sessions with officials, it had little involvement with the substance of the session. The subsequent issue of *Network '92* reproduced in its entirety the PrepCom IV summary report from the *Earth Summit Bulletin*, which suggests that the latter should now be viewed as the most authoritative source of information on official negotiations.[113]

ELCI's post-PrepCom IV newsletter suggests a similar retreat from attempts directly to influence the

111 In April 1991 193 NGOs had gained accreditation (letter from Yolanda Kakabadse, NGO Liaison Officer, UNCED Secretariat to 'NGOs seeking accreditation', 11 April 1991). By the start of PrepCom IV over 1 000 organisations had been accredited (International Institute for Sustainable Development *Earth Summit Bulletin* from PrepCom IV, vol.1 no.1 *op. cit.*, 2 March 1992); by the end that number had risen to 1 420.
112 See the Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations' Issues and Non-Governmental Organizations Programme *Report on the Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Preparatory Process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* CASIN, Geneva 1992 for a more detailed account of these issues. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM *op. cit.*

inter-governmental process: 'It comes as no surprise that NGOs who were intensely involved in the UNCED process will have to look for alternatives themselves, rather than relying on governments to solve the deepening environmental crisis'.[114]

This is not to suggest that either network had withdrawn from preparations for the Rio Summit. Rather, their focus had shifted to contexts in which they might be able to operate more effectively. ELCI and the ISC placed greater significance on inter-NGO dialogue as the basis for progress, contrasting the closed and uninspiring negotiations between governments with the potential benefits to be derived from collaboration between NGOs:

> If there ever was a time that citizens groups laboured under the illusion that they could greatly influence decisions made inside the compact and closed-door world of government negotiations, that has been all but dashed in this fourth and final meeting of diplomats before the Earth Summit.[115]

As a result of this shift in emphasis, ELCI became an active participant in preparations for the parallel events to take place in Rio, in the process representing *Agenda ya Wananchi* as 'a vehicle for creating cohesion in the NGO world'.[116]

The IFC was also more closely associated with the Global Forum than with UNCED itself during the events. This entailed joint responsibility, with the Brazilian NGO Forum, for organisation of the Global Forum and the hosting of a cross-sectoral dialogue on issues to be addressed in UNCED, 'The Intersectoral Dialogue'. The post-UNCED edition of *Network '92* considers the activities and successes of COCF and the IFC at length and speculates on the organisations' future roles, but does not identify influencing inter-governmental decision-making in either context.[117] In contrast to ELCI's cynicism about the nature of inter-governmental decision-making, the UNCED edition of *Network '92* considers participation by NGOs in inter-governmental processes as desirable in itself, rather than assessing its value as dependent on the more substantive achievements it enables:

> Never before in history have so many different people, from so many different walks of life and with so many different interests, gathered together in one place to discuss one common interest; to try and solve one common problem ... This has been an exercise in public participation and partnership on a global scale. Without a doubt, one of the most successful outcomes of the

113 Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.16 *op. cit.*, April 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
114 Environment Liaison Centre International *Ecoforum* vol.16:1 ELCI Nairobi March / April 1992 p.3.
115 *Ibid*, p.8.
116 *Ibid* p.8.
117 Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.19, *op. cit.* August - September 1992.

UNCED process has already taken place, without the events themselves having even begun. In searching for solutions to the problems we face, we have developed a process that is, in itself, part of the solution.[118]

This conclusion was not endorsed by many organisations involved in UNCED.

3.4.5.1 NGOs versus transnational corporations

Hostility towards this analysis is most apparent in the assertion by a number of NGOs that the private sector, and multi-national companies in particular, were responsible for many of the problems identified in the UNCED documentation and should be made to alter their activities through concerted global regulation and legislation. The draft texts of Agenda 21 and the other Rio agreements provided very little to support this analysis, which fuelled assertions that the private sector had exerted undue influence in ensuring that 'responsible entrepreneurship' and increased industrial development were presented as solutions.[119]

Suggestions that there was a covert agenda to avoid such initiatives gained credence through the dismantling of the UN Centre for Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) by the new UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in February 1992, as part of a broader reform of the social and economic activities of the UN deemed 'pro-Western' by *The Times*.[120] The UNCTC had prepared a Code of Conduct for TNCs and recommendations for the text of Agenda 21 on 'Transnational Corporations and Sustainable Development'. These were not formally presented to governments at PrepCom IV – Martin Khor's contemporary report outlines the divisions underlying this *volte face*:

> The UNCTC was asked by ECOSOC to prepare action recommendations on TNCs and sustainable development as possible inputs into the Earth Charter and Agenda 21 of UNCED. A comprehensive set of recommendations was prepared on five major areas: global/corporate environmental management; risk and hazard minimization; environmentally sounder consumption patterns; full-cost environmental accounting and environmental conventions, standards and guidelines. However, at a meeting of the UN Commission on TNCs (which oversees the UNCTC), industry together with the US, EC and Japan made clear their opposition to the recommendations. To date, the UNCED secretariat has also not included the UNCTC

118 *Ibid.*
119 See for example Bruno, Kenny *The Greenpeace Book of Greenwash* Greenpeace International, Amsterdam May 1992: 'Despite the urgent need for binding agreements controlling the impact of TNCs on the environment and their role in development, the formal UNCED process has all but ignored the issue. Instead, the corporations themselves and their political organizations such as the BCSD and ICC have set the terms of the debate. As a result UNCED itself now risks becoming greenwash on a grand scale by giving the false impression that important, positive change has occurred and by failing to alert the world to the root causes of environment and development problems. In the end, the TNCs, in collaboration with some governments, could hijack the Earth Summit and destroy an historic opportunity to make progress toward ecologically sound, socially equitable development.'
120 Quoted in Khor Kok Peng, Martin 'Regulating Transnational Corporations: the biggest gap in UNCED's agenda' Briefing Papers for UNCED No.20, Third World Network Penang Malaysia March 1992.

recommendations into its Agenda 21 drafts; neither has it circulated the recommendations (contained in E/C.10/1992/2) to UNCED delegates although the document had been referred to Prepcom 4 for discussion.[121]

The final text of Agenda 21 instead proposes 'strengthening the role of business and industry', emphasising industrial development and increased efficiency in the use of resources as critical contributions in reducing poverty and the unsustainable use of natural resources. Both correlate closely with the vision of the Business Council for Sustainable Development (considered earlier). Neither can be readily corroborated. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) report on UNCED concludes 'there is no evidence at all to suggest that market forces by themselves protect the environment. There is, on the other hand, plenty of evidence that unfettered market forces can quickly degrade the environment.'[122]

The evidence appears to support conspiracy theorists who decried an unholy alliance between Western governments supporting global market liberalisation, the UNCED Secretariat and transnational corporations. Such assertions were made forcibly and repeatedly prior to and during the Rio Summit. One document in particular gained widespread support. At the end of PrepCom IV four organisations (Greenpeace International, Friends of the Earth International, the Brazilian NGO Forum and Third World Network) issued 'A ten point plan to save the Earth Summit', which was endorsed by a further 27 NGOs.[123] This was presented as an ultimatum to governments if the support of the signatories was to be regained. The text expressed concern at the lack of progress towards UNCED's stated objectives and addressed ten issues in particular (including climate change, transnational corporations, hazardous wastes, forests, nuclear weapons, and trade). Common to the majority is a call for states to become more proactive in establishing regulations and legislation to limit socially and environmentally damaging activities. The plan concludes that such action is unlikely, given the influence of opposing perspectives: 'the gravity of the situation deepens as UNCED entrusts care for environment and development with the very institutions that are causing many of the problems in the first place'.[124] For four of the most influential NGO groupings involved in the UNCED process, this constituted a final attempt to alter the outcome of UNCED, although its presentation as a public statement without more detailed substantiating documentation suggests its target audience may have been the media and the general public rather than government officials.

121 Ibid.
122 Holmberg, Johan, Koy Thomson and Lloyd Timberlake *Facing the Future: Beyond the Earth Summit* Earthscan London 1993 p.14.
123 Reproduced in *Third World Resurgence* No.21, Third World Network Malaysia May 1992.
124 Ibid.

By contrast, the objectives of business and industry organisations appeared to have been overwhelmingly achieved from UNCED. A UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) report records a statement submitted by industry representatives to Ambassador Mazairac (UNCED co-ordinator for Major Groups discussions). This urged that:

> we must ensure that our actions and responses to environment and development issues motivates and enhances the creative and dynamic process in the private sector. The capacity of industry to adjust to sustainable development and to continue to create wealth and employment in all countries must be seen as the key to achieving sustainable development.[125]

The NGLS report notes the extent to which these principles are reflected in the final text of Agenda 21 and concludes, 'The objectives of the business and industry representatives were, in the main, achieved'.[126]

3.5 14 Days in Rio de Janeiro

It was suggested above that the International Facilitating Committee (IFC) and the Environment Liaison Committee International (ELCI) had withdrawn from the central roles as conduits and promoters of non-governmental involvement initially envisaged for themselves in the official UNCED proceedings. A similar shift in priorities was also evident in BNGOF. The Forum had initially undertaken to act as 'a representative and legitimate NGO reference point in Brazil for liaison on both practical and substantive questions involving UNCED',[127] endorsing the 'independent sectors' approach. However, it had subsequently supported the 'Ten point plan to save the Earth Summit', which was critical of government priorities and hostile towards the activities of transnational corporations, as noted above. BNGOF, the IFC and ELCI were all more actively involved with the parallel NGO Global Forum than with the official UNCED negotiations.

Thus comparable tensions and difficulties are apparent in each of the three NGO networks which had been most influential in preparations for UNCED. Early strategy documents demonstrate their intention to produce position papers endorsed by their constituents which would have a significant impact on the inter-governmental negotiations. The presumption is evident in each that this process would be relatively straightforward, and would provide the network with a strong set of

125 UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service *E & D File* No.29 'Major Groups' UN Non-Government Liaison Service, Geneva July 1992 p.2.
126 *Ibid.*
127 Brazilian NGO Forum 'Preparatory Forum of Brazilian NGOs' Bulletin 1, BNGOF Sao Paulo Brazil October 1990.

recommendations and objectives, and the legitimacy to pursue these on behalf of the broader constituency. In each instance, it became increasingly clear that a coherent set of priorities would not be forthcoming and that the scope for channelling the views of a diverse range of non-governmental actors into the official deliberations was very limited.

Yet a separate trend should also be noted. In each instance, the benefits of increased interaction appear to have been redefined. Analysis of the necessity for collaboration during the earlier stages of preparation for UNCED privileged influence over official proceedings and placed the onus on governments and the UNCED Secretariat to motivate the broader constituencies. Koy Thomson's identification of flaws in the national reporting structure charges Maurice Strong with a particular responsibility: 'To persuade all sectors of society to [come together] he must inspire an unprecedented sense of shared responsibility, accountability and confidence in the conference itself'.[128] As the Summit approached, both enthusiasts and cynics found intrinsic value for NGOs in the formation and maintenance of alliances. They placed the responsibility for initiating collaboration with the organisations concerned and considered broader societal change as the most relevant measure of success, rather than impact on the UNCED process.

This transition is evident in the shifting priorities of the principal networks identified earlier. Whereas initially the IFC's remit was to facilitate independent sectors' interactions with UNCED proceedings, by mid-1992 its main focus was on a three day conference 'Decisions for Change: the Intersectoral Dialogue', described as 'the only opportunity within the entire '92 Global Forum for the various sectors of society to come together, share their individual agendas, engage one another in a substantive debate over their positions, and work towards achieving higher orders of inter-sectoral dialogue'.[129] The 'Alternative Treaties' finalised at the Global Forum have a similar rationale:

> The long-term objective of the treaties is to build the foundations of a worldwide movement, comprised of NGOs, social movements and grassroot organisations, to establish new patterns of equity, participation and ecologically sustainable development. Each treaty contains practical solutions that NGO can implement in their future actions.[130]

The fourth NGO network considered in detail previously was the NGO Strategy Group, established as an informal alliance by organisations closely involved in following negotiations during the four

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128 Thomson, Koy 'The Two Faces of the UK National Report', Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.4 *op. cit.*, February 1991. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
129 Centre for Our Common Future *Brundtland Bulletin* No. 15 *op. cit.* Special Feature March 1992 p.7.

PrepComs for UNCED. Here also, considerable changes were apparent by June 1992. By PrepCom IV, the growth in the number of organisations accredited to attend the preparatory meetings required greater formalisation in the procedures followed by the Strategy Group. Pressure was placed on key individuals to provide a widening range of services as the needs of participating organisations became more diverse. Tensions over access to the negotiations for NGOs and the merit of the Summit texts also placed considerable strain on collaborating NGOs. During UNCED, negotiations on remaining text were predominantly conducted behind closed doors. A demonstration by youth organisations on 11 June was aggressively broken up by security staff and led to even tighter restrictions on NGOs during the high-level conclusion of the Summit. There was little opportunity for the type of co-ordination offered by the Strategy Group at the PrepComs and less likelihood of influencing the negotiations on the contentious issues remaining to be agreed. While large numbers of NGOs attended UNCED sessions at Rio Centro, for a significant proportion of those eligible to do so the limited opportunities to influence proceedings proved unappealing. By contrast, events at the NGO Global Forum, most notably the Forum of International NGOs and Social Movements (generally referred to as INGOF), provided a more constructive context for NGO activists.

3.6 Agreements reached in Rio by Governments

The main agreements reached at UNCED were noted earlier. Opinion is sharply divided over the extent to which NGOs could viably claim to have influenced the final texts, or more importantly the conceptual framework which the Rio agreements articulate. Malaysian diplomat Fauziah Mohd Taib's account suggests that their impact was peripheral: 'The NGOs and other pressure groups may have in one way or another helped shape the agenda, but the agreements that were eventually arrived at were negotiated by the practitioners who were representing their governments and thus defending their national interests'.[131] Others identify significant themes attributable to NGOs and credit them with important roles in debates on institutional issues:

> Whole chunks of Agenda 21 can be traced to NGO drafting groups and coalitions. One example is the section in the poverty chapter on 'empowerment', which completely changed the orientation of the text. Women's organizations were the trail-blazers of a theme which runs throughout Agenda 21: citizens' participation in decision making, with a particular emphasis on

130 Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations' Issues and Non-Governmental Organizations Programme *Report on the Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Preparatory Process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, op. cit.*
131 Fauziah Mohd Taib *Malaysia and UNCED An analysis of a diplomatic process: 1989 - 1992* Kluwer Law International, London 1997 p.160.

the role of women. Another theme, that of taking actions and making decisions as close as possible to the people, was pushed by NGOs. The Commission on Sustainable Development was given a significant boost by NGO lobbying. Many other examples can be found, and we should not forget that the fact that the Earth Summit was happening at all was due, in some measure, to the persuasive skills of environment and development organizations.[132]

Princen and Finger assert that the architects of UNCED envisaged a limited service role for NGO participants, publicising and promoting the Summit among their constituencies and perhaps providing some input to governments in areas where their expertise is recognised as complementary to the resources already available. Those organisations which were able to perform these functions were acknowledged and rewarded accordingly, while those which did not conform to the official delineation of the roles to be played by NGOs were marginalised from the official process.[133] Princen and Finger associate this process of marginalisation closely with the UNCED Secretary General:

> Strong had already been the Secretary-General of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment held in 1972 and was a member of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Traumatised as he had been by heavy social movement protest in Stockholm in 1972, Strong was determined from the very beginning to pre-empt any opposition to UNCED. This experience explains, at least in part, Strong's interest in NGOs.[134]

These three positions are rather overstated. There is little to suggest that NGOs exerted sufficient influence over negotiations to change the positions of key governments and plenty of testimony from IGO representatives disillusioned with the narrow self-interest exhibited by many government delegates. On the other hand, the influence of industry groups on sections of Agenda 21 has been documented and challenges the exclusive role Fauziah Mohd Taib ascribes to governments. Princen and Finger's analysis invests so much power and influence in Maurice Strong that it requires them to turn a blind eye to instances when his intentions were thwarted (the negligible success of the Earth Council, for example).

Attributing responsibility and distinguishing influence in these circumstances is difficult and perhaps contentious. Nevertheless, the overall course the negotiations took was not determined by any one government. In the ideological and pragmatic dialogues which took place in preparation for UNCED the contribution of constructive and innovative ideas was of key importance, whatever their origin. NGOs were able to take part in this process and can legitimately claim to have helped in elaborating many elements of the agreements reached. The concurrent development of networks promoting

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132 Holmberg, Johan, Koy Thomson and Lloyd Timberlake *Facing the Future: Beyond the Earth Summit op. cit.* p.27.
133 Princen, Thomas and Matthias Finger *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global* Routledge, London 1994 pp.220-1.

interaction between NGOs at the global level further supports the notion of a 'melting pot' of ideas from which the Summit agreements were drawn. This image also allows for the frustration and cynicism evident in a number of commentaries at the absence of a clear and radical critique of existing practices and ways of living. Difficult issues could be avoided because of the need to achieve a broad consensus, and in most cases no one would be held responsible for their exclusion.

3.6.1 Major Groups

One area in which consideration of the influence of NGOs is particularly pertinent is the Agenda 21 text on 'major groups'. In Agenda 21, non-governmental actors are acknowledged as nine distinct 'major groups of civil society'[135] with particular roles to play in achieving sustainable development,[136] a concept which would appear to be closely related to the 'independent sectors' of society identified by the Centre for Our Common Future. This constitutes a major conceptual shift for the UN, with implications for the ways in which governments, inter-governmental bodies and other actors relate to these diverse groups. It should also be noted that inclusion of the nine major groups chapters was agreed by governments near the end of the final PrepCom. No discussion appears to have taken place to establish the rationale behind the inclusion of some groups and the exclusion of others. Very little consultation on these issues appears to have taken place with the groups to be included. There is some evidence that attempts were made to include other sectors. One report states that 'proposals at PrepCom IV to include religious groups, peasants and people of African descent as separate major groups did not meet with success'.[137] Yet the criteria on which these decisions were based are not clear.

While women's groups, trade unions, the private sector, local authorities and NGOs all contributed significant proportions of the material eventually included in their respective chapters, they were not invited to provide a coherent perspective on the section as a whole, or on relations between different major groups. The overall sense of a concept introduced into Agenda 21 as an afterthought is

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134 *Ibid.* p.195.

135 The nine chapters of Agenda 21 on major groups are: Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development; Children and youth in sustainable development; Recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities; Strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations: partners for sustainable development; Local authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21; Strengthening the role of workers and their trade unions; Strengthening the role of business and industry; Scientific and technological community; Strengthening the role of farmers. *Agenda 21* chapters 24-32, *op. cit.*

136 Agenda 21 Chapter 27: Strengthening the role of Nongovernmental Organizations para. 27.2: 'One of the major challenges facing the world community as it seeks to replace unsustainable development patterns with environmentally sound and sustainable development is the need to activate a sense of common purpose on behalf of all sectors of society. The chances of forging such a sense of purpose will depend on the willingness of all sectors to participate in genuine social partnership and dialogue, while recognizing the independent roles, responsibilities and special capacities of each.' *Agenda 21, op. cit.*

substantiated by the fact that the term 'major groups' was not used in any official documents, nor in any of the myriad unofficial papers, prior to the final stages of PrepCom IV. Even so, there had been a great deal of attention to the broader roles played by organisations of civil society in achieving sustainable development during preparations for UNCED.

Five sectors had been acknowledged at the Bergen Conference: 'industry, trade unions, the scientific community, youth, and Non-Governmental Organizations concerned with environmental issues'.[138] The first issue of the International Facilitating Committee's newsletter defines the independent sectors of society as 'development and environment NGOs, grassroots movements, women's organizations, youth groups, the media, indigenous peoples, scientific unions, trade unions, industry, religious and interfaith communities, etc'.[139] Thus the non-governmental organisation closest to the UNCED Secretary General had provided both the general rationale for expanding the understanding of the roles played by a range of 'independent sectors' and identified seven of the nine major groups eventually cited in Agenda 21 before the first PrepCom had even begun. Development of the concept is evident throughout the preparatory meetings.[140]

A further basis for inclusion would seem to be the emphasis on devolving decision-making to the appropriate level implicit in many expositions on sustainable development, including the Brundtland Report. Reporting on PrepCom II, Kimo notes the significance of a procedural paper tabled by the Canadian Government:

> [L.38] calls on the Secretariat to take into consideration the 'traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous people and other local communities for the sustainable use, conservation, management and development of natural resources and their special relationship to the environment'; This document requires the Secretariat to listen to indigenous peoples, rubber tappers, colonists and other local communities that are sustainably using their environment and use their 'traditional practices' as the basis for recommendations by the Secretariat and thus the PrepCom.[141]

While records to substantiate Kimo's conclusions are not available, it appears that this document provided impetus for the involvement of both indigenous peoples and local communities in the official process. Although the reference here is to local communities, Agenda 21 recognises local

137 UN Non-Government Liaison Service *E & D File* No.29, 'Major Groups' *op. cit.* July 1992.
138 Centre for Our Common Future *Brundtland Bulletin* No.8 *op. cit.* June 1990 p.1.
139 Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No. 1 *op. cit.*, July 1990.
140 Maurice Strong was responsible for the UNCED Secretariat paper A/CONF.151/PC/9 in 1990. In para.8 under 'groups in society' are listed six of the nine groups covered in Agenda 21 Section III.
141 Goree VI, Langston James 'Kimo' 'PrepCom II Chronicles: Notes from Geneva' posted on en.unced.general, April 1991.

authorities as one of the major groups of civil society. This may be because communities do not constitute a distinct entity, while staff and elected representatives are more demonstrably accountable. It may be that there is no direct correlation between the issue as raised at PrepCom II and Agenda 21 chapter 28. Nevertheless, L.38 is an early acknowledgement of the significance of effective local governance, which is elaborated throughout Agenda 21 and particularly in the chapters on local authorities and indigenous peoples.

For both groupings, participation in UNCED was problematic. Indigenous peoples' representatives frequently asserted their sovereignty over their territories and rejected both the claim that they constituted one of nine major groups of society and the inference that they had anything to learn from other sectors on living sustainably. Local authorities also bridled at being termed 'NGOs' for purposes of accreditation to the UN and the implication that local democracy was less legitimate than national government.

Pressure for the incorporation of local government as a Major Group can be attributed in large measure to the work of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, formed in 1990. A further significant impetus was provided by the 30th World Congress of the International Union of , Local Authorities (IULA) in Oslo in June 1991. The Congress produced a declaration emphasising the central role to be played by local government in establishing partnerships with other sectors 'to make environmental protection measures work'.[142] ICLEI's most significant contribution to Agenda 21 was the 'Local Agenda 21 project', an attempt to assist municipalities in implementing UNCED commitments.[143] Reference to 'Local Agenda 21' passed almost unnoticed into the text of Agenda 21 chapter 28, but has since had a major impact in many parts of the world.

As with Local Agenda 21, it appears that the broader significance of these nine chapters of Agenda 21 was not readily apparent to non-governmental participants and that no coherent rationale determined the inclusion of some sectors and the rejection of others. Even so, identification of distinct sectors of civil society as contributors to sustainable development has had wider resonance in two areas of particular relevance: discussions on procedures for accreditation of NGOs to the UN; and the

142 Reported in Centre for Our Common Future Network '92 No. 9 op. cit., August 1991. Available on Earth Summit: The NGO Archives CD ROM, op. cit.
143 Centre for Our Common Future Brundtland Bulletin No.14 op. cit. December 1991 p.39. ICLEI also initiated an Urban CO_2 Reduction Project intended to help each municipal government develop its own comprehensive CO_2 reduction programme.

formation of national-level bodies to monitor and promote UNCED follow-up (often termed national councils for sustainable development).

3.7 Agreements reached in Rio by NGOs

For many NGOs in Rio de Janeiro for the Earth Summit, the opportunity to initiate and strengthen networks with other organisations was of paramount importance. The number of people present was unprecedented. The issues under discussion had never been presented in this way. The chance to establish common principles and joint programmes of work might not present itself again. Thus regional and national linkages were strengthened: 'Before this meeting, we had a lot of trouble trying to link up with groups in some Asian countries. But here we found 20 Koreans, 15 Taiwanese and so on. We now know who to talk with.'[144] Numerous formal and informal associations were cemented during the Summit, and new collaborative alliances such as EarthAction International were created. Negotiation of 32 Alternative Treaties under the auspices of the Forum for International NGOs and Social Movements (INGOF) provided an intellectual focus for this activity.

3.7.1 The Alternative Treaties

The Alternative Treaties were first proposed at PrepCom III. Their purpose was redefined at PrepCom IV, taking into account the fall-out from the Paris NGO Conference. Drafts and outlines were developed by interested organisations in the months preceding the Global Forum. Each Treaty was co-ordinated by a Northern and a Southern NGO. INGOF received funding for this work from the Canadian International Development Agency, the Norwegian and Japanese governments, the US National Wildlife Federation, and WWF among others. The Treaties were divided into four groups: NGO co-operation and institution building; alternative economic issues; major environmental issues; and cross-sectoral issues. Two thousand delegates undertook to contribute to the Alternative Treaty process, which continued throughout the two weeks of UNCED.

The Treaties were carefully presented not as a critique of the official UNCED agreements, but rather as a set of commitments to actions which could be achieved by NGOs acting in collaboration:

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44 Chee Yoke Ling, Third World Network, quoted in Isberto, Ramon 'Earth Summit: For NGOs, unity means staying slightly apart' Inter Press Service, 1 June 1992.

The treaty process was conceived of through the build-up to the Rio conference, as successive PrepComs indicated that the government negotiating process, whilst far from closed to NGO participation, was nonetheless unlikely to deliver an agenda reflecting the serious need for immediate action to change our understanding of economic, material and ethical relations in the world. NGOs are increasingly gaining confidence in their legitimate claim to a voice in the global policy dialogue. They are asserting with growing conviction the need for an empowered civil society.[145]

A core steering group oversaw negotiations during the Global Forum, providing a basic infrastructure (translation facilities, venues, access to computers) and hosting discussions on the rationale behind the process. In addition to large numbers of organisations new to UNCED, many of the NGOs and individuals who had followed the preparations closely contributed to the formulation of the Treaties. Peter Padbury identifies two assumptions that shaped the NGO treaty process:

A. international co-operation is required to build consensus among NGOs to replace current institutions, policies and processes and to envision new ones that are more equitable, just and sustainable, and

B. NGOs are key catalysts in the change process; they are moving from being critics of governments to being inventors and builders of the sustainable society.[146]

The Treaties provide an illuminating example of the elaboration of NGO systems for self-governance. The role of transnational networks in establishing and popularising constitutive norms and thereby challenging prevailing regulative concepts of legitimacy were explored more fully in the previous chapter.[147] The relevance of collaboration among NGOs to negotiate the means for achieving common objectives has been considered by a number of authors. Less attention has been given to the significance of interaction in exploring contested or conflicting norms, or in conceptualising new principles. The role of INGOF in overseeing negotiation of the Alternative Treaties provides a striking example of an NGO network which promoted dialogue on norms, given unprecedented prominence by the convergence of some 50 000 NGO representatives in Rio for UNCED. One commentary states that '[t]he long-term objective of the treaties is to build the foundations of a worldwide movement,

145 Padbury, Peter 'NGOs Sign Alternative Treaties at the '92 Global Forum' Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.18, *op. cit.*, June - July 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
146 'International NGO Forum: International Steering Committee (1992-1993)' *The Network* No.29 August 1993, from a paper drafted by Peter Padbury and circulated at the first session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, June 1993.
147 The distinction between the "constitutive" definition of group identities and interests and the "regulative" definition of legitimate behaviour and policy has been elaborated by Kratochwil, Frederich V *Norms, Rules, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* CUP, Cambridge 1989.

comprised of NGOs, social movements and grassroot organisations, to establish new patterns of equity participation and ecologically sustainable development'.[148]

It is also relevant to note the considerable difficulties experienced in bringing widely divergent organisations together to negotiate common statements of belief and the means by which these might be furthered. A contemporary internal report by staff of Friends of the Earth describes the 'disagreeable mix of movements present at the Global Forum', including multilateral banks, multinationals, and companies. 'This was an indication of what was awaiting us: continued tension between those of us who want social, economic and ecological justice and those who profit from the present situation'. The authors suggest that Friends of the Earth's positions on many of the issues covered by the Alternative Treaties are 'more detailed and more radical', and they question the motives of some of the other participants: 'It is, moreover, possible that some of the treaties [will] be used against us, posing as the voice of NGOs, but in fact representing the interests of infiltrating companies or government representatives'.[149]

What role (if any) should the private sector have in negotiating in this context? Is industry necessarily hostile to NGO work (and vice versa), or are its representatives necessary participants if viable, pragmatic solutions are to be elaborated? Should the private sector be considered in these homogenous terms, or does it include a diversity of actors who have very different positions on the issues at hand? These questions proved highly controversial for NGOs during the Rio process and have led to tensions and divisions in many other contexts.

Grubb et al. emphasise the problems which were apparent in the negotiation of the Alternative Treaties and suggest that the principal reason divisions were less pronounced than in the official conference is because the participants were not negotiating 'real' agreements or engaging with all the relevant actors:

> These negotiations between the NGOs at Rio were certainly not as difficult as the official negotiations, but they were hardly easy, and it requires little imagination to foresee the depth of

148 Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations' Issues and Non-Governmental Organizations Programme Report on the Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Preparatory Process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, op. cit.
149 Friends of the Earth International 'The Earth Summit: Myths, Verdicts, Actions, Landmines' Section on the Treaty Process FOE Link No.50, FOEI Amsterdam June - August 1992.

disputes had they been negotiating real policy and trying to take account of the full range of viewpoints and affected parties (for example including NGOs from-industry or trade unions).[150]

Princen and Finger suggest that environmental NGOs' activities in world politics can be understood as 'the construction of linkages on two dimensions: one dimension connects the biophysical to the political, and the other connects the local to the global'.[151] Insofar as they are able to bring the extremes of these two dimensions together, the authors suggest, NGOs play a distinct role which in turn is a key element in the elaboration of new ways to articulate and tackle the 'global ecological crisis'.[152] Conversely, NGOs which do not bridge these gaps are neglecting their principal responsibility at the international level, which is to set the conditions under which states will act (or react). This distinction is explored in a consideration of the roles played by NGOs at the Rio Summit:

> many NGOs invested in strengthening the UNCED process, but neglected the positions of NGOs operating at the grass-roots level. Those NGOs that accepted their assigned role of information disseminator and promoter [i.e., a role prescribed by the UNCED secretariat] got visibility and some degree of access. But they also alienated many NGOs, especially the grassroots and social change NGOs, who were largely excluded and whose views did not get translated to the international level. By contrast, at Rio itself, many NGOs directed their efforts toward strengthening the global NGO community, as opposed to strengthening the state system through the UNCED process. One mechanism was the so-called alternative treaty writing process, a complex and trying effort to write statements of NGO self-commitment. To do this, both vertical and horizontal connections had to be · made, connections that, in the implementation phase of the UNCED process, may prove critical. Thus, it appears that those NGO activities in UNCED that conformed to the states' conception of appropriate activity – traditional, essentially national politics yet in an international forum – were most visible but probably least effective in translating local and biophysical needs to the global level. The real translational linkages began to take shape apart from the official process, the concrete effects of which will only be seen over the long term.[153]

Princen and Finger claim that the distinct role of environmental NGOs in world politics is to make links between biophysical realities and political processes and between local circumstances and global decision-making. In so doing, NGOs constitute the principal spur for action. They articulate the problems to be confronted, generate pressure on governments to respond to these challenges, and provide viable alternative models where possible. The central assertion the authors make is that the

150 Grubb, Michael, Matthias Koch, Abby Munson, Francis Sullivan and Koy Thomson *The Earth Summit Agreements: A Guide and Assessment* Earthscan Publications London 1993 p.44. Peter Sand provides a more considered appraisal of the relevance of the Alternative Treaties in any broader assessment of the UNCED outcomes: 'The 'alternative treaties' were not intended as legally binding instruments, nor as a substitute for the important simultaneous input of NGOs to the official UNCED process and other ongoing efforts at international environmental law-making. They served mainly as a focus of civic interaction between NGOs in the joint articulation of goals and action plans.' Sand, Peter 'International Environmental Law After Rio' *European Journal of International Law* pp.377-389, vol.4 no.3, 1993.
151 Princen, Thomas and Matthias Finger *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global* Routledge London 1994 pp.220-1.
152 'NGOs make their contribution when they translate biophysical change under conditions of global ecological crisis into political change and do so at both the local and global levels'. *Ibid.* p.232.

architects of UNCED envisaged a limited service role for NGO participants, publicising and promoting the Summit among their constituencies and perhaps providing some input to governments in areas where their expertise is recognised as complementary to the resources already available. Those organisations which were able to perform these functions were acknowledged and rewarded accordingly, while those which did not conform to the official delineation of the roles to be played by NGOs were marginalised from the official process.

Yet the focus of activity for these marginalised organisations was not just on criticising the official event, or on attempting to use other means to force their perspectives onto the official agenda (though these clearly did occur). The most coherent output from NGOs attempting to articulate an alternative to the official agreements was a series of 'statements of *NGO self-commitment*' (my italics).

It is rather frustrating that, having established a dichotomy between NGOs which played a passive role in information dissemination and publicising UNCED and those which attempted to shape a coherent alternative conceptualisation of issues, priorities and responsibilities, in their conclusions Princen and Finger revert to a much narrower notion of measures of effectiveness which can be applied to NGO networks:

> The effectiveness test for these coalitions is not, as noted, the apparent clout according to budget or membership nor the quantity of information exchanged. Rather, it is the extent to which, first, biophysical realities are translated effectively into political action and, second, local needs are transferred to international decision-making (and then to national decision-making).[154]

The implication is that the Alternative Treaties process was some form of displacement activity, valid in that participants were bringing their understanding of biophysical and local realities to a consideration of mechanisms which could deliver change, but of limited significance because this discourse took place outside the magic circle of states. If political action and state (or inter-state) decision-making are the measures by which to assess the effectiveness of NGO coalitions, the articulation of commitments to be entered into primarily by NGOs themselves must be held to be of circumscribed value. Any broader relevance can only be measured subsequently if negotiation of the Alternative Treaties can be understood to have influenced NGOs' effectiveness in achieving these principal objectives.

153 *Ibid*. p.222.
154 *Ibid*. p.229.

These claims seem contradictory. If environmental NGOs transform politics by placing new issues and perspectives on the agenda, the processes by which norms are tested, established and disseminated among NGOs must have a significance which has not been adequately acknowledged. Princen and Finger imbue national governments and inter-governmental bodies with a centrality in achieving change not borne out by many considerations of this area; yet even on these terms, the elaboration of collaborative working relationships between widely divergent NGOs and the expression of shared values (and means by which these can be realised) must constitute a strengthening of the capacity of NGOs to achieve the desired political transformation. Consequently this dialogue between NGOs could be considered a better use of the opportunity offered by the Rio Summit than any which might have been possible through the adoption of a more flexible and inclusive attitude to agenda setting and NGO involvement by the official UNCED organisers.

3.7.2 North – South relations between NGOs

One area in which many of the participants in the Alternative Treaties process have claimed that NGO interaction was more productive than its governmental counterpart was in constructive dialogue between Northern and Southern organisations. Vandana Shiva of Third World Network concluded that '[t]hose of us deeply involved have found our partners are crossing the North-South divide much more effectively than governments.'.[155] Nevertheless, significant tensions were apparent between Northern and Southern NGOs throughout the UNCED process. Particularly contentious issues included: matters of funding and resultant (implicit or explicit) influence over Southern partners by Northern NGOs; the disproportionate influence of Northern organisations in the official conference through the numbers with accreditation and also those participating as members of their national delegations; and differences in ideological perspectives, most pronounced in perceived divisions between Southern organisations concerned with economic and social issues and their Northern (particularly US) counterparts preoccupied with environmental conservation.[156]

Emphasis has been placed in a number of commentaries on the leading role played by Southern NGOs in the UNCED process. Bill Hinchberger reports that

155 UN Non- Governmental Liaison Service E&D File No.25, op. cit. July 1992.

156 In response to the question, 'Did you observe a difference in the goals and/or tactics of "Northern" and "Southern" NGOs?' 80% said yes (questionnaire sent to the 1 420 organisations accredited to attend UNCED, from which 79 responded). Doherty, Ann 'The role of non-governmental organizations in UNCED' in Spector, Bertram I, Gunnar Sjöstedt, I William Zartman eds. Negotiating International Regimes: Lessons Learned from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development pp.203-17, Graham & Trotman / Martinus Nijhoff, London 1994 p.216. The survey does not explore the nature of these differences.

Third World non-governmental organizations as a whole were credited with encouraging some of their more traditional northern counterparts to take a harder look at the social ramifications of the environment-development dichotomy. Even before the conference some European environmentalists had singled out Brazilian, along with Malaysian, groups for providing intellectual leadership for the international NGO movement.[157]

A prominent member of the Third World Network, Martin Khor concluded:

> Northern officials and especially northern NGOs have become much more sensitized to the development needs and perspectives of the South ... Many environmental groups which in the past focused only on saving plant and animal life have come to a new understanding that resolving environmental problems requires tackling North-South and rich-poor inequities at the same time.[158]

It should also be acknowledged that the structure put in place to promote adoption and implementation of the Alternative Treaties foundered due to a lack of financial support and the uneven ability or willingness of designated regional focal points to commit time and resources to their role. One of its principal architects writes of '[t]he failure of INGOF to produce lasting results', citing a litany of factors which limit the capacity of NGOs to collaborate effectively.[159]

Despite such reservations, NGO activity at the Global Forum during the Rio Summit constitutes an ambitious attempt to define a common agenda and to broaden the scope for collaboration from attempts to influence the inter-governmental negotiations to desired forms of societal change, and the role of NGOs in realising these. As a dialogue between constituent parts of what may be termed 'global civil society' the Forum addressed much that is of interest, whether analysis entails picking over the bones of a 'failure' or discerning the germ of ideas developed more fully subsequently.

3.8 Conclusions

Analyses of the roles played by NGOs acting collaboratively in the Rio process fall broadly into three groups:

- first, those which interpret the outcomes of the Summit as a significant advance on previous international understanding and commitments on issues of environment and development, and attribute this in some measure to the work of NGOs in establishing

157 Hinchberger, Martin 'Non-Governmental Organizations: The Third Force in the Third World' *op. cit.*
158 Khor, Martin 'Third World Network's Analysis of the Earth Summit: Disappointment and Hope' *Terra Viva* 9 June 1992 p.8.
159 Padbury, Peter 'Experiments, Reflections and a Survey on Next Steps' *op. cit.*

pressure for agreements to be reached and in providing expertise on specific issues and legitimacy in their roles as representatives of broader constituencies;[160]

- second, those which attribute liberal, 'progressive' ideals to the spectrum of participants in both the official Conference and the parallel Forum, but argue that the agreements reached are wholly inadequate in confronting the systemic factors which cause and perpetuate environmental degradation and social inequality;[161] and

- third, analyses which assert that one of the main effects of UNCED has been to legitimise the roles played by transnational companies in the various processes of globalisation, and that participating NGOs have been coerced into playing a promotional role for this process to the detriment of their responsibilities to those not otherwise represented (future generations; local, grass-roots organisations; the environment).[162]

None of these interpretations acknowledges the shift in emphasis evident in the work of all the principal NGO networks, as documented here. Although they demonstrated divergent strategies and ideologies, the two central international networks (the ISC and the IFC) and the most significant national network (the Brazilian NGO Forum) all revised their emphasis on the significance of networking during the course of preparations for UNCED. In each instance, this entailed attaching increased importance to interaction between NGOs and less weight to influencing the inter-governmental negotiations. This transition obliged the networks to redefine their reasons for existence and presented them with new priorities and conflicts. In part this transition was forced upon the networks by their members. While initial objectives presumed a degree of homogeneity among NGOs and equated common objectives with greater influence on policy formulation by governments, in practice strengthening relations between organisations became the main priority of each network. The need for various forms of arbitration and conciliation was not widely anticipated but assumed a central importance in each instance. It is also evident that the networks considered here developed an

160 See for example Haas, Peter M, Marc A Levy and Edward A Parson 'Appraising the Earth Summit: How Should we Judge UNCED's Success?' *Environment* Vol.34 No.8 pp. 6-11, 26-33, Washington D.C. October 1992; and Holmberg, Johan, Koy Thomson and Lloyd Timberlake *Facing the Future: Beyond the Earth Summit op. cit.*
161 'UNCED and the Global Forum were inevitably trapped by the structures they were criticising, for theirs was an intensely liberal view in a world which had left liberalism behind ... The Global Forum was right in its recognition that countervailing forces are all that can compel the institutions of the global 'free market' to operate within the bounds that will allow most people to live decently; it may just have been a little optimistic in supposing that the NGOs could be a focus for their organisation.' Middleton, Neil Phil O'Keefe and Sam Moyo *The Tears of the Crocodile: From Rio to reality in the developing world* Pluto Press Chipping Norton UK 1993 p.107.
162 Such as The Ecologist *Whose Common Future? op. cit.*

appreciation of the potential benefits in facilitating the creation of new alliances and the negotiation of shared principles and norms at the international and national levels. Paradoxically, each example also provides evidence of dissatisfaction from member organisations with the role played by the network in delivering this type of service. This suggests that there are inherent problems for international NGO networks attempting to facilitate agreement on ideological issues.

The ELCI Paris Conference and negotiation of the Alternative Treaties suggest that a number of factors mitigate against networks functioning effectively in norm-setting:

- Building trust and elements of a programme of collaboration between participants is most feasible among a relatively homogeneous group; however, the establishment of norms by transnational movements necessitates the participation of as broad a range of organisations (by region, sector and ideological perspective) as possible.

- Negotiation among organisations will of necessity be perceived by some contributors as 'watering down' their own principles and expertise. The value of working with partners perceived as less effective or of compromising on weak positions may result in the collaborative process itself being called into question.

- Legitimising a process whereby the collective voice of an alliance of organisations assumes central importance in relations with other bodies may come to marginalise individual organisations when their stance on a particular issue differs from the consensus. This may in turn make NGOs as a whole easier to contain, allowing their interlocutors to exclude awkward participants from the discourse by asserting the pre-eminence of the majority. The Friends of the Earth report on the Alternative Treaties process quoted earlier suggests that legitimation of some form of collective decision-making may increase the ease of access for hostile 'infiltrators', aiming to dilute or discredit the effectiveness of NGOs.[163]

Despite these impediments, the agreements reached by NGOs at the Global Forum provide a compelling articulation of the need for networks to operate as the conduits for international dialogue on norms and principles. The institutional challenges presented to organisations collaborating at the

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163 Friends of the Earth International 'The Earth Summit: Myths, Verdicts, Actions, Landmines' Section on the Treaty Process FOE Link No.50, op. cit

international level on environment and development issues present a comprehensive articulation of the shift in perspective identified above. The limitations in the scope of the Treaties, the contradictions and inconsistencies within and between different Treaties, and the failure of attempts to realise effective follow-up bear out the intrinsic problems for networks in placing relations between NGOs at the heart of their operations and making progress towards the broader societal change this could presage.

As for the broader themes of this thesis, an extended consideration of international non-governmental networks during preparations for the Rio Summit provides us with strong empirical evidence of the significance of interaction between organisations at the global level in realising a range of different, at times incompatible objectives. In the deliberations of participants over the terms by which they would co-operate, and their efforts to articulate and agree common principles and goals, we can also identify conscious attempts to tackle many of the conceptual issues raised in chapter one.

Chapter 4:

Institutionalising the Earth Summit – attempts to incorporate the UNCED models for NGO networking into the regular work of the UN

4.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses attempts to translate the organisational principles established during the UNCED process into new UN procedures and institutions. The establishment of a new body, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the negotiation of new rules governing NGO accreditation to the UN derived directly from UNCED. In both instances, non-governmental actors believed they had played a significant role in achieving change. However, the degree to which these developments subsequently reflected the ethos of the Rio Summit is open to question. During the same period, notions of self-governance and pluralistic understandings of legitimacy and responsibility within international NGO networks deriving from the UNCED period appear to have been marginalised from the mainstream discourse.

The role played by NGO networks before and during the Rio Summit was addressed in the previous chapter. It was argued that all of the principal networks engaged in the UNCED process increasingly prioritised interaction between NGOs and gave proportionately less attention to attempts to influence the inter-governmental proceedings. This shift is evident across the range of functions performed by each of the networks considered, to a greater or lesser extent. Thus each increased its endeavours to link member organisations and initiate dialogue with other networks. They also placed greater emphasis on the elaboration of common positions and negotiation of future working relations between NGOs.

As considered earlier, the reasons for this shift in emphasis are not wholly clear and may have resulted as much from the limitations and weaknesses inherent in the operations of NGO networks as from an emergent appreciation of the intrinsic value of collaboration between organisations at the international level. One factor which is emphasised repeatedly in documentation from the period in question is the unprecedented opportunity presented to NGOs by UNCED (and the attendant global interest) to establish collaborative mechanisms and agreed norms. These would have considerable legitimacy, given the large number of organisations from all parts of the world which participated. Negotiation of the Alternative Treaties can be understood as the most coherent attempt to realise these possibilities, but all the networks considered in the previous chapter appear to have accepted this rationale and adapted their activities and priorities as a result.

If this assessment is valid, then the period following the Rio Summit should allow us to consider how durable these agreements were and their broader impact (if any) on the inter-governmental processes addressing issues of sustainable development. Chief among these is the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), established after UNCED to monitor implementation of the agreements reached and to promote follow-up to the Summit. Creation in 1994 of the CSD NGO Steering Committee (set up by NGO representatives attending the second annual CSD session) and the work of a succession of NGO caucuses at annual CSD sessions provide useful instances of NGO collaboration intended to influence CSD decisions and to strengthen links between organisations.

This chapter will also consider how the practices for NGO involvement established through the preparatory meetings and at the Summit itself led to a reappraisal of arrangements for NGO accreditation and participation in the regular work of the UN Economic and Social Council.

Given the enduring levels of interest in the implications of UNCED from a wide range of perspectives it is remarkable how little academic attention has been given to the UN body charged with principal responsibility for following up recommendations and promoting action to implement the objectives outlined in the Rio agreements. Where reference to the CSD is made at all in analyses of international institutional issues or of the activities of civil society at the global level, these have predominantly been as codas to a more detailed assessment of the UNCED process, or as asides in works focusing on other contexts.

Yet the CSD's mandate is extensive, and its responsibilities suggest a central, catalytic role in stimulating action at local, national, regional and global levels. The Commission has completed one full review of Agenda 21 at its annual sessions and has since carried out a more focused programme of work addressing issues not adequately covered elsewhere in the international system. This is therefore an established institution, with an extensive track record in an area of international relations attracting steadily increasing academic and general attention. Why has it not merited far greater interest? In order to address this question it is useful first to consider a range of analyses and commentaries by academics, NGOs and government representatives relating to UNCED follow-up. These are broadly from two periods: the months following the Rio Summit, when the institutional role of the CSD was not clear but its broad remit had been set out; and from the time of the UN General Assembly five-year review of progress and difficulties experienced in realising the objectives established at UNCED. These appraisals provide a broad contextualisation for the more detailed assessment of the role of NGO networks in the years following 1992 which constitutes the bulk of this chapter.

4.1.1 Post-UNCED Assessments

Writing shortly after UNCED, Haas *et al.* present an assessment of the CSD's potential which typifies many contemporary analyses:

> The [CSD]'s mandate gives it great potential to raise governmental and public concern for the environment and development agenda by holding regular high-level meetings to monitor progress on Agenda 21. Meetings of the commission, particularly if they include a ministerial session, could focus the attention of the press, public, and activists on global environment and development issues, much as the G-7 summits do for global economic issues or the European environmental summits for environmental issues within Europe.[1]

Haas and his colleagues identify ways in which the CSD could assume a central role in international affairs, most notably through facilitating bargaining between governments to reshape international politics in ways which better reflect the new priorities of sustainable development. In order to do this

1 Haas, Peter M., Marc A. Levy and Edward A. Parson 'Appraising the Earth Summit: How Should we Judge UNCED's Success?' *Environment* volume 34, number 8 pp. 6-11, 26-33, Washington DC October 1992. Located online at http://www.ciesin.org/docs/008-570/008-570.html. Accessed on 3 January 2002. For similar analyses see also French, Hilary 'After the Earth Summit: the Future of Environmental Governance' Worldwatch Institute Paper 107, Washington DC USA 1992; Conca, Ken 'Environmental Organisations and the UN' in Weiss, Thomas G. and Leon Gordenker eds. *NGOs, the UN and Global Governance* pp.103-119, Lynne Rienner Publishers Boulder Colorado USA 1996; Imber, Mark 'The Environment and the United Nations' in Vogler, John and Mark Imber eds. *The Environment and International Relations* pp.138-155, Routledge London 1996; Susskind, Lawrence E. 'What Will it Take to Ensure Effective Global Environmental Management? A Reassessment of Regime-building Accomplishments' in Spector, Bertram I., Gunnar Sjöstedt and I. William Zartman eds. *Negotiating International Regimes: Lessons Learned from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)* pp.221-233, Graham and Trotman, London 1994.

the CSD should have a very high level chief official with the capacity to bring other international institutions into line, and it needs a highly competent, well-staffed secretariat able to engage a range of other actors and organisations. These requirements can be understood as the organisational elements necessary to maximise the new body's effectiveness: otherwise, its importance is largely taken for granted.

In a similar vein, the authors suggest a number of factors which may limit the capacity of the new body to play the role they outline. Many important specifics (membership, location, frequency of meetings, budget and so on) had yet to be decided and could prove disadvantageous. The CSD had been given a vague mandate and its ability to call for reports and information from governments was unclear. The Commission might be 'held hostage to [unspecified] petty bureaucratic squabbles or become a venue for patronage and cronyism' which would lessen its effectiveness. Despite these misgivings, the future viability of the CSD is presented as synonymous with the likelihood of significant international action to realise the objectives identified at UNCED. In other words, if progress of any importance is to be made at the international level the Commission on Sustainable Development would certainly be a key player. By contrast, the Convention processes focusing on biological diversity and climate change 'have less potential to foster dramatic change'.[2]

Similar assumptions regarding the intrinsic significance of the CSD are evident in public pronouncements by various politicians. US Vice-President Al Gore, speaking at the inaugural session of the Commission, set out an expansive vision of the new institution's role. It is useful to consider an extended excerpt from this speech, as it gives an indication of the degree to which eminent politicians were prepared to pay lip service to the transformative imperative in sustainability and to place the CSD centrally in an assessment of how progress could be achieved. It also captures the close associations implicit in many contemporary analyses between national activity, inter-governmental collaboration, and the role of organisations of civil society, while skirting around the tensions and contradictions inherent in pursuing sustainable development in these three arenas simultaneously:

2 Haas, Peter M., Marc A. Levy and Edward A. Parson 'Appraising the Earth Summit: How Should We Judge UNCED's Success?', op. cit. They conclude that 'To assure UNCED's long-term prospects for success, the Sustainable Development Commission will have to balance participation at high levels, where political embarrassment can be both generated and experienced, and at lower levels, where expertise and creativity can better flourish. And new mechanisms must be developed for transferring financial and technological resources to developing countries—mechanisms that satisfy both industrial countries' legitimate needs for accountability and respect for property rights and developing countries' legitimate demands for democratic decisionmaking.'

Two principles must guide us as we set about the pursuit of sustainable development. First, the principle of national responsibility. After all, the role of this Commission is primarily catalytic. It can focus attention on issues of common interest. It can serve as a forum for raising ideas and plans. It can help resolve issues that arise as nations proceed in their sustainable development agendas. It can monitor progress. It can help shift the multilateral financial institutions and bilateral assistance efforts towards a sustainable development agenda. It can help revitalize the United Nations system to ensure that sustainable development is a central theme in each organization. Indeed, this Commission, through its focus on sustainable development, can enhance United Nations' efforts to maintain peace, stability and prosperity in this post-Cold-War world. But it can do none of these things unless each country makes a strong commitment to change. This Commission will simply be a meeting about meetings if the members fail to bring to the table a strong sense of national responsibility.

Will the United States show that sense of commitment? We can. We will ... But just as each nation must assume national responsibility, so must we all act together. If sustainable development is to become a reality, the second principle we must follow is that of partnership. There are still those who think the wealthy countries on this planet have a monopoly on technology and insight. That's nonsense. We can all learn from each other. That's why this Commission must encourage partnership among countries – especially between North and South. Over the last 20 years we have made some progress in creating the basis for a global partnership. UNCED was a landmark in unifying 'environment' and 'development' in the term 'sustainable development'. Now this insight must be given life within the policies of every government. Trade, commerce, agriculture – all interests need to be part of the effort, and that's why this Commission as well must help create partnerships within countries. There are those who expect us to rely on a single financial mechanism such as the GEF for Agenda 21 implementation. But Agenda 21 addresses much too broad a range of issues for the GEF. That's why this Commission must create partnerships between it and all multilateral development banks. All of them have to be involved. Finally, there are those who believe that only government can marshal the resources for this task. Not true. Public policy that gets input from everyone is better public policy. The fact is the private sector played a huge role in Rio. And if this Commission is to succeed it must help create partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations.[3]

Gore's vision suggests fundamental shifts in world affairs and indicates that the US would be fully engaged in realising these changes. Moreover, the CSD can play a pivotal role: 'Archimedes said if he had the right lever and a firm place to stand, he could move the world. This Commission should seek to exert leverage on other institutions which can help us accomplish our task'.[4] He draws analogies between the rapidity of change in the former Soviet bloc and South Africa and the potential for similar transformations in global collaboration on sustainable development issues.

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3 US Vice-President Al Gore 'Keynote Address to The Commission on Sustainable Development' United Nations New York, June 14 1993. Available online at: http://clinton1.nara.gov/White_House/EOP/OVP/html/sustain.html. Accessed on 3 January 2002.
4 *Ibid.*

Another notable appraisal of the CSD's potential from 1992 comes from the influential 'think-tank' the South Centre, whose Working Group on Post-UNCED Strategies for the South concluded: 'Building on the experience of the South in relation to Rio and the gains made, the establishment of CSD could provide developing countries with a significant new base for promoting integrated development policy initiatives'.[5] While cautioning that, in the work of the CSD, Northern countries may wish to privilege environmental concerns above the systemic causes of ecological degradation (the detrimental effects of capitalism, aggressively promoted through various forms of economic and social globalisation), the South Centre report advocates closer relations with Northern NGOs as a key element in challenging prevailing Northern policies and practice:

> The proceedings of the Commission are likely to be followed closely now by more interested and vocal public opinion in the North. The Commission and its work could therefore provide an important platform for the South in advocating significant policy changes within the North relating to lifestyles, and equitable national and global development which is sustainable. If approached skilfully, cooperation with NGOs in the North could provide an additional element of pressure for new departures in policy.[6]

Thus in the period immediately following its creation, commentaries from very different perspectives ascribed to the CSD a pivotal role in subsequent international politics. While some doubts remain about the adequacy of the agreements reached to halt detrimental trends and the capacity of the UN to deliver the desired outcomes, these are usually tempered with acknowledgement that much had been accomplished and that decision-making by consensus dictates that progress will be achieved at the pace of the slowest.[7] In a similar vein to Al Gore's speech the rapidity of change is likened to recent events in South Africa and the former Soviet bloc, and taken as evidence of a major conceptual shift which will inexorably transform international and domestic affairs.

4.1.2 The CSD five years on

The contrast between the above and informed assessments written five or more years after UNCED is striking. One seasoned NGO leader, Richard Sandbrook, writing shortly after the five-year review of outcomes from UNCED, provides a trenchant critique of the Rio Summit's inherent failings:

5 South Centre Working Group on Post-UNCED Strategies for the South 'Informal overview of major issues emerging from the discussion of relevance to the South in formulating post-UNCED policy and action' para. 22, South Centre Report Geneva, October 1992.
6 Ibid., para. 26.
7 See for example Porter, Gareth and Inji Islam The Road from Rio: An Agenda for US Follow-up to the Earth Summit Environmental and Energy Study Institute, Washington D.C. USA, August 1992.

it was as if the international set had all put themselves (myself included) into a sort of wash mode where words replaced the soap. There was any amount of froth and foam. Everything and everyone was jumbled together into the lather, but then we all became spun dry. And, by and large, we are all still spun dry. When all was over there seemed to be little else other than words and yet more international agreements that went far ahead of countries' abilities to apply them.[8]

Sandbrook highlights failings in three principal areas, which continue to hamper the likelihood of progress: first, the dearth of targets and commitments agreed at UNCED for the local and national levels; second, the failure to agree a method or methods to redistribute wealth on an international scale, thereby starting to tackle poverty; and third, the absence of effective means to look after market failures and address environmental and social issues now that an international free trade system is in place. In lieu of progress in these critical areas, Sandbrook asserts, many of those involved in international processes are indulging in 'displacement activities', producing strategies that remain on the shelf, indicators that are not used, framework agreements that are not acted upon, charters, conference reports and so on – 'but words do not replace deeds, I am afraid'.[9]

Shortly before the 1997 five year review the President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, sketched out a more conventional understanding of shortcomings since UNCED:

> Since Rio we have made some progress in fulfilling the commitments which Heads of State and Government accepted in the name of their citizens. However, despite the Rio Commitments, the basic concept of sustainable development is still not well understood. The policies and structures required to implement the Earth Summit agreements are still not in place ... Some of the expectations which were raised at Rio have not been fulfilled, particularly in relation to speed of implementation, finance and transfer of technology. Expectations were raised which were always going to be difficult to meet. At UNGASS, we should be realistic and focus on a limited number of priorities. We can then look at where we can make a difference and ensure concrete action rapidly.[10]

Santer makes no mention of the CSD at all, despite the importance of its future programme of work in taking forward the agreements from the five-year review. His call for realism in place of unfulfilled

8 Sandbrook, Richard 'Twenty Years on and Five Years In' Bergesen, Helge Ole, Georg Parmann and Øystein B. Thommesen eds. *Yearbook of International Co-operation on Environment and Development 1998/9* pp.19-22,The Fridtjof Nansen Institute / Earthscan London 1998 p.20. The majority of references from academic works to the CSD from 1997 and later suggest little or no awareness of its activities. For example, Mische and Ribeiro, writing in 1998, still refer in passing to the mandate of the 'new Commission on Sustainable Development'. Mische, Patricia M. and Mauricio Andres Ribeiro 'Ecological Security and the United Nations System' in Alger, Chadwick F. ed. *The Future of the United Nations System: Potential for the Twenty-first Century* pp.315-356, United Nations University Press, Tokyo Japan 1998 p.332.
9 Sandbrook, Richard 'Twenty Years on and Five Years In', p.21. *op. cit.*
10 Santer, Jacques 'The Environment and Sustainable Development' speech at the inauguration of the new European Consultative Forum, Brussels 5 June 1997. Available online at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/santer/1997/js050697.html. Accessed on 1 September 2001.

expectations indicates a far more confined and prosaic reading of the significance of sustainable development than had been widespread five years earlier.

4.1.3 NGO Networks and the CSD

Analogous shifts are evident in analyses of the significance of NGO networks during this period. As we have seen previously, greatly enhanced NGO influence over inter-governmental deliberations on issues of sustainable development was widely discerned in the UNCED process. Antonio Donini, for example, describes the 'Rio example' as 'a clear demonstration of the crucial role that NGOs have to play as policy shapers in an intergovernmental setting. So far, this is the closest approximation to direct popular participation that the UN as been able to accommodate'.[11] Caroline Thomas concludes that '[t]he sudden high diplomatic profile of environmental issues in the run up to Rio derived largely from the activities of NGOs who took advantage of the political space provided by the fortuitous ending of the cold war'.[12] Hilary French anticipates that '[a]s environmentalists from around the world learn to work together for shared goals, the non-governmental movement stands to become as influential at the international level as it is within nations'.[13] French considers openness to public participation in international governing processes as a prerequisite for this transformation to occur and suggests that provisions for public review and comment, and mechanisms for bringing 'citizen suits' at the international level will be necessary. Haas et al. draw correlations between the institutional developments in the UN system and growing associational links between NGOs:

> If NGO alliances persist beyond UNCED with the same degree of institutionalisation, the effect on future global politics could be significant. Institutional links would make it easier for NGOs to share information and expertise, to exchange and co-ordinate political strategies, and to teach each other about the most pressing problems in their home countries.[14]

As noted in the previous chapter, there was also an influential body of NGOs who interpreted UNCED as the triumph of 'free market environmentalism'.[15] After the event, Greenpeace and others expressed concern at the appointment of Edouard Saouma, head of the UN Food and Agriculture

11 Donini, Antonio 'The Bureaucracy and the Free Spirits: Stagnation and Innovation in the Relationship Between the UN and NGOs' in Weiss, Thomas G. and Leon Gordenker eds. NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance pp.83-101, Lynne Rienner, Boulder USA 1996 p. 84.
12 Thomas, Caroline 'Beyond UNCED: An Introduction' in Thomas, Caroline ed. Rio: Unravelling the Consequences pp.1-27, Frank Cass, Ilford UK 1994 p.6.
13 French, Hilary F. 'After the Earth Summit: The Future of Environmental Governance' op. cit. p.48.
14 Haas, Peter M., Marc A. Levy and Edward A. Parson 'Appraising the Earth Summit: How Should we Judge UNCED's Success?' op. cit. p.161.
15 The Ecologist Whose Common Future? Reclaiming the Commons Earthscan, London 1993 p.1.

Organisation, to lead a task group advising the UN General Assembly on formation of the CSD and other aspects of UNCED follow-up – a decision described by Fiona Reynolds of the Council for the Protection of Rural England as 'like putting King Herod in charge of a maternity hospital'.[16] Despite this, and similar criticisms on specific issues, many organisations which had expressed concern at the ethos of UNCED appeared to view the creation of the CSD as a positive development. A number of commentaries describe it as an institution which NGOs had advocated during Rio PrepComs against opposition from the UK, the USA, India, China and others, and which (in part as a result of this auspicious beginning) merited cautious support. Clif Curtis of Greenpeace International, for example, wrote to 175 governments before the 47th UN General Assembly session considered the remit of the CSD and suggested a direct correlation between the influence vested in the new body and broader perceptions of governments' commitment to sustainable development: 'While other important UNCED-related actions are needed, in our view the General Assembly's actions on the CSD ... will be interpreted internationally as a key indicator of governments' commitment to UNCED implementation'.[17]

By 1997 this association between commitment to making the CSD an effective body and commitment to sustainable development as a whole would have seemed inappropriate. The gulf between Al Gore's optimism in 1993 and Jacques Santer's more modest ambitions in 1997 is also evident in the shift in many NGOs' assessments of the potential of the CSD over this period. This contrast between expectations at its inception and widespread cynicism and lack of interest after the CSD had been in existence for five or more years demands further consideration. Haas and his colleagues anticipated some of the bureaucratic and institutional barriers which subsequent commentators have also identified. Concerns over the small secretariat assigned to the Commission and the effectiveness of the means devised to ensure the 'injection of the idea of sustainable development into the normal UN programme of work'[18] were raised by many when the relevant decisions were taken, but nowhere were these considered as major impediments to the CSD functioning effectively.

16 McCully, Patrick 'UN Appoints FAO Chief to form Sustainable Development Commission' in *Earth Island Journal* vol.7, no.3 Summer 1992.
17 Curtis, Clifton 'Commission on Sustainable Development' letter to representatives' posted on econet electronic conference enced.csd 22 October 1992. Reprinted in Appendix 4. See also Roddick, Jackie 'The Sustainable Development Commission: Half Way Down the Road' United Nations Association UK pamphlet, September 1992; Sessions, Kathryn G. 'Institutionalizing the Earth Summit: The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development' United Nations Association USA Occasional Paper No.7, Washington D.C. October 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives, op. cit.*
18 *The Network* No. 28, Geneva Switzerland July 1993.

The contrasts in the above examples are illuminating. At its inception the CSD was widely envisaged by government officials, NGO activists, UN staff and academic commentators as a body which could play a leading role in shifting the locus for international relations towards a common articulation of the principles of sustainable development as the basis for future collaboration. By 1997 these aspirations had largely disappeared. Even the strongest apologists for the CSD had much more prosaic expectations. While institutional limitations are highlighted by some, far more fundamental difficulties in tackling the problematic elements of sustainable development are frequently cited.

To this decline in the perceived significance of the CSD must be added differences over the relative importance of environmental protection, social improvement and economic factors in various understandings of 'sustainable development'. Contradictions between these various policy areas are evident in some of the post-UNCED assessments noted earlier and have been explored in previous chapters. It is also clear that resolution of these conflicts had largely been deferred from UNCED. This presented two sets of problems for the CSD and other related international institutions: first, to translate the rhetoric of UNCED into action, entailing difficult commitments and a programme to engage other inter-governmental issue regimes (notably those dealing with trade and finance); and second, to create a viable role for itself which spanned the breadth of functions anticipated but demonstrated some coherence and commonality between them. An overarching problem here would be to find ways to contribute to activity at the national level without provoking states which objected to perceived attempts to question or undermine national sovereignty. A related process required the CSD to translate the ethos and the practicalities which had characterised the involvement of NGOs in the UNCED process into its regular work and to champion greater flexibility and openness towards non-governmental actors in other parts of the UN system. Many of the difficulties and contradictions identified above are also evident in this context.

This is not to suggest that the CSD has not conducted valuable work or that it has not provided the context within which significant agreements could be brokered between governments. The Commission's record in developing a forum for the exchange of practical information on implementation of Agenda 21 is solid, and its role as a catalyst, highlighting inconsistencies or gaps in the international system and advancing solutions has led to a number of constructive initiatives. Further, the CSD has developed innovative practices for the involvement of non-governmental actors,

which have served as a challenge to other parts of the international system. It has also refined its system for receiving and analysing national reports from governments, to the point where this is seen as a useful exercise which is beneficial for those who participate. Yet in comparison with the ambitions expressed immediately after the Rio Summit, this constitutes damning with faint praise.[19] What happened in the intervening years to nullify the hopes placed in the CSD after UNCED? Were there specific organisational problems which limited its effectiveness, or can its lack of impact be attributed to a more general failure to adopt sustainable development as an overarching set of imperatives to govern international affairs?

These questions assume particular importance for our consideration of the role and functions of international NGO networks focusing on sustainable development. In chapter 2 it was suggested that these networks do not necessarily depend upon inter-governmental bodies and processes to provide them with contextual relevance and permanence. Here, the relationship is rather different – in charting the decline in the perceived importance of the CSD, can we also identify a retreat from the expectations widely expressed in 1992 for international NGO networks? If this is the case, how much is it dependent upon the inter-governmental context, and what steps have been taken by NGOs to sustain the ethos of collaboration to achieve broader societal change identified in the last chapter? Has this been shaped by the broader inter-governmental context or can we discern evidence of autonomous initiatives fostered by NGO networks? Have collaborations been instigated to push for action in the areas of most glaring failure identified by Richard Sandbrook, or does his charge of 'displacement activity' apply equally to NGOs and governments? If the answer to this last question is 'yes', have the CSD and the UNCED legacy had any significance for their activities?

4.2 Background: The legacy from UNCED

As far as NGOs are concerned, UNCED's major achievement may be its contribution to the internationalization of the NGOs. The networking, education and pressure to be active and

19 For example, Paul de Jongh, a Dutch civil servant who was vice-chair of the Commission in 1996, has a hard job finding anything positive to say of the five-year review: 'the Rio Plus Five meeting, as it was called, served the cause of continuity by affirming that the UNCED agreements still hold and by keeping the pressure on national governments to take them seriously'. De Jongh, Paul and Sean Captain *Our Common Journey: A Pioneering Approach to Cooperative Environmental Management* Zed Books, London 1999 p.256.

effective at the multilateral level in today's world will affect the work of NGOs and the inter-governmental and United Nations processes in the future.[20]

The national and international opportunities for real NGO participation laid down in Agenda 21 must be defended, or first won, through appropriate political pressure. The self-organization and a minimum of national and international cooperation between the various NGOs and social groups are an important prerequisite for effective pressure.[21]

Previous chapters have challenged the assumptions underlying the conclusions of various writers on international relations regarding the role and influence of non-governmental actors. One such is the premise that quantifying influence in specific inter-governmental processes is an adequate measure of NGOs' effectiveness.[22] Another is the fixed hierarchy implicit in much of the literature on regime theory, which also presumes a core of governmental (and perhaps also commercial) actors with the capacity to agree upon 'principles, norms, rules, procedures and programmes that govern the interactions of actors in specific issue-areas'.[23] The evidence from a plethora of NGO networks operating globally or transnationally suggests that these fixed, often hierarchical models do not adequately encompass the priorities or the objectives of NGO collaboration. Working together to influence inter-governmental decisions and sharing information among members constitute types of activity which broadly comply with these models. We should also recognise that attempts by international NGO networks to influence economic actors or social groups can occur quite separately from the prism of inter-governmental activity. The same is true of efforts to establish shared norms which derive their legitimacy in large measure from their transnational origins. Yet these latter activities also have the capacity to have an impact on inter-governmental processes or to provoke broader transnational societal change which obliges international relations theorists to recognise them as significant.

The distinctions this implies are particularly evident in the work of NGO alliances functioning before and during the Rio Summit, as we have seen. The Alternative Treaties formulated during the Global

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20 Adams, Barbara 'Increased NGO involvement challenges United Nations' *Development Forum* vol.20 No.3 UNDP New York May - June 1992 p.8.
21 Unmüssig, Barbara 'New Environment and North-South Policy after UNCED - Problems and Prospects' in Gettkant, Andreas ed. *In the Aftermath of the Earth Summit: Responsible Global Action for the Millennium* pp.106-118, Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden, Bonn Germany 1993 p.117.
22 Arts, Bas *The Political Influence of Global NGOs* International Books, Utrecht the Netherlands 1998.
23 Levy, Marc A, Oran Young & Michael Zürn 'The Study of International Regimes' *European Journal of International Relations* vol.1 No.3 pp.267-330, Uppsala Sweden September 1995 p.274; the authors go on to stress that states constitute an exclusive club in this context: 'regimes are properly understood as social practices created to guide interactions among the members of international society (that is, states) in identifiable issue areas.'

Forum at Rio were carefully articulated, not as a representation of what governments should have committed themselves to do, but rather as a collective exercise in defining shared principles and objectives among participating organisations and establishing common undertakings for action *by NGOs themselves*.

Concurrently, the work of the International Facilitating Committee and the UNCED NGO Strategy Group introduced greater coherence into efforts by NGOs to influence the decisions being negotiated by governments. By encouraging or facilitating informal alliances between organisations to present joint positions to governments, these processes often privileged a particular viewpoint or perspective, which could be understood as coming from the main body of NGOs and would have widespread credence as a result. While comparable alliances had functioned in previous UN Conference processes, and in numerous other international contexts, these were qualitatively different in two respects: first, the UNCED agenda, which combined environmental concerns with development priorities; and second, the new electronic means for communication and information sharing which were becoming available and were widely used by UNCED NGOs.[24]

The presumption that networks should attempt to achieve consensus among their members conforms closely to the understanding of the functions performed by NGOs and their relations with each other presented in Agenda 21 (particularly in chapter 27, which focuses specifically on the role of NGOs):

> To ensure that the full potential contribution of non-governmental organizations is realized, the fullest possible communication and cooperation between international organizations, national and local governments and non-governmental organizations should be promoted in institutions mandated, and programmes designed to carry out Agenda 21. Non-governmental organizations will also need to foster cooperation and communication among themselves to reinforce their effectiveness as actors in the implementation of sustainable development.[25]

This notion of social partnership, initiated at the international level but pertaining to decision-making processes in national and local contexts, constitutes a significant departure from established UN attitudes towards NGOs. As we shall see, attempts to translate the Agenda 21 perspective into the

24 Shelly Preston notes the initiative of IBASE (the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analyses) and the Association for Progressive Communications in devising and managing the UNCED Information Strategy Project in 1992, which enabled NGOs around the world to strategise and exchange information. The Earth Summit Bulletin, initiated at the Fourth UNCED PrepCom, will also principally disseminated in electronic form. Preston, Shelley 'Electronic Global Networking and the NGO Movement: the 1992 Rio Summit and Beyond' in *Swords and Ploughshares: A Chronicle of International Affairs* vol.3, no.2, Washington D.C. Spring 1994. Available online at http://stile.lboro.ac.uk/~gyedb/STILE/Email0002089/m12.html. Visited on 1 September 2001.
25 *Agenda 21* para. 27.4, *op. cit.*

regulations governing access and relations with NGOs proved to be problematic and ultimately

unsuccessful. The perspective adopted in Agenda 21 also provoked negative reactions from those

whose interpretation of international NGO networking was informed by different understandings of

the nature of NGOs, and the purpose of networking. In her analysis of Agenda 21, Theodora Carroll-

Foster outlines these criticisms:

> It treats NGOs in a monolithic way. It thereby makes the mistake of assuming that the
> variegated NGOs will have common cause or agenda and will be amenable to being treated in
> the same way by international organisations or governments. It fails to incorporate any analysis
> about NGOs, whether Northern or Southern, and therefore does not appear to understand how
> NGOs work; how they relate to communities and societies; how they network locally and
> internationally; and develop momentum, action, and change.[26]

The grounds for elaboration of a broader understanding of the functions and influence of international

NGO networks were presented in chapter 2 and will be returned to in the following chapter. At this

point it should be noted that UNCED witnessed a new level of NGO networks' significance in two

related though not necessarily complementary contexts:

- in advancing appreciation of the intrinsic importance of networks and networking (both

  among NGOs and for a broader audience of governments, UN officials and others)

- in providing some evidence that networks could bring greater coherence to NGOs'

  interactions with inter-governmental processes

The tension between the two types of 'networking' suggested here points to a fundamental divergence

in understandings of the purpose and the functions of international NGO networks. In order to

elaborate the implicit distinctions between what I have termed 'mainstream' and 'alternative'

perspectives, I have had to render as black and white differences which are often more subtle or

imprecise. Nevertheless, the underlying ambivalence over the relevance and purpose of networks

which the table below illustrates provides a valuable starting point for consideration of the role of

networks after UNCED:

26 Carroll-Foster, Theodora 'Commentary on Agenda 21 Chapter 27' in Carroll-Foster, Theodora ed. *Action 21, Abstract Reviews and Commentaries*
IDRC Books, Ottawa Canada 1993 p.191.

• Table 4.1 Two understandings of the significance of international NGO networks

	Mainstream	Alternative
Academic perspective	State-centric regime theory	Civil society access to global governance
Participation at UN Conferences	Lobbying governments	Dialogue and agreements between NGOs
Structure	Fixed, hierarchical structure reliant upon a competent secretariat	Loose, informal association dependent upon support from and use by its members
Key relations with other organisations	Defined by its relations with inter-governmental bodies	Defined by its capacity to create and improve interaction between NGOs
Beneficiaries	Most useful to small, local and Southern NGOs which need information and expertise	Useful to large, Northern organisations which can learn from the experience of, and gain legitimacy from collaborating with small and Southern NGOs. Also useful to small organisations which can exchange ideas and information transnationally
Purpose	To strengthen NGO influence over governmental decision-making	To facilitate dialogue on issues of principle and norm-setting
Measure of success	Lead to emergence of a composite NGO position	Allow articulation of a wider divergence of views

While the distinctions indicated above are much in evidence in contemporary and retrospective literature on UNCED, within a short period after the event the 'mainstream' understanding appears to have gained the upper hand in the work of the CSD. The Alternative Treaties process, which had engaged so many organisations, is conspicuous by its absence from most of the documents available on the establishment and early work of the CSD. I have only been able to find a single NGO document addressing the mandate, functions and working practices of the Commission on Sustainable Development which suggests that the Treaties constitute an agreed starting point for NGOs attempting to articulate alternative approaches and objectives at the international level. Yet this is precisely what was envisaged in the Treaties themselves. A proposal for a second phase of activities arising from the

Alternative Treaties process was circulated among NGOs between the first and second sessions of the CSD. This spelt out their purpose and continuing relevance:

> The Treaties were intended to be agreements on principles and commitments for NGO action on environment and development issues regardless of what governments decided at Rio. A number of the NGO Treaties have been used successfully in many countries in a variety of ways since they were developed in Rio. However underlying many of the Treaties is a common thread illustrating the lack of substantive credible alternative models.[27]

The document goes on to suggest that ongoing inter-governmental work, and the agreements reached in Rio, would be insufficient to achieve necessary changes. Future collaboration between NGOs should focus on 'several key pieces of the new paradigm that are missing'. Chief among these were:

1. Accountable, democratic decision-making institutions, for both governments and NGOs, including financial institutions.

2. Alternative economic models that promote socially and ecologically sustainable development.

3. Visions and values of sustainable communities in sustainable societies.[28]

In this paper the International NGO Forum (INGOF – the network which oversaw the Alternative Treaties process) advocated that NGOs needed to 'step back from the busy crises of immediate lobbying and public education' and participate in 'a dialogue among South / North / East / West NGOs on new fundamental alternatives'. The results of this dialogue could then be influential in inter-governmental contexts such as the CSD and the 1995 Social Summit.[29] This proposal eventually led to the 1995 Manila meeting of international NGO networks, considered in Chapter 2.

By contrast, the Centre for Our Common Future's quarterly update *The Brundtland Bulletin* sets out the priorities for subsequent editions in December 1992, and does not mention the Treaties at all in its litany of important processes it will follow in future. Significantly, those highlighted are almost all inter-governmental – the CSD, the Global Environment Facility, and UNDP's Capacity 21

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27 'International NGO Forum (INGOF) NGO Treaty Process - a proposal for phase 2' endorsed by members of the INGOF Steering Committee, December 1993. Reproduced in Appendix 8.
28 *Ibid.*
29 *Ibid.*

Programme. The one exception is the Earth Council, which as we have seen was closely associated with UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong. Reference to the Alternative Treaties occurs only in information on meetings publicised by other organisations. The International Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, for instance, announced an event to be held in June 1993 which focused on action to implement the agriculture-related Treaties and to strengthen the network formed at the Global Forum. The US Citizens' Network provided information on a Treaty Working Group, formed to disseminate and promote awareness of the Treaties in America.[30] Just six months after their inception, the clear impression is that such examples are marginal to the emerging focus for international NGO activity. Residual pockets of enthusiasm exist in particular locations and around specific issue areas, but the coherence envisaged during the Global Forum has vanished.

As we shall see later in this chapter, the CSD NGO Steering Committee, created in 1994, was established to enhance NGO access to UN work on sustainable development. Its remit and the scope of issues addressed by NGOs collaborating under the auspices of the Steering Committee coincided closely with the work programme of the CSD itself. The co-ordinating role played by the Steering Committee was also understood as necessary by the CSD Secretariat, with a clear emphasis on the 'mainstream' interpretation of the functions of NGO networks, as presented above. Development of various forms of dialogue with Major Groups, and the advancement of 'partnership' with civil society would become key elements in the work of the CSD, and the NGO Steering Committee played an enthusiastic role in advancing these.

Thus in a number of significant contexts the development of fundamental alternatives by NGOs was marginalised, while incorporation of non-governmental actors into the regular work of the UN and other official bodies responsible for implementation of Agenda 21 became of intrinsic importance. The implications of this shift in emphasis will be explored later.

4.2.1 Evidence of discontinuity

In the aftermath of UNCED a large proportion of NGOs which had been involved in the Summit process – probably the majority – did not play an active role in follow-up to the event at the global level. Many shifted their focus to national or regional promotion of sustainable development, while

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30 *Ibid.*

others were discontinued or fell into decline without UNCED as the principal context for their activities. A number of prominent individuals within influential organisations moved to other roles on concluding their work on the Summit. On the other hand, at national and international levels, new organisations were created before and after UNCED to focus particularly on implementation of the Rio agreements and promote awareness of their relevance. Broad-based networks were established to play this role in many countries and regions[31] and to focus on particular issues or constituencies such as the Women's Environment and Development Organization; the Climate Action Network; and the Business Council for Sustainable Development [later renamed the World Business Council for Sustainable Development]..

Further evidence of discontinuity is apparent among the organisations which continued to play an active role internationally. Where some coherence had existed previously between groups and networks focusing on different aspects of the UNCED agenda, now distinct processes had been established to address climate change, biological diversity and desertification, with separate secretariats and far less co-ordination than had been necessary during preparations for the Summit. As will be considered later, it was decided that annual sessions of the CSD would each address a third of the issues covered in Agenda 21, in order to allow more detailed consideration of each. Many anticipated that this would also undermine the holistic approach to sustainable development advocated through UNCED, not least through weakening possibilities for NGOs working on different issues to maintain their associations.

A marked break in personnel and organisational structure should also be noted in the UNCED Secretariat and in many governments. UNCED staff had mostly been seconded from other parts of the UN system and from governments. After June 1992 the majority returned to their previous roles, although a handful of high-level officials were given new posts within the Convention Secretariats and in the newly-created UN Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development, a division of the UN Secretariat headed by the Deputy Secretary General of UNCED, Nitin Desai. A comparable dispersal occurred in many governments, where specially established units were disbanded and officials returned to their previous posts, while in other instances new institutions were set up to address domestic and international follow-up to UNCED.

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31 For example, the United Nations Environment and Development UK Committee; the German Forum for Environment and Development; the Norwegian

Despite this upheaval affecting institutions and personnel, a core of NGOs maintained their efforts to build upon the advances achieved over the previous two or three years. For some, the links forged with other organisations were seen as necessary elements for further sharing of information and resources. A number prioritised the development of sustained joint critiques of ongoing processes, such as global economic liberalisation, which they considered inimical to sustainability but which had been legitimised by UNCED. Most others welcomed gains in access to and recognition from the UN and sought to make these permanent in the ongoing work of the UN Economic and Social Council and other parts of the UN system. A final group attempted to make connections between these areas, emphasising the complementarity of attempts to influence inter-governmental processes and efforts to achieve more effective collaboration between NGOs. There are four principal contexts in which the role of NGOs and NGO networks before and during UNCED presented ongoing questions about prevailing orthodoxies:

- The role of non-governmental actors in the work of the United Nations, most notably its activities relating to sustainable development: while existing arrangements limited access to international NGOs, Agenda 21 stressed the significance of local and national activity, and the need to strengthen links between these and international decision-making. How could this evident contradiction be tackled?

- Established practice at the UN governing the accreditation of NGOs, and the access NGOs were granted to attend and address key sessions during regular UN meetings and at special conferences was widely perceived to have been amended in the UNCED context. Had new precedents been established and, if so, could these be introduced into new arrangements for NGO participation in the ongoing work of the UN?

- The significance of NGO self-organisation at the global level was widely acknowledged as a significant factor in the UNCED process. This included co-ordinating input to the inter-governmental process and elaborating and promoting broader global norms. Could this range of activities be reflected in organisational arrangements and conceptual approaches established after UNCED?

ForUM; and the Alliance of Northern Peoples for Environment and Development (ANPED - later renamed the Northern Alliance for Sustainability).

- Mainstream international relations theories have had to accommodate the end of the cold war and emergent tensions between Northern and Southern countries which undermine assumptions of fixed hierarchies. Does a growing acknowledgement of the significance of organisations of civil society in international affairs constitutes a further challenge to state-centric models?

The Rio Summit also presented a number of broader theoretical challenges to established practice and underlying ideological constructs relating to the role of civil society. Thus a close association between sustainable development and notions of accountability and democracy is evident in many of the documents agreed at UNCED. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, for example, states that '[e]nvironmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens',[32] suggesting that this involvement is not just desirable on moral grounds, but that it leads to better decisions and legislation. The broader ramifications of this approach for the UN itself and for member governments are substantial – the degree to which these have been confronted in the organisational and substantive work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development has been of particular concern to NGO networks operating in this area.

A further shift is apparent in the identification in Agenda 21 of nine Major Groups – distinct sectors of civil society with complementary roles to play in the achievement of sustainable development. This conflicted with existing UN terms for the involvement of non-governmental actors in its work, which made no distinctions among this range of organisations.

UNCED thus advanced an inter-related set of principles which presented considerable challenges for the UN and for theories of international relations. The two principal elements to this were:

- sustainable development as a body of norms and activities which should become of central importance in all areas of international interaction

- involvement of non-state actors, and action at national and sub-national levels, as of central importance

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32 A/CONF.151/26 'Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development' chapter 1, resolution 1, annex I, Principle 10, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992.

The challenge for advocates of Agenda 21 and the policies it advanced was therefore to infuse these organising principles into the regular work of the UN, and also regional, national and local decision-making structures.

On a separate front, the emphasis on what I have termed the 'mainstream' approach to international NGO networking (as expressed in Agenda 21) assumed a homogeneity among NGOs which was overly simplistic, and failed to explore ways in which NGO networks collaborate to elaborate and advance shared norms and achieve broader societal change.

In the following sections I will consider the organisational arrangements intended to institutionalise the Rio Summit in detail, and then assess how these had fared by 1997.

4.3 NGOs and the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Agenda 21 called for the formation of a new body to oversee implementation and monitoring of its provisions:

> In order to ensure the effective follow-up of the Conference, as well as to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues and to examine the progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels, a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development should be established.[33]

It also established that the CSD should report to the UN Economic and Social Council; that a highly skilled Secretariat should service the Commission; and that NGOs and other Major Groups should be granted access to information and encouraged to provide reports and other material according to their expertise.[34] The CSD's principal responsibilities are to monitor progress towards sustainable development in the UN system, to receive and 'consider' national reports and other communications from national governments, and to 'enhance dialogue ... with NGOs and the independent sector'.[35]

33 *Agenda 21 op cit.* para. 38.11.
34 *Ibid.* para.38.13.
35 *Ibid.*

Responsibility for determining the detail in these generalities was deferred to the 47th UN General Assembly Session in autumn 1992. The GA 'should determine specific organizational modalities for the work of this Commission, such as its membership, its relationship with other intergovernmental United Nations bodies dealing with matters related to environment and development, and the frequency, duration and venue of its meetings'.[36] Thus although creation of the new Commission was considered one of the 'quiet victories' of UNCED,[37] much remained to be determined regarding the CSD's working methods, its remit, its accessibility for NGOs, and so on.

As noted in the previous chapter, during the four Preparatory Committee meetings (PrepComs) for UNCED, governments had disagreed over the appropriate institutional arrangements to put in place: 'countries initially opposed to the Commission included: the UK, China, Austria, India, Sweden, Brazil, Japan, Argentina, Australia, Kenya and Norway. In the face of this opposition stood countries like the Netherlands and France, supported by a coalition of non-governmental organisations.'[38] The reasons behind opposition to creation of a new UN Commission were varied and complex. The possible imposition of some system of national reporting has been cited as a particular concern of some of the larger G77 countries such as Brazil and India. American and British priorities were governed by the need for financial constraints on the UN, which had led to a common position that no new UN institutions should be created in any context.[39]

Once general acceptance of the need for a new Commission to be created had been reached, there was still considerable disagreement over its location (physical and organisational); over its remit and over its working methods. Debate on these institutional arrangements during PrepCom IV for UNCED was protracted, and many of the more detailed questions were left to be resolved after conclusion of the Summit. One NGO observer summarised the positions taken and the compromise reached:

> African countries wanted a powerful Commission, over which small Southern countries would have much more control. Northern preferences ... for a weak Commission coupled with Indian,

36 *Ibid.* para.38.12.
37 Bill Pace, quoted in Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.19 COCF Geneva August-September 1992 p.1.
38 *Ibid.* p.1.
39 Mark Imber has suggested that anticipation of the opportunity for institutional streamlining may have led the UK and the USA to accept the creation of the CSD. Whilst created to coordinate rather than duplicate the activities of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Development Programme (UNDP), it may well be that the SDC [sic] *will* largely supplant the central purpose of ECOSOC itself. Therein may lie the explanation of the late-conversion of the western powers to the creation of an SDC, something resisted throughout the preparatory phases of the UNCED since 1990, by the UK and USA in particular until after the March 1992 sessions in New York.' Imber, Mark 'Some reflections on the Sustainable Development Commission', unpublished paper, University of St Andrews September 1992.

Chinese and Brazilian determination to restrict its powers to require national reports, led to the final Rio compromise, which puts the Commission firmly under ECOSOC, subject to a periodic review by all ECOSOC's national members. [40]

A further element of Agenda 21 of particular interest to NGOs in this context was its call for 'an expanded role for non-governmental organisations, including those related to major groups, with accreditation based on the procedures used in UNCED'.[41] This was understood by many as a call for revisions to the arrangements for NGO participation in the regular work of the UN. This would thus entail the translation of the principles underlying the formal involvement of NGOs in UNCED into the regulations governing NGO access to the UN system as a whole. One problem with this was that it would call into question the rights and privileges of NGOs whose associations with the UN were long-standing. One contemporary report states that:

> some of the organisations that belong to the Conference of NGOs with Consultative Status to the UN (CONGO) and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), both of which have been working with the UN for some time, feel that processes for NGO participation in the UN already exist and need not be changed. They see the accreditation procedure used in UNCED as needlessly bypassing an existing system that works and of which they are a part.[42]

NGOs which had been active in lobbying for creation of the CSD continued to push for the strongest possible mandate and role. Proposals were formulated advocating that the CSD should function as a global arbiter on sustainable development issues.[43] The UN Commission for Human Rights and the International Labour Organisation were also cited as precedents for UN bodies which recognised non-governmental actors as key participants and initiators of work.[44] Advocates of these quasi-legalistic roles for the Commission found one ally in the Dutch Government, which suggested that some form of 'ombudsman' role should be performed by the CSD, which could be petitioned on violations of

40 Roddick, Jackie 'The Sustainable Development Commission: Half Way Down the Road' United Nations Association UK pamphlet, London September 1992.
41 *Agenda 21 op. cit.* para. 38.44.
42 Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.19 *op. cit.* August-September 1992 p.6.
43 Referred to in Sands, Philippe 'Report of a Consultation on Sustainable Development: the Challenge to International Law' convened by the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD) London 1993 p.9.
44 For example, Kathryn G. Sessions of the United Nations Association USA wrote in September 1992: 'Another example with considerable relevance to the CSD is the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which, in conjunction with nongovernmental groups, has gradually built international acceptance of the need for global reviews of national progress in meeting human rights standards.' Sessions, Kathryn G. 'Institutionalizing the Earth Summit', *op. cit.*

international environmental agreements. A letter signed by representatives of 13 NGOs,[45] principally US-based, and dated 23 October 1992, refers to 'the ombudsbureau proposed by the Netherlands'. It calls for pressure by NGOs to avoid a return to 'business as usual'. The 'Comments on the Commission on Sustainable Development' sent with this letter set out some general objectives for an effective body. These include:

- The [CSD] mandate should not be limited to reviewing agreements reached at UNCED, but should be forward-looking, including new agreements based on evolving political, economic and social concerns and emerging scientific understanding.

- The Secretariat of the Commission should have the resources and staff it needs, and independence and stature within the UN system to allow it to review the work of other UN bodies.

- The CSD should adopt its own rules of procedure (which would give it the right to establish its own NGO participation procedures, set up subsidiary bodies or initiate consultative processes involving other international organizations and NGOs and other independent groups, and make studies and recommendations on its own initiative).

- The CSD should, as agreed in Chapter 38 of Agenda 21, employ the NGO accreditation procedures used at UNCED. This will ensure that NGOs that participated in UNCED will be able to participate in the work of the CSD. Additionally, the UNCED accreditation procedures should be used to accept other 'relevant and competent' NGOs for the CSD meetings and the working groups it may set up ... Additional procedures will need to be developed for receiving meaningful input from NGOs such as the working-party model used in the UNCED preparatory process, and the 'Ombudsbureau' proposed by the Netherlands.

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45 The letter was sent to NGOs which had been active in the Rio process, urging them to lobby their governments in advance of the General Assembly general debate on UNCED follow-up. Signatory organisations are Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth USA, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Bread for the World, Environment and Energy Study Institute, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Panos Institute, Center for Development of International Law, Union of Concerned Scientists, and United Nations Association USA. Reproduced in Appendix 5. Attached to this letter was a paper entitled 'Comments on the Commission on Sustainable Development', dated October 28 1992; this was attributed to Cape 2000, a consortium made up of the first six of the organisations listed in the previous sentence (all US NGOs).

These objectives give some idea of the extent of what was considered possible immediately following UNCED by some of those most closely involved. They also indicate the extent to which some NGOs saw themselves as playing a key role in giving the CSD a strong institutional place and a clearly defined and authoritative role in relation to other inter-governmental bodies.[46] It is therefore important to note the close association drawn between these objectives and the emphasis placed on ease of access and input for NGOs in the Commission's future work. All of these were presented in the letter as essential if NGOs are to help like-minded governments prevent a reversion to 'business as usual':

> It is vital that the voices and perspective of the independent sector be heard, by both governments and the UN Secretary General, expressing support for the establishment of an effective CSD and for the active participation of NGOs and major groups in the work of the new Commission. We urge you to communicate with your governments before November 2 to discuss their positions regarding the CSD. We hope that you will voice your support for provisions which allow for full participation of international, national, and local NGOs and major groups in the works of the Commission (as was agreed at UNCED).[47]

A contemporary position paper produced by NGOs meeting in Europe as members of the 'Working Group on Institutional Change' (established during the PrepComs for UNCED) set out a more general rationale:

> NGOs can actively contribute to the general improvement of international decision-making and the achievement of sustainable development. They can bring a substantial amount of expertise and practical experience and can play a very important role as guardians in the implementation of international policies. They raise public awareness and stimulate action at local and national levels. For that reason, they must be enabled to participate as observers in governmental and inter-governmental meetings and submit statements.[48]

This position paper was signed by 25 people from 16 countries in an individual capacity.

As noted in the previous chapter, this association between NGO involvement and the strength of the institution was also drawn by many NGO activists during preparations for the Rio Summit.[49] This constitutes one of the areas in which opinion on the validity of the event as a whole has been most

46 See also Hajost, Scott and Liz Barratt-Brown 'Drafted amendments to the ECOSOC functional commission rules for the CSD rules of procedure', by two US NGO representatives, which proposes line-by-line alterations to ECOSOC Doc. E/5975 'Rules of Procedure for the Functional Commissions of ECOSOC' New York, January 1993.
47 *Ibid.* Note the use of the term 'the independent sector' here to denote all non-governmental actors, despite the acrimony surrounding its promotion by the Centre for Our Common Future in 1990.
48 'Recommendations of the Working Group on Institutional Change on the UN Commission on Sustainable Development' p.15 from a meeting at the Peace Palace, the Hague 4 to 6 November 1992.

sharply divided between those who believe that civil society organisations were co-opted to lend credibility to a process which they should be decrying and those who advocate collaboration and partnership with governments and other actors as the most constructive course for NGOs to take. Nevertheless, what is absent from this document is any acknowledgement of ideological differences which could be anticipated between NGOs and governments, between NGOs and other major groups organisations (most notably the private sector), and between NGOs pursuing different objectives. The marginalisation of such ideological questions and the privileging of apolitical objectives such as 'effectiveness' and 'management' echo the concerns of Chiang Pei-heng and Juan Jose Consejo, noted in the previous chapter, that NGOs could be assimilated into a 'technocratic world administration run by a coalition of technocrats and experts'.[50] The disappearance of the more radical critiques which were considered earlier suggests that some were prepared to take a pragmatic stance on UNCED follow-up (Greenpeace International) while others had ceased to play an active role in these deliberations (ELCI).

There was therefore a core of NGOs closely involved with UN follow-up to UNCED. They had become familiar with the issues to be addressed through participation in the UNCED PrepComs and had developed working relationships with the UN Secretariat and officials in government delegations They had broadly accepted Agenda 21, including its representation of the role and composition of civ society, as a legitimate set of objectives to be pursued subsequently. They had also put considerable time and effort into broadening awareness and interest in the creation of the CSD, and had a clear interest in maximising NGOs' roles in the new body.

At the same time, a more diffuse group of NGO activists and commentators found sufficient evidence in the post-UNCED debate for increasing cynicism and hostility towards the whole process. For example, Chatterjee and Finger assert that 'the UNCED process has divided, co-opted, and weakened the green movement'.[51] They conclude that NGOs have lent legitimacy to a programme designed to allow the continuation of destructive industrial development. Others were dubious about the proposed institutional arrangements, claiming that ECOSOC was a moribund organisation, and that placing the

49 Use of the term 'NGO' in this paragraph reflects the distinction drawn by Hajost and Barratt-Brown between NGOs and other Major Groups. Elsewhere, and most notably in consideration of arrangements for participation in the work of ECOSOC, the term 'NGO' is used in accordance with established UN practice to denote all non-governmental actors.
50 Chiang Pei-heng *Non-governmental Organizations at the United Nations: Identity, Role and Function* Praeger Publishers New York USA 1981 p.246.
51 Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger, *Crosscurrents* vol.2 No.2 May 1992. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives, op. cit.*

CSD as a subsidiary to ECOSOC would leave it with little power or influence.[52] And, as noted above, a third group of NGOs saw the potential for a shift in the balance of NGOs in a formal relationship with ECOSOC as problematic, given that this might undermine their own position and privileges. As the CSD's programme of work would not allow a detailed consideration of issues of sustainable development until its 1994 session, these divisions over questions of process assumed greater importance than might otherwise have been the case and may have suggested to a wider audience that a strengthened role for NGOs in UNCED follow-up would prove more problematic than anticipated.

4.3.1 UNCED arrangements for NGO accreditation

The terms for NGO accreditation to UNCED have particular significance given that they are cited in Agenda 21 as the starting point for involvement of new organisations in the work of the CSD. In his role as Secretary General of the Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, Maurice Strong had secured agreement that not only the ECOSOC NGOs, but also 'other NGOs of genuinely international character' should be able to participate, so long as they were 'directly concerned with the subject matter of the Conference'.[53] Twenty years later, as Secretary General for UNCED, Strong was able to steer the Conference decisions towards a forceful statement that the principles of supporting NGO involvement developed in the Rio process should be incorporated into the working arrangements for the UN as a whole. In his final speech at UNCED, he stated:

> We must also expand the participatory process that has meant so much to us here – participation of people through non-governmental organisations in the implementation of Agenda 21, and indeed in the United Nations itself. I believe we need to review entirely the system of arrangements within the United Nations for greater participation of these organisations.[54]

The clearest example in Agenda 21 of this expansion is the call for the General Assembly to 'examine ways of enhancing the involvement of non-governmental organizations within the United Nations system in relation to the follow-up process of the Conference'.[55] There is a close correlation between this and the UN Secretary General's subsequent recommendation that ECOSOC review arrangements for NGO accreditation which had remained unchanged since 1968: 'It now seems time to update these

52 Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.19, *op. cit.* August-September 1992 p.6.
53 A/CONF.48/PC.11, 30 July 1971. Quoted in Willetts, Peter 'Consultative Status for NGOs at the United Nations" in Willetts, Peter ed. *"The Conscience of the World": The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System* pp. 31-62, Hurst & Co. London 1996 p.54.
54 A/CONF.151/26 'Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development' vol.IV, para.74, 28 September 1992.
55 *Agenda 21* 38.44, The Regency Press London 1992.

arrangements in the light of relevant experience gained within the United Nations in the course of last 25 years, in particular through the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and its preparatory process'.[56] It should also be noted that, where Strong implies and Agenda 21 states[57] that this move to greater participation should apply to the UN as a whole, Boutros Ghali's recommendation limits considerations strictly to the UN Economic and Social Council.

Attempts to extend the number and range of NGOs in a formal relation with ECOSOC in this way were not universally welcomed. The G77 position at the outset of the UN General Assembly's consideration of UNCED follow-up was that ECOSOC procedures should be applied to the work of the CSD. Wrangles over the pre-eminence of one precedent over the other continued throughout the meetings dealing with organisational arrangements for the CSD and on into the review of ECOSOC accreditation procedures which eventually concluded its work in 1996. This discontent with the application of UNCED precedents to the regular work of ECOSOC was also expressed by a number of NGOs, particularly those which had an established relationship with the UN which could be destabilised or undermined by such change.

4.3.2 Organisational Sessions

4.3.2.1 47th UN General Assembly

In November and December 1992 the 47th Session of the UN General Assembly considered institutional arrangements for follow-up to the Rio Summit. As noted previously, despite opposition from the UK and others during PrepComs for the Summit, it had been agreed at the Fourth and final PrepCom the previous April that a new UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) would be created and that the new body should be a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). At its 47th Session, the General Assembly decided that the CSD's secretariat services should be provided by the newly created Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development.[58] The GA also addressed many of the practical modalities for the

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56 E/1993/12 'Rules of procedure of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Report of the UN Secretary-General' para.22, January 29, 1993.
57 Agenda 21 calls on 'the United Nations system, including international finance and development agencies, and all intergovernmental organizations and forums' to engage NGOs and major Groups organisations in the review of Agenda 21 and to take into account the results of the proposed reviews of NGO participation in their future work. Agenda 21 op. cit. para. 38.43.
58 A/RES/47/191 'Institutional Arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development' para 2, 29 January 1993 [based on the report of the second Committee (A/47/719)].

operations of the CSD and its relations with other parts of the UN system which had not been specified in the UNCED process.

The General Assembly confirmed that the Commission would function as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, and as with other similar bodies, recommendations to the General Assembly would be submitted initially to ECOSOC. Finally, the General Assembly endorsed the Secretary General's creation of a High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development, made up of 21 experts from around the world, and the UN Administrative Committee on Co-ordination's decision to put in place a subsidiary Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD).[59]

NGO access to the GA during its deliberations was more extensive than usually possible. An inter-governmental Ad Hoc Working Group on UNCED Follow-up was established to address institutional arrangements for the UN after the Rio Summit. A UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service briefing states that 'NGOs were able to attend not only its formal but also its informal, off-the-record negotiating sessions. Such "informals", within which negotiations on resolutions are carried out, are usually closed. Inside the Working Group on UNCED, however, the "spirit of UNCED" with regard to NGO access to the process was maintained.'[60] A group of NGOs based in New York created an 'Interim Networking Group of NGOs to Monitor Establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development', which was co-ordinated by the Women's Environment and Development Organization.[61] This was an early attempt at self-organisation and raised many of the issues subsequently addressed by the *CSD NGO Steering Committee*, which was created during the 1994 CSD Session.

4.3.2.2 NGO activity in UN follow-up to UNCED

Much that was agreed by governments at the 47th GA on UNCED follow-up was seen as overly cautious by NGO commentators. Put in general terms, the position of many such observers was that if the Rio Summit had succeeded in involving organisations of civil society in UN work on issues of

59 *Nine agencies and programmes of the UN are core members of the IACSD (UNEP, UNDP, FAO, the World Bank, ILO, IAEA, WMO, UNESCO and WHO). Other agencies and UN bodies are able to send representatives to IACSD meetings. It was established in October 1992 by the Administrative* Committee on Coordination (ACC) as a result of the recommendation of UNCED and meets twice a year.
60 UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service 'NGOs at the 47th United Nations General Assembly' *E & D File* vol.II No.2, NGLS Geneva February 1993 p.3.
61 Women's Environment and Development Organization 'Creation of an Interim Networking Group of NGOs to Monitor Establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development' WEDO New York 1992. Reproduced in Appendix 6.

sustainable development and creating the context in which broad commitment to action could be fostered, this had been possible to a large extent because the conference had taken shape outside the restrictive bureaucracy which oversees the regular work of the UN. Writing shortly after the Summit, Kathryn G Sessions contrasted the accreditation procedures for UNCED with those for ECOSOC and concluded that the former were more conducive to the involvement of a broad range of organisations:

> ECOSOC's procedures are more rigorous and tend to favor the largest and most established international NGOs, whereas UNCED procedures tended to be more liberally applied and were more inclusive of national and smaller NGOs.[62]

Many NGO commentators also emphasised that the overarching claims laid by Agenda 21 to issue areas which were the principal responsibility of existing agencies and programmes of the UN could be expected to lead to turf wars, if serious efforts were made to translate the rhetoric into institutional change. The body charged with promoting these new priorities would be much less effective if it were merely a cog in the machine it was supposed to be altering, particularly given ECOSOC's reputation as an ineffective body. Still other concerns were expressed at the proposed location of the Secretariat in the DPCSD, which was seen as offering insufficient independence and access to the Secretary General, heads of programmes and agencies, and other influential figures in the UN system.

Underlying these viewpoints was a common assumption that the CSD represented a significant opportunity for furthering international consensus and action on the UNCED agreements and that the institutional arrangements for the Commission would have a critical impact on its effectiveness and, by extension, on the chances for progress on the Rio agenda as a whole. The procedural matters under consideration would test the commitment of governments to the overarching importance of sustainable development in the work of all international institutions in future.[63]

A further supposition shared by many non-governmental analysts was that the involvement of non-governmental organisations had been a vital element in securing whatever progress could be attributed to UNCED and that continued flexibility and openness for participation of the major groups of civil

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62 Sessions, Kathryn G. 'Institutionalizing the Earth Summit', *op.cit.* Whether this is borne out by the actual terms of the ECOSOC Resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968 and Decisions 1/1 and 2/1 of the Preparatory Committee for the UNCED is open to question. The very restrictive provisions of these enabling documents are often overlooked in favour of the liberal interpretation applied during the UNCED process [illegible]
63 Clif Curtis of Greenpeace International wrote an open letter to 175 governments' Permanent Representatives in New York, (October 1992), *op. cit.* He advocated that the Secretariat should be in an independent unit reporting directly to the Secretary General, and not in the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD) [suggested home for the CSD secretariat prior to creation of the Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development], as 'such placement would hinder the Commission's review and monitoring functions of that Department'. Reprinted in Appendix 4.

society, as defined in Agenda 21, would be equally necessary if the CSD were to play a constructive role in future.[64] A number of those most closely involved in the negotiations at PrepCom IV leading to agreement that the Commission should be established claim that the role of NGOs in cementing consensus on creation of the CSD was highly significant. For those who believed they had helped in its creation, the desire to influence these arrangements and to play a continuing role in its work was particularly strong.[65] The expansion of access for NGOs to decision-making processes within the UN can be understood as a key element in legitimising the role such non-governmental actors played in initiating the Commission. If it were seen as a strong advocate for non-governmental participation and influence, its creation would subsequently be understood as one of the most significant outcomes from the Rio Summit. Thus Bill Pace of the Center for the Development of International Law, who had been a leading NGO proponent of the CSD four months earlier, wrote in August 1992:

> For many NGOs and governments, one of the main reasons they supported the creation of a new functional commission is because of the participation rights and roles of NGOs and their effectiveness in other UN commissions, such as the Commission on Human Rights. Perhaps no other issue is more important than whether governments and the UN honor the commitments and mandates in Agenda 21, especially in Chapter 38, that call for an enhanced role for NGOs in the UN system and in future international decision-making fora.[66]

However, a distinct current of concern had been raised throughout preparations for the Rio Summit and afterwards by NGO activists who believed that environmental NGOs and others had effectively been hoodwinked by a collaboration between business and governments and had lent credibility to the agenda agreed by these two groupings. Caroline Thomas, writing in the post-UNCED edition of *Environmental Politics*, concludes that the Summit was 'unequivocally an interstate event which reached agreements principally in the interests of states':

> Furthermore, other actors with entrenched interests and enormous power failed even to engage in a constructive debate about the fundamental causes of the crisis and possible solutions. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church would not entertain the demographic debate, and the Pope had a huge influence on limiting the agenda. Transnational corporations argued successfully for self-

64 For example, one observer wrote in September 1992 that 'At least one delegation at UNCED cited NGO efforts as a major factor in gaining the support of their government for the CSD. The extent and character of NGO involvement at national and international levels is likely to be a critical element in building the political will and public demand needed for an effective Commission on Sustainable Development.' Sessions, Kathryn G 'Institutionalizing the Earth Summit', *op. cit.*
65 See for instance Jackie Roddick 'The Sustainable Development Commission: Half Way Down the Road', *op. cit.*
66 Pace, Bill 'Commission on Sustainable Development' information note, Center for the Development of International Law, August 1992. In the same piece, Bill Pace wrote that '[project-work relating to the establishment of the CSD undertaken by his organisation] is inextricably linked to questions about the enhanced role of citizens and NGOs in the post-Cold War, post-Earth Summit United Nations, and to reorganization of the Secretariat and proposed substantial reforms of the United Nations system.'

regulation, and had powerful allies in the richest states. Even the NGO community has, to an important extent, been co-opted into the mainstream debate. While this may make for more comfortable relations with the IMF, World Bank, and rich governments, and hence lend respectability and the appearance of being taken seriously, it is questionable whether it will achieve much for the disempowered or the environment. The total failure of UNCED to address fundamental causes of the crisis removed any possibility of meaningful effort to address the sustainability problem.[67]

Another growing division among NGOs working on institutional follow-up to UNCED was over the ramifications of the undertaking in chapter 38 of Agenda 21 to allow all NGOs accredited to the Rio Summit to have the right to attend annual meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development.[68] The debate on how this should be interpreted can broadly be characterised as follows. Some 1400 NGOs had been given UNCED accreditation, a total which exceeded the number with participatory rights at ECOSOC sessions in 1992. The debate initiated by the GA and carried on in ECOSOC meetings increasingly focused on the logistical problems which a large increase in NGO numbers would cause. As a result, proposals which would restrict the rights of NGOs participating in CSD sessions in comparison with other functional ECOSOC Commissions were put forward. The circulation of any document prepared by an NGO to delegations, which in other ECOSOC contexts would be carried out by the UN (and such written statements registered as official UN documents) would be the responsibility of that NGO. In addition, the CSD would have the right to require NGOs to address the CSD through designated spokespersons. In other sessions, NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC had a right to speak.[69]

These proposals provoked a strong response from a number of organisations which felt that their established rights, as set out in the ECOSOC Rules of Procedure[70] were being undermined. Existing antipathy between some members of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) and the so-called 'UNCED NGOs' was further exacerbated. For the former, a large influx of organisations onto the ECOSOC roster threatened to weaken their position as the focus for interaction between governments and non-governmental actors.

67 Thomas, Caroline 'Beyond UNCED: An Introduction' in Thomas, Caroline ed. *Rio: Unravelling the Consequences* pp.1-27, Frank Cass, Ilford UK. 1994 p.4.
68 *Agenda 21* para.38.44, *op. cit.*
69 See Willetts, Peter 'From "Consultative Arrangements" to "Partnership": The Changing Status of NGOs in Diplomacy at the UN' *Global Governance* no.6 pp.191-212, 2000 for a more detailed analysis of these issues.
70 E/5715/Rev.2 'Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council' July 1992.

For the latter, the potential for a major expansion in the number of NGOs accredited to ECOSOC was being jeopardised because of the self-serving attitude of established organisations.

The possibility that wider relations between the UN and NGOs might be affected by UNCED was given greater credence by the association drawn between non-governmental involvement in the preparations and at Rio and the call for a review of existing ECOSOC arrangements for involving NGOs in its work.[71] The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), an active member of CONGO, made the following statement to the initial meeting of the UN Committee on NGOs, convened to address wider changes to accreditation procedures in ECOSOC:

> Changes to rule 76 [of the ECOSOC Rules of Procedure] have the effect of removing participatory rights and privileges acquired by category I and category II non-governmental organizations. This too does not appear to WFUNA to be necessary in the circumstances. It is perhaps true that adding all the non-governmental organizations that participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to the Roster would create pressures on available space and services that are not easily accommodated. However, the answer of treating the representatives of all non-governmental organizations equally and thus lowering the rights and privileges already acquired does not seem to accord with established concepts of fairness.[72]

In other words, the introduction of a large number of NGOs to the ECOSOC Roster should not be used to justify diminution of the rights of established organisations. WFUNA's proposed compromise would have accorded the new organisations an insecure position – when space permitted, their role would be equivalent to that of existing Category I and II NGOs; when greater demands were placed on the Secretariat (and therefore when the event in question was of particular interest to a large number of NGOs), priority would be given to those with previous accreditation.

Many UNCED NGOs were aware of this potential for conflict and sought to defuse it through calls for the rights of Category I and II organisations to be applied to the CSD as well. A group of 25 NGO representatives from around the world who had collaborated as the Working Group for Institutional Change during UNCED PrepComs met in The Hague in November 1992 to prepare recommendations on the CSD. Among these was that

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71. 'The Secretary General also believes that it would be appropriate for the Council to undertake a general review of the overall arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations. The current arrangements were basically determined by the Council in its resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968. It now seems time to update these arrangements in the light of relevant experience gained within the United Nations in the course of last 25 years, in particular through the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and its preparatory process.' Para. 22 E/1993/12 'Rules of procedure of the Commission on Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General', January 29 1993.

There should be an open and inclusive policy regarding NGO participation in the new Commission by fully applying the existing ECOSOC rules for the participation of NGOs in consultative status with the ECOSOC and arranging for the equal participation of NGOs accredited at UNCED and that the procedure used to accredit the UNCED NGOs should be used to accredit NGOs who apply to participate in the CSD in the future.[73]

Even so, divisions between different groupings are clear and would continue to surface in the deliberations of the ECOSOC Open-Ended Working Group on NGO Accreditation, the work of which is considered later in this chapter.

4.3.2.3 ECOSOC Organisational Session

The ECOSOC organisational session had been scheduled to last from 2-5 February 1993 but in the event took a full two weeks (2-13 February). The principal reason for this extension was that the European Commission was keen to see arrangements for participation of the European Community (EC) which had been introduced at UNCED applied to the work of the CSD. This was resisted by most other countries, as it would give an inter-governmental body rights similar to those of states and a permanent place on the CSD. Lengthy negotiations and informal consultations took place before a temporary compromise was reached which would allow other regional organisations to be granted an equivalent status to the extent that they had 'attained a similar level of competence' to the EC. This was still not acceptable to all countries, and a final decision was deferred to a resumed ECOSOC session in late April.

Despite the difficulties caused by negotiations on the status of the EC in the CSD, decisions were taken on the establishment and organisation of the Commission, and an undertaking was made to conduct a review of current arrangements for consultations with NGOs. The decisions included agreement on rules of procedure for the CSD as a functional commission of ECOSOC, including supplementary arrangements regarding the participation of specialised agencies, inter-governmental organisations and NGOs.[74] The principal agreements regarding these issues were concluded on 12 February: ECOSOC Decisions E/1993/207 on 'Establishment of the Commission on Sustainable

72 E/C.2/1993/NGO/1 'Statement submitted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations to the meeting of the Committee on NGOs' para.6, 10 March 1993.
73 'Recommendations of the Working Group on Institutional Change on the UN Commission on Sustainable Development', op. cit p.24. It is perhaps an example of poor drafting that this recommendation advocates separate procedures for NGOs applying to participate in CSD sessions from those used in the rest of ECOSOC, but the purpose would seem to have been to identify common ground with Category I and II NGOs.

Development' and E/1993/215 on 'Participation of and consultation with specialized agencies and participation of other inter-governmental organizations' drew largely on the Secretary General's report on 'Rules of Procedure for the CSD' (E/1993/14), which was itself based on the General Assembly resolution on 'Institutional Arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development' (A/47/191).

Decision E/1993/215 was to cause considerable problems. Under its terms, NGOs which had been accredited to the Preparatory Committee for UNCED (some 1 400 organisations) would be able to apply for and be granted ECOSOC accreditation. These provisions conflicted with the existing ECOSOC rules of procedure in removing rights to circulate documents and address Commission sessions, so the decision states that, solely for the purposes of the CSD, the new provisions it sets out should 'supplement' rules 75 and 76 of the ECOSOC rules of procedure. Thus ECOSOC had instigated arrangements solely for the CSD by which the accreditation rights for NGOs were extensive, but the participation rights, including those for NGOs with Category I and II status, were actually more restrictive than in any other ECOSOC body. It should be pointed out first that the Decision did little more than to accept the recommendations put forward by the Secretary General and the General Assembly. It would seem reasonable to assume that during an organisational session unexpectedly prolonged to two weeks, from the three days originally envisaged, delegates may have been hard pressed to resolve outstanding matters quickly. The provisions for this decision had been considered in some detail by the General Assembly a few months earlier (as noted above), and the UN Secretariat had put forward further options with a strong steer towards the key elements found in E/1993/215.

A further factor which may have persuaded government delegates to rely on prior decisions and proposals was that the views of NGOs following this ECOSOC session were contradictory and often conflicting. A number of delegations with a particular commitment to strengthening NGO involvement would have been aware that the number of NGOs and the extent of geographical distribution had been much higher during the deliberations of the General Assembly and may have given greater credence to the outcomes from that session as a result. In addition, countries of the European Community may very well have been too preoccupied with the complexities of negotiating

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74 Information from *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* vol. 5 No. 1, 'A summary of the proceedings of the organizational session of the Commission on

the role of the European Commission in the work of the CSD to focus on the procedures for NGO involvement.

Some NGO lobbyists present during the Session suggested darkly that an unholy trade off might have been mooted, whereby the EC countries would agree to refrain from pushing for the application of UNCED procedures to the accreditation of new NGOs or for newly accredited organisations to have access to all working sessions of ECOSOC and thereby strengthen support for recognition of the European Commission's status.[75] There is little evidence to support such conspiracies. Even so, it does seem plausible that the highly charged debate over the status of the EC may have entrenched positions on other organisational matters and made constructive debate unlikely. The uneasy compromise that the EC's negotiating status should apply only to the work of the CSD may have made it difficult subsequently to revert to establishing procedural arrangements for NGO participation to apply to ECOSOC as a whole.

Whatever the factors affecting the context in which the resolution was considered, clearly ECOSOC had agreed an 'ambiguous, poorly-drafted Decision'.[76] Where Agenda 21 had called for 'an expanded role for non-governmental organisations, including those related to major groups, with accreditation based on the procedures used in the Conference',[77] and the General Assembly advocated the 'integration of environment and development issues' in 'the United Nations institutional system arrangements',[78] ECOSOC had made this expansion and integration less likely by putting in place arrangements which applied solely to the CSD.

A number of other significant factors should be acknowledged in assessing the arrangements made by ECOCOC for NGO involvement in the work of the CSD:

Sustainable Development', 1 March 1993.
75 See for example 'A report of the intergovernmental negotiations concerning the rules of procedures of the [CSD] during the organisational session of [ECOSOC]', Netherlands National Committee for IUCN, 24 February 1993. This states that the G77 issued an informal discussion paper on NGO accreditation the day before the scheduled close of the session. This paper proposed removal of a number of points put forward by the Secretary General: '[n]ot only were UNCED NGOs deprived of a special status, but there was also no reference to the rules of procedure of UNCED, although this was explicitly required by the General Assembly resolution.' The report outlines NGO concerns that countries of the EC might be willing to compromise: 'The position of Denmark [then holding the Presidency of the EC] and the EC was focused on the special status for involvement and participation of the EC. In the corridors lipservice was paid to the importance of NGO participation. The feeling among NGO observers was, however, that if a choice were to be made, the EC delegations would opt for EC status to the detriment of NGO involvement'. This issue was also thought to affect the position of the US (concerned about the future role of NAFTA) and the Nordic countries (not wishing to prejudice their relations with the EC while joining the Community remained an option for them). 'Only the Canadian delegation was straightforwardly and openly in favour of NGO participation in the debates'.
76 Willetts, Peter 'Consultative Status for NGOs at the United Nations' op. cit. p.56.

- Agenda 21 language on the 'major groups of civil society' posed considerable problems in attempts to draw up procedures for NGO participation which complied with the broad framework of ECOSOC procedures. The Secretary General called on the CSD to 'provide for non-governmental organizations, including those related to major groups, as well as industry and the scientific and business communities, to participate effectively in its work and contribute within their areas of competence to its deliberations'.[79] No reference is made to major groups, or to any broader conception of organisations of civil society in the agreed procedural arrangements for the CSD.

- Decision E/1993/215 requests the CSD to encourage an 'equitable representation' of NGOs from developed and developing countries, in line with text agreed in many other contexts. The same paragraph also calls for 'a fair balance between non-governmental organizations with an environment focus and those with a development focus'. The suggestion that these two analogous areas exist in which an equilibrium of sorts among NGOs is desirable derives from political battles about the agenda for UNCED.[80] It is interesting to note that the point has been added to suggestions in the texts agreed by the General Assembly and put forward by the Secretary General.

- The ECOSOC Decision develops the Secretary General's points regarding the desirability of self-organisation among NGOs, to include creation of constituencies and interest groups, as well as networks for the exchange of information and documentation.[81] It is unclear what significance this exhortation has in a text dealing otherwise with procedural arrangements for inter-governmental meetings. The origin of these suggestions lay in concern that the influx of a large number of NGOs might place severe strain on the resources at the disposal of the UN, and in their original context could be read as suggestions for ways in which

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77 *Agenda 21* para, 38.44, *op. cit.* The conclusion to the paragraph states that 'The General Assembly, at an early stage, should examine ways of enhancing the involvement of non-governmental organisations within the United Nations system in relation to the follow-up process of the Conference' - a recommendation which presaged the Review of ECOSOC Accreditation Procedures subsequently initiated by the Secretary General.
78 Preamble to Res. A/47/191, *op. cit.*
79 E/1993/12 'Rules of procedure of the Commission on Sustainable Development, Report of the Secretary-General' para.2, *op. cit.*
80 E/1993/215 (b), *op. cit.* This language is taken from Decision 1/1 (para 3) of the UNCED Preparatory Committee First Session. UN doc. A/45/46, 25 January 1991
81 ECOSOC 'Invites non-governmental organizations, with a view to enhancing their effective and coordinated contribution to the work of the Commission and to the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in general, to consider or to continue organizing themselves in various constituencies and interest groups as well as setting up non-governmental networks, including electronic networks, for exchange of relevant information and documentation' E/1993/215 (d), *ibid.*

particular difficulties might be resolved. However, when read as part of a more rigorous set of decisions on procedure the text implies that restrictions on NGO access may be necessary if these recommendations are not acted upon.

As noted earlier, existing rights for established NGOs in categories I and II are curtailed in the context of the CSD. The right to circulate documents as official texts and for the UN to meet the costs for this distribution will not apply.

4.3.2.4 CSD Organisational Session

The CSD organisational session took place from 24-26 February 1993. The 53 members of the Commission[82] elected Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia as Chair of the CSD. A four-person Bureau was chosen to serve with the Chair. The organisational session also agreed a provisional agenda for the first session of the CSD, which was to deal principally with the organisation of future annual meetings. The principle of grouping chapters of Agenda 21 into clusters of issues as the basis for the yearly programme of work of the CSD was also accepted.

In addition, a number of decisions on future work of the Commission were agreed.[83] These covered issues such as the right of the Commission to establish informal negotiating groups and ways in which it would consider contributions from entities outside the UN system, including NGOs. Further informal consultations on the work of the CSD were called for – these took place in late March and were chaired by CSD Vice-Chair Hamadi Khouini of Tunisia.

4.3.2.5 Subsequent steps taken by the ECOSOC Secretariat

A letter dated 3 March 1993 was sent by the NGO Unit in the ECOSOC Secretariat to all the NGOs accredited to UNCED which did not hold ECOSOC accreditation.[84] They were given until 15 April to respond to this invitation. The letter departed from Decision E/1993/215 in inviting applications for accreditation from NGOs which had not been involved with UNCED at all. They were required to submit information to establish the status and credibility of the organisation (accounts, annual reports,

82 Election of 53 countries to serve on the Commission for periods of one to three years took place on 16 February 1993.
83 The focus for these discussions was Secretary General paper E/1993/14, op. cit.
84 A copy of this letter is reproduced in P Willetts ed. "The Conscience of the World" op. cit. p.308.

constitution and so on) for consideration at a resumed session of ECOSOC to be held before the inaugural session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Of particular significance here is that the Secretariat took the initiative in rectifying a practical shortcoming in the original decision. As noted earlier, a number of non-governmental organisations had been created in the period immediately preceding and following the Rio Summit. Many of these had taken as their remit to promote awareness and action in specific countries or regions, or within particular sectors, on the issues brought to global attention through the UNCED process.[85] For advocates of strengthened NGO involvement in the UN institutions dealing with follow-up to Rio it would be regrettable if these new entities were not given the chance to participate in the work of ECOSOC on an equal footing with more long-standing organisations. The evidence suggests that the Secretariat took the opportunity to create an opening for a short period through which these newly created organisations would be able to enter a formal relationship with ECOSOC, and thereby sidestep the much more protracted process for accreditation which they would otherwise have had to go through.

The letter from the ECOSOC NGO Unit was sent to all NGOs which had held accreditation for the Preparatory Committee for UNCED. Its contents were clearly of wider relevance, and a number of NGOs and other bodies took it upon themselves to disseminate this information to those who might be interested in applying for ECOSOC Roster Status to attend CSD meetings. 'Action alerts' were sent out which stressed the importance of the issue, and the need for a quick response. The Netherlands Committee for IUCN, for instance, disseminated the information in a circular letter to 'participants of the ANPED [Alliance of Northern Peoples for Environment and Development] Working Group on follow-up to UNCED'. They wrote:

> Please realize that if you fail to reach their deadline you will lose your accreditation, and you might have to go through a long and bureaucratic procedure if you ever want to attend a CSD meeting at a later stage. Moreover, if the great majority of NGOs accredited for UNCED applies for reaccreditation, governments will have to make a rapid decision about a long list and they will have less opportunity to veto the reaccreditation of their national NGOs. So even if you are not planning to attend the coming meeting of the CSD we urge you to fill out the enclosed form,

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85 That UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong was head of the newly-created Earth Council (referred to in *Agenda 21* para.38.45, *op. cit.*) which clearly met this description may perhaps be of some relevance.

both out of solidarity with NGOs which might face a political veto from their own governments, and to avoid long bureaucratic procedures for your own organization later on.[86]

The following is a breakdown of organisations which took up the invitation of the ECOSOC Secretariat.

●Table 4.2 Non-governmental organisations applying for Roster Status for meetings of the CSD by region:[87]

Region or Country	NGOs with previous UNCED accreditation	NGOs with no previous UNCED accreditation	Total
USA	115	27	142
Western Europe	76	·16	92
Latin America	75	7	82
South Asia	73	3	76
Africa	57	5	62
East Asia	33	5	38
Canada	23	3	26
Pacific	15	1	16
Caribbean	4	2	6
Eastern Europe	4	‑2	6
Middle East	4	0	4
Total	479	71	550

The geographical distribution among these organisations is still very uneven. Only six organisations from the former communist countries of East and Central Europe and four from the countries of the Middle East applied for ECOSOC status – extremely low figures given the populations in these regions. Conversely, there are a disproportionately high number applying from the industrialised regions, particularly the United States. Even so, given the increase in the overall number of organisations in a formal relationship with ECOSOC that these newcomers represented, their impact on the geographical range of all the NGOs accredited to ECOSOC is significant.

It should also be noted that the proportion of organisations with no previous UN accreditation from the US, Canada, Western Europe and Australia is extremely high (66 per cent of the total). This

86 Letter to participants of the ANPED Working Group on follow-up to UNCED, Netherlands Committee for IUCN, Amsterdam, 17 March 1993.
87 Information from E/1993/65 'Representation of and consultation with non-governmental organizations in the Commission on Sustainable Development', 26 May 1993. [The total number of organisations applying for roster status which had previously been accredited to UNCED is wrongly given as 481 in E/1993/65].

suggests that sharing of information among these NGOs was more effective than in other regions and that more Northern organisations acted in the opportunistic fashion suggested by the Netherlands Committee for IUCN above. If the intention of ECOSOC had been to draw in organisations from around the world which had been unable to attend the Rio Summit but which wished to play a role in the follow-up the results must have been somewhat disappointing, at least in comparison to the figures for organisations which had UNCED accreditation.

The table below is a breakdown of broad categories of organisations applying for accreditation. The information derives principally from their names and from the brief description attached to those seeking accreditation for the first time. In some cases organisations have been entered under two categories, when their area of interest clearly applies to both;[88] organisations whose name did not reveal enough information on which to reach a conclusion are listed under 'not clear'.

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88 17 organisations have been listed under two categories: for instance, the Arab Office of Youth and Environment and the Uganda Women Tree Planting Movement.

● Table 4.3 Breakdown of NGOs by category and country of headquarters:[89]

	Industrialised countries[90]	Developing countries[91]	Economies in transition[92]	Total
Academic	20	22	0	42
Environment	58	72 ·	2	132
Development	13	21	1	35
Sustainable development	12	13	2	27
Media /information	10	3	0	13
Rural issues	6	25	0	31
Youth & students	6	13	1	20
Industry	16	4	0	20
Professional associations	6	2	0	8
Regional development	2	12	0	14
Education	6	2	0	8
Religious organisations	15	4	0	19
International co-operation	25	0	0	25
Women	7	9	0	16
Indigenous peoples	5	2	0	7
Peace groups	12	2	0	14
Legal issues	13	2	0	15
Local campaigns	3	13	0	16
Social justice	12	20	0	32
Foundations	8	6	0	14
Energy / technology	18	7	0	25
Marine issues	10	1	0	11
Not clear	4	19	0	23
Total	287	274	6	567

These figures give an inexact representation of the nature of organisations applying for accreditation. By relying on the name of the organisation alone in most cases it has been necessary to make assumptions about the work each undertakes which may not be accurate. By using the headquarters of the organisation as the determinant of the location of its work there may be an inadequate

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89 The 23 categories listed below are intended to cover the principal groupings of organisations applying for ECOSOC accreditation. Some overlap between these is inevitable, but each was considered to represent a distinct perspective. This categorisation conflates identification by the issues the NGOs concerned focus on with identification by the constituency they represent. This leads to some problems of definition, but is perhaps consistent with the ways in which such NGOs define and identify themselves. The so-called 'UNCED NGOs' and new applicants are presented together as all were subsequently placed in the same category on the newly-created CSD Roster.
90 Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand.
91 Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.
92 Countries of the former Soviet bloc.

representation of those with operations in more than one region.[93] Even so, credence must be placed on the names given as an indication of organisations' areas of interest and expertise as these are their single most accessible manifestation to others around the world interested in issues of sustainable development. The location of organisations' headquarters also has significance – for most bodies, this will be the base for the most senior staff and the place where key organisational and policy decisions are taken.

Despite possible reservations over the accuracy of this breakdown, it serves a number of useful purposes. First, it shows clearly that the influx of NGOs onto the ECOSOC Roster was not exclusively, or even principally, made up of bodies working on issues of environmental protection, as some have suggested.[94] Second, it demonstrates that the Rio Summit and its aftermath were significant to very different groups in different parts of the world, which in turn suggests that the broader societal concerns organisations from one region may be understood to represent or reflect are not necessarily mirrored in other areas. Organisations addressing rural issues, regional development and social justice are predominantly from Southern countries, while industry associations, religious groups and bodies prioritising international co-operation come mainly from the North. Finally, it points up issues and groupings which were addressed in the UNCED process which are poorly represented among those applying for accreditation. These conclusions should be explored further, as they have a wider relevance to the role of NGOs in UN follow-up to Rio.

Not just environment. There is a widely-held assumption among commentators, particularly in Europe and North America, that UNCED was principally an environmental event. The commonly used term 'the Earth Summit' perhaps helps to perpetuate this. Environmental organisations may be understood to have used their influence to shape general perceptions of the scope and focus of the Rio Summit. Environment departments in many Northern governments played the lead role in co-ordinating and presenting national positions in preparation for Rio, and in negotiating the agreements reached. Again, this may have contributed to the ways in which the whole process has been understood. The statistics for South Asia in particular indicate that this interpretation is not reflected by the interests of the

93 The Alliance of Northern Peoples for Environment and Development for example, has operated extensively in Central and Eastern Europe, but has its headquarters in the Netherlands. Many similar examples could be cited.
94 Princen and Finger, for example titled their book on the UNCED process and its aftermath *Environmental NGOs in World Politics*. They do note that 'cultural differences distinguish NGOs' from different parts of the world, and identify the colonial legacy and distinct 'organisational cultures' as significant determinants of NGOs' priorities and ways of working.' Princen, Thomas and Matthias Finger *Environmental Politics* Routledge, London 1994.

NGOs wishing to continue their involvement with the UN after UNCED. Of 76 organisations seeking ECOSOC accreditation, only 5 have a clear environmental focus (6.6 per cent). This is half the number addressing either social justice or rural development (13.2 per cent and 14.5 per cent respectively). By contrast, 34 of the 82 South American organisations work predominantly on environmental issues (41.5 per cent) while only a handful work on matters of social justice and rural development (2.4 per cent and 3.7 per cent).

Different concerns in different regions – In two of the groupings, over half the organisations are based in the USA. US NGOs constitute 25.8 per cent of all those listed, but 11 of the 20 representing industry (55.0 per cent), and 14 of the 19 organisations with a clear religious affiliation (73.7 per cent). South Asia has not one organisation in any of these two categories. The only other instance in which over half the organisations are from one region is 'local campaigns', under which 9 of 16 organisations are from Latin America (56.2 per cent), which may perhaps reflect regional awareness of, and ease of access to, the Summit.

Missing perspectives. Of the major groups identified in Agenda 21, it is striking that there are no trade unions or other organised labour bodies. It may be that international organisations such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions or the process established in the work of the International Labour Organisation are considered to be sufficient channels for the representation of these perspectives by many. These formal means for presentation of distinct perspectives are also evident among local government bodies, which are also unrepresented among those applying for accreditation. Again, international associations such as the International Union of Local Authorities (which has a long-standing formal relation with the UN system) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives may be seen to play this role effectively for the broader local government community.

Of the other major groups identified in Agenda 21, women's groups and youth organisations are present in reasonable numbers and with a fair geographical distribution. Farmers may have a voice in some contexts through organisations focusing on rural development. Even so, these two perspectives are not necessarily interchangeable and may be opposed in certain instances. None of the organisations listed as addressing rural issues has a clear role in representing or articulating the views of farmers.

It is also worth noting that there are no organisations from among some of the principal sectors not included in the major groups categorisation: the disabled and older people are absent from the list.

In a brief statement issued at the end of May 1993, ECOSOC reported that:

> At its 11th meeting, on 26 May 1993, the Council decided to accredit to the Commission on Sustainable Development those non-governmental organizations listed in the note by the Secretariat on the representation of and consultations with non-governmental organizations.[95]

4.3.3 First session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

By June 1993 a full year of debate over organisational issues had passed, during which time protracted, if necessary, discussions had taken place over the institutional location of the CSD, its remit, and its relations with other actors. Yet still more procedural issues were to be determined at the inaugural CSD session, at which the new institution's work programme would be decided and the requirements for reporting by governments and other key actors would be agreed.

Despite some frustration at the lack of substantive progress since UNCED (most notably the lack of financial support from developed countries), the governmental participants at the CSD established a number of important precedents. These fall into two general areas: domestic – international linkages; and the advancement of notions of social partnership as the basis for achieving sustainable development.

Domestic – international linkages. Unlike other functional commissions of ECOSOC, from the outset the CSD attracted significant ministerial participation. At the first session 46 Government Ministers attended, the majority from environmental departments.[96] The CSD also established an optional reporting procedure for countries, under which information on implementation of sections of Agenda 21 would be requested annually. The incorporation of the views and activities of 'major groups' organisations in this process was encouraged. A number of states also initiated partnerships to further co-operation on particular issues (for example, the UK and India agreed to collaborate on forest issues, while the USA and Colombia pledged to work together on technology co-operation). All of these arrangements can be understood as attempts to bring domestic policy and activity into the purview of

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95 E/1993/INF/2/Add.1 'Non-Governmental Organisations Accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development', 26 May 1993.

the new global body and to explore formal and informal means by which collaboration could be fostered.

Social partnership. In addition to the possibility of input to national reports to the CSD, 'major groups' organisations were also encouraged to submit information directly to the CSD Secretariat. The Commission also negotiated text on the Major Groups concept at its 1993 and 1994 sessions.[97] NGOs were not slow to take advantage of this openness – the majority of formal sessions were addressed by one or two NGO delegates, and access to informal drafting groups was not called into question.

This also constituted the first opportunity for a large-scale meeting of NGOs after UNCED, and thus the first significant chance for the organisational principles advanced in the Alternative Treaties and elsewhere to be addressed. In practice, little attention was devoted to appraisal of these agreements – efforts at co-ordination focused principally on maximising access to the inter-governmental negotiations.

In the period immediately following UNCED extensive negotiations were necessary between governments to clarify the arrangements for international follow-up to the Summit. This included detailed consideration of access for non-governmental actors to the future work of the UN in this area, and opened a more far-reaching debate on the implications of sustainable development in international diplomacy which has considerable significance for the study of international relations.

It is also important to note the genesis of a number of powerful myths emanating from NGOs' participation in UNCED and from broader perceptions of the relevance of the process as a whole. The terms under which NGOs participated in UNCED preparations were actually more restrictive than those pertaining in regular sessions of ECOSOC, although this was seldom recognised by commentators. A number, such as Kathryn Sessions, conflated the procedural arrangements with practice which arose during the PrepComs, and propagated the idea that the terms agreed by governments at PrepCom 1 for NGO involvement constituted an advance on previous texts.[98] In addition, widespread impressions of the Summit as predominantly concerned with environmental

96 Sessions, Kathryn G. 'Report on the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development' UNA-USA, Washington D.C. July 1993. Reproduced in Appendix 7 p.3.
97 Documents E/1993/25/Add.1 'Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its First Session', 30 June 1993 and E/CN.17/1994/L.11 'General Discussion on Progress in the Implementation of Agenda 21. Focusing on the Cross-sectoral Components of Agenda 21 and the Critical Elements of Sustainability', 25 May 1994.

issues is not borne out by the documents agreed by governments or by NGOs and is not reflected in the priorities of NGOs coming into a formal relationship with the UN as a result of UNCED.

A final development to note is that, although NGO contributions to the ongoing debate on institutional issues was extensive, this was not matched by attempts to sustain the international networks noted in the previous chapter, which were intended to foster debate on issues of principle and programmes for co-ordinated activity by NGOs. The initiatives started in the Rio context were not promoted or developed by NGOs involved in UNCED follow-up and were quickly marginalised and forgotten. By contrast, NGO collaboration in the CSD context came to deal principally with attempts to co-ordinate input to the inter-governmental negotiations.

4.4 The Open-Ended Working Group and the Review of Rules for NGO Participation in ECOSOC

In the event, a compromise between existing arrangements and the particular priorities emerging after UNCED could not be satisfactorily realised before the first CSD session. ECOSOC took a decision in February 1993 to establish a Review to consider revisions to existing arrangements for NGO participation. Although Agenda 21 had envisaged revisions to strengthen 'the role of non-governmental organisations as social partners'[99] which would address the whole UN system 'including international finance and development agencies',[100] the mandating resolution for the proposed Review took a narrower focus:

> a general review of current arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organisations, as determined by the Council in its Resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968, with a view to updating them, if necessary, in particular in the light of recent experience, including that gained during the process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.[101]

The deliberations and conclusions of the Open-Ended Working Group established to conduct the Review are too wide-reaching and convoluted to explore in detail here.[102] The Review addressed three

98 Sessions, Kathryn 'Institutionalizing the Earth Summit' *op. cit.*
99 *Agenda 21* para.27.6, *op. cit.*
100 *Ibid.* 27.9.
101 E/1993/214 'Review of the arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations'. 12 February 1993. Debate in the course of the review did go beyond this remit, and address some of the more general issues raised in Agenda 21.
102 See Willetts, Peter 'Social Partnership or Successful Sidelining? The United Nations Review of its Relations with Non-Governmental Organisations' paper prepared for the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Bern Switzerland 2-4 March 1997 for a more detailed account of this process.

areas: the fora in which NGOs should be allowed to participate; the issues on which NGOs should be able to express their views; and the types of NGOs which are legitimate participants in the UN system. Resolution 1996/31, agreed in July 1996, provided the following conclusions:

- The new resolution would only apply to ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. Attempts to open negotiation on terms for access to the UN General Assembly were not successful, although the debate on what was appropriate and beneficial for ECOSOC to recommend continued until the final text was negotiated. In the event, only a weak recommendation that the General Assembly should examine the question of NGO participation in its work remained: ECOSOC agreed 'to recommend that the General Assembly examine, at its fifty-first session, the question of the participation of non-governmental organizations in all areas of the work of the United Nations'.[103]

- Although there are a wide range of issues not addressed in ECOSOC, many of these (including trade and disarmament) are dealt with by UN Conferences, to which ECOSOC-accredited organisations would have access. Thus the agreement reached not to make recommendations on access to other parts of the UN system does not fully resolve problems arising from the initial suggestion that details should be agreed of the areas to be addressed by NGOs with accreditation. The final text resolves these by avoiding mention of issues altogether. References to different types of issues were removed before agreement to the final Resolution.

- The Review addressed the legitimacy of NGOs in two broad contexts, and resolved many of the problems arising from the gaps between prevailing practice and the provisions of Resolution 1296[104] – in particular from its inconsistency with practice established through UNCED. It considered, and rejected, various alternative typologies for NGOs (most notably various articulations of the 'major groups' approach from Agenda 21); and it made significant alterations to the access open for national NGOs and to the contexts in which applications for accreditation could be rejected.

103 E/1996/297 'ECOSOC Decision on Non-Governmental Organizations', 25 July 1996.
104 ECOSOC Resolution 1296 (XLIV) 'Statute for NGOs', 23 May 1968.

The first draft submitted by the Working Group Secretariat, CRP.1 [Conference Room Paper], set out a detailed introduction, to be added to a revised Resolution 1296. This stressed that the participation of 'organisations representing the major groups defined in Agenda 21, including the private sector, should be obtained'.[105] The vague and arbitrary nature of the major groups structure, as defined in Agenda 21, made it impossible for these to be used as the basis for a procedural resolution. A number of established NGOs objected to its inclusion in this context. The World Federation of United Nations Associations, for example, argued against 'unnecessary ideological or political references'.[106] A subsequent attempt by a group of countries including Canada and the European Union to introduce a list of types of organisation which mentioned the major groups but stressed that these were illustrative rather than comprehensive[107] was also rejected as a basis for defining the involvement of NGOs in the work of ECOSOC.

In two related areas, however, the UNCED process can be understood to have led to significant change to the existing Resolution. It had been established practice that national organisations should not generally be able to participate in the work of ECOSOC, and that, wherever possible, they should be represented at the UN by international 'umbrella' NGOs. The presumption that this form of hierarchical structure adequately involved national NGOs is evident in Resolution 1296, which states that 'National organisations shall normally present their views through international non-governmental organisations to which they belong'.[108] However, the imperatives in sustainable development to devolve decision-making to the appropriate level, and to emphasise the inter-relationships between local, national and global contexts presented direct challenges to these presumptions. Despite opposition from many established international NGOs, and divisions between governments on the principles to be pursued and the implications of the different options, a compromise was eventually reached. Resolution 1996/31 states that 'Regional, subregional and national organisations, including those affiliated to an international organisation already in status, may be admitted'.[109] This surprisingly strong formulation derived much of its legitimacy from the

105 E/AC.70/1995/CRP.1 'Working Document for the Second Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations' para.3, 1995.
106 E/AC.70/1995/NGO/3 'General Review of Arrangements for Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations: Statement submitted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations' para.4, 3 May 1995.
107 E/1995/83/Add.1 'Report of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations – Compilation of Proposals' para. 3.1, June 1995.
108 ECOSOC Resolution 1296 (XLIV) 'Statute for NGOs' para.9, op. cit.
109 Resolution 1996/31, 'Consultative Relationship Between the United Nations and Non-Governmental Organisations' para.9, 25 July 1996.

precedent established through UNCED, and from the participation of significant numbers of 'UNCED NGOs' who fitted this description in the regular work of the CSD from 1993 onwards.

The new Resolution also attempted to regularise arrangements for NGO participation in UN conferences. The decisions taken in this area constituted the most detailed alterations to the previous arrangements, but the specific provisions reflect a range of concerns which are not greatly relevant here. The final text offers no real advance for NGOs, and is perhaps a reflection of the 'lowest common denominator' from previous conferences, rather than the compilation of best practice which might have been anticipated. The G77 group of developing countries asserted the right of states to revise the list recommended by the conference Secretariat for accreditation, which in various contexts could constitute a very retrograde step, while the use of UNCED Decision 1/1 as the basis for text on the circulation of written statements by NGOs places greater restrictions than had applied in practice in many other areas. By contrast, a new general right for NGOs to speak at all stages of a conference process and at all levels of conference bodies was established. As with Resolution 1296, there is still considerable scope for flexibility in the interpretation of these provisions for individual events, although their general tenor is not very positive for NGOs.

As an exercise in 'institutionalising the Earth Summit', the final text of Resolution 1996/31 must be understood as a failure. The spirit of Agenda 21, with its emphasis on establishing partnerships between the UN and NGOs and broadening participation in the work of the UN, is not really reflected in the conclusions of the Open-Ended Working Group at all. The final text agreed did not lift the restrictions placed on the circulation of NGO documentation and rights to address the plenary during CSD sessions, noted earlier. Nevertheless, the concerns from some NGOs that the Review might place greater restrictions on their activities also proved groundless. It should also be noted that innovative arrangements, including the introduction of dialogue sessions involving governments and NGOs in both the Commission on the Status of Women (1996) and the Commission on Sustainable Development (1997), as well as the incorporation of an extensive set of stakeholder dialogues during the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in June 1996,[110] constitute *ad hoc* advances which question the influence of some of the more restrictive aspects of the new Resolution.

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110 Information from Felix Dodds, UNED-UK.

4.5 Networking and the Commission on Sustainable Development -- The CSD NGO Steering Committee

By 1994, the Commission on Sustainable Development had established a programme of work and put in place a New York-based Secretariat. The UN had also initiated a system of task managers, appointed in other relevant UN bodies to oversee production of reports and recommendations for action drawing on the expertise of other parts of the UN system. It was only at its second session, two years after the Rio Summit, that the CSD held its first substantive session, at which the principal issues addressed were health, human settlements, and fresh water.

As we have seen, NGO attention also focused principally on organisational issues during the period following UNCED, addressing both the instigation of new, permanent arrangements in the UN to deal with Rio follow-up, and new structures for NGO self-organisation. However, initially these collaborations were relatively *ad hoc*, providing a specific service to NGOs for a limited period rather than a more general and permanent focus for NGO interaction. By 1994, a number of factors led to creation of a new body:

- interaction with the CSD Secretariat on organisational issues (booking of rooms; provision of computer facilities and so on)

- the need for an organisational structure to support the work of issue caucuses attempting to influence the CSD's decisions. (A number of these had continued to function after the UNCED PrepComs, including the International Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters [INTGLIM] and groups working on oceans and agriculture.)

- the need for an identifiable interlocutor for CSD member governments, the CSD bureau and Secretariat wishing to communicate with NGOs – this was of particular relevance in determining whether NGOs would be able to address CSD sessions, and which organisation could most effectively represent broader perspectives

- greater organisation and co-ordination among other sectors, most notably trade unions and industry, increased pressure on NGOs to do likewise

- events held elsewhere (most notably the UN Conference on Small Island Developing States [Barbados 1994] and the UN International Conference on Population and Development [Cairo 1994] had led to the involvement of new NGOs in regular UN work; a number saw the CSD as an appropriate context for their future activities

- appreciation of both the need for and the feasibility of collaboration between CSD sessions, particularly to prepare adequately for the next meeting, increased interest in a central co-ordinating body with a remit to function throughout the year

- tensions between Northern and Southern NGOs (notably over issues of access and funding, but also on policy) also accentuated the need for an impartial body which could assume responsibility for some of the contentious organisational issues

One of the principal sources of impetus for change was the CSD Secretariat. Two documents produced in preparation for the 1994 CSD session illustrate the extent to which improved co-ordination among NGOs was seen as a necessary element in the overall success of the organisation. The first, titled 'Frameworks for the Long, Medium and Short-Term on Major Groups Related Activities of the CSD Secretariat', was produced following the first meeting of the Major Groups Focal Points (the points of contact in the various secretariats for non-governmental organisations in all relevant parts of the UN system).[111] The second, 'Commission on Sustainable Development Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations / Major Groups' is a report disseminated to NGOs and Major Groups on relations with the CSD which 'proposes some modalities for making this important partnership work'.[112]

The 'Frameworks' document argues that UNCED achieved two results beyond the official agreements: unprecedented involvement by non-governmental actors; and raised expectations of the global community regarding the UN's ability to 'maintain and foster the sustainable development momentum achieved at Rio'. To build upon these two achievements required the creation of a 'truly

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111 'Frameworks for the Long, Medium and Short-Term on Major Groups Related Activities of the CSD Secretariat - Draft' UN Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development, New York November 1993. Reproduced in Appendix 9. A shorter version of this paper was printed in Network, or was the newsletter of the Centre for Our Common Future, with a request for comments to be sent to the CSD Secretariat. Network No.30, op. cit. September 1993.
112 'Commission on Sustainable Development Consultation with Non-Governmental Organisations / Major Groups - Non-Paper' UN Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development, New York February 1994. Reproduced in Appendix 10.

international partnership' between the UN and Major Groups; the global community 'expects the CSD and its Secretariat to be the protector and nurturer of this partnership'. In order to achieve this, a proactive role is envisaged for the CSD Secretariat in building links and collaboration with non-governmental actors: the CSD's responsibilities should include 'enabling linkages between Major Groups, as well as linkages between major groups and governments and international organizations'; the CSD Secretariat should '[provide] the missing link as a central exchange forum for information, activities, networks, resources and the like, between major groups and inter-governmental organizations'.[113]

The document concludes that the CSD should play an active role in promoting greater interaction between Major Groups, and that this would in turn foster social and economic transition. The associated costs should not detract from the importance of these activities: 'Required investments will have a high return in terms of both promoting the implementation of Agenda 21 and increasing the visibility of the Secretariat'. Thus, in addition to its more passive responsibilities to collect information from, and provide information to Major Groups, the document advocates that the Secretariat should:

1. Participate in Major Groups Meetings and Conferences to work as a multiplier for the objectives laid down in Agenda 21 and in decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to advise major groups with regards to effective access to the intergovernmental machinery

2. For different topics, organize conferences involving major groups to facilitate interaction and communication among them and with the UN system and the exchange of information

3. Mobilize special support to major groups in developing countries in the form of logistical inputs, information and fund raising, if possible.[114]

While the first Secretariat document was never formally released to a general audience, the second paper mentioned above was widely circulated and was intended to promote dialogue with NGOs about the role of the CSD and ways in which NGO participation in its future work could best be realised. Again, it emphasises the central importance of non-governmental organisations in

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113 'Frameworks for the Long, Medium and Short-Term on Major Groups Related Activities of the CSD Secretariat - Draft', op. cit.

'facilitating the global transition to sustainability' and the need to develop working relations between the CSD and Major Groups. It outlines the guidelines for NGO involvement in the CSD, as set out in ECOSOC decision 1993/215, and stresses the principle of 'equitable representation of all NGOs / Major Groups' in the CSD's work. What is noteworthy about this paper is the extent to which it implies that the strengthening of co-ordinating mechanisms for NGOs is desirable for the Commission as a whole, and that as a result it is appropriate for the CSD Secretariat to exert pressure on NGOs to comply with a model for interaction which is not necessarily self-generated:

> NGOs / major groups are encouraged to coordinate inputs among themselves – either related to substantive issues or regionally. NGOs are encouraged to establish advisory committees constituted on a regional or constituency basis to facilitate their communication with the Secretariat and the CSD during sessions and intersessionally.[115]

Advocacy of such advisory committees was very much the initiative of the Secretariat, with no evident support from existing NGO coalitions, yet their putative role in this paper is clearly influential. Among their proposed responsibilities are:

- determining who will speak on behalf of constituencies

- enabling the CSD Secretariat to establish contact with NGOs / major groups and distributing material on the work of the CSD

- taking part in pre-session consultations with the CSD Bureau, and meeting with the Bureau during CSD sessions to assess the relationship and explore ways to make it more productive for both sides

The paper also includes a general reference to the cost implications of these proposed consultation mechanisms, suggesting that some financial support might be available for these new advisory bodies: 'it might be worth exploring the means of voluntary financial support for NGOs / major groups on an ongoing basis for the above activities'.[116] Finally, the Secretariat paper specifically advances the CSD's relations with NGOs as an example of relevance for the review of UN relations with NGOs, which had been initiated the previous year: 'the ECOSOC open-ended working group on NGO reform

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114 *Ibid.*
115 *Ibid.*
116 *Ibid.*

should be encouraged to take into account the CSD's own experiences with NGOs during its deliberations'.[117]

No record exists of responses to this consultation document, and the proposal to create advisory committees was not subsequently taken up. The CSD Secretariat also failed to act upon the recommendation to explore ways in which financial support for NGO activity might be provided.[118] Nevertheless, this consultation paper and the internal document on Major Groups-related activities establish clear positions on some of the principal issues which would govern creation of non-governmental alliances around the CSD. They demonstrate that the Secretariat actively supported such networking and recognised its value to the work of the Commission. They stress the need for geographical and gender equity in NGO participation and advocate that NGO alliances should determine who would have access to formal speaking opportunities during CSD sessions. They also suggest that such networks are the most appropriate means by which to engage local and national organisations, and specific sectoral constituencies, in Agenda 21 implementation.

In setting out a position on the significance of a structure to guide NGO interaction with the CSD, both papers are unduly selective in their consideration of recent history. They avoid any reference to the precedents for NGO collaboration established before UNCED, and imply that initiation of a formal collaborative structure would fill a void. They also fail to acknowledge the Alternative Treaties process, and indicate that the key purpose of Major Groups collaboration is to ensure the CSD functions more effectively, and to establish an intermediary between the CSD Secretariat and individual organisations. The need for NGOs to use this type of apparatus to establish common principles, or to advance fundamental alternatives, as envisaged by INGOF, is not alluded to at all. Rather, the Rio agreements are presented as the unequivocal articulation of sustainable development, Major Groups are considered as essentially homogenous, and the possibility of differences on ideological or political grounds is not acknowledged.

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117 *Ibid.*

118 Although the CSD Secretariat did not subsequently seek funds to support the activities of major groups in developing countries, the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) continued to operate a fund for Southern participation in CSD sessions, as it had done during the UNCED process. Donor governments were encouraged to transfer funds to NGLS, and participants were then identified by NGLS and provided with financial support to attend the CSD. This had a much more limited scope than the support for major groups activities in developing countries outlined in the draft Framework document.

At the second CSD session in May 1994, participating NGOs agreed to creation of a new mechanism to regularise the work of NGOs and other Major Groups in the CSD context. The extent to which the CSD Secretariat's pre-emptive strikes foreshadowed the responsibilities and the remit of the CSD NGO Steering Committee is significant. The terms of reference adopted by the new body in May 1994 emphasise the importance of information dissemination to constituent groups and provision of information from NGOs to the CSD. Steering Committee members are elected to 'serve as focal points to ensure participation of issue and regional networks within the NGO community through their ability to disseminate information'.[119] Particular responsibilities include disseminating UN reports; supporting capacity building and regional consultative meetings; and promoting preparations for and participation at future CSD sessions.

The Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee also rule out any use of the new body as a vehicle for advancing fundamental alternatives to existing models for global governance: 'The activity of this committee would in no sense be one of political or policy representativeness for the NGO community'.[120] Rather, its role was to be procedural, acting as the apolitical conduit for relations between the CSD and NGOs envisaged by the CSD Secretariat. Thus the NGO Steering Committee's responsibilities included:

- Arranging meetings – evening NGO-Government dialogues; morning strategy sessions; and so on;

- Negotiating with the CSD Secretariat, ECOSOC NGO Unit etc. on procedural matters, including rights to speak and participate in meetings

- Ensuring that facilities for NGO representatives are adequate

- Undertaking to disseminate information through existing networks and to relevant contact points.[121]

While the support of the CSD Secretariat and Bureau for this model of NGO self-organisation was undoubtedly a spur, pressure to take the apolitical, principally procedural set of functions outlined also

119 'NGO Steering Committee to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development Terms of Reference' agreed at an NGO Plenary Meeting during CSD 2, New York, 26 May 1994. Available online at: http://www.csdngo.org/csdngo/. Accessed on 1 September 2001. Reproduced in Appendix 11.
120 Ibid.
121 Bigg, Tom 'UNED-UK Report on the Second Session of the CSD' UNED-UK, London June 1994.

came from less positive sources. First, the application of the Agenda 21 Major Groups schema to the work of the CSD as a whole obliged the Steering Committee to attempt to involve other sectors in its work, including the private sector. This inevitably reduced the possibility of the Steering Committee becoming the context in which alternative visions and shared norms could be advanced by NGOs. A second limiting factor was the growing lack of trust between Northern and Southern NGOs active in the CSD. This mirrored the acrimony increasingly evident in dialogue between governments over the failure of the North to deliver financial and technical assistance as its part of the 'Rio deal'. Particular ill-feeling among NGOs was evident at the start of the 1994 CSD session, which took place shortly after the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Although SIDS governments had produced a Plan of Action, there had been little involvement from Northern governments in the Conference process, and the willingness of the North to consider the particular problems experienced by such states as an integral part of future global collaboration to realise sustainable development had not been in evidence.[122] NGOs present in Barbados had drawn up a widely endorsed action plan which had been used to influence delegates negotiating government positions. They had also adopted the Major Groups approach with some success, setting out cross-sectoral stances and developing proposals for future collaboration.

A number of NGO delegates went straight from Barbados to the CSD, and found that a preparatory NGO meeting had been organised by IUCN Netherlands, to which they had not been invited. Participants at this event, which took place on the weekend before the CSD started, were principally from Northern countries. They met to draft preliminary position papers on the issues on the CSD's agenda, *to be further considered by other NGOs* subsequently. Considerable ill-feeling resulted from the failure to involve SIDS NGOs, or to take into account the model for consultation and lobbying which had met with success in Barbados. As a result, the creation of the CSD NGO Steering Committee can be understood to have arisen as much from the lack of trust between NGOs at the second CSD session, and the need for agreed rules for their interaction, as from the more positive objectives identified by the CSD Secretariat. This atmosphere of distrust also militated against attempts to identify shared issues of principle, and increased attention on procedural and organisational arrangements.

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122 Similar disquiet was expressed by developing country governments, most notably from Africa, involved in the elaboration of the Framework Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification [INCD].

Advocates of the Alternative Treaties as a significant set of commitments entered into by an unprecedented gathering of NGOs found their views were marginalised as of little significance in these circumstances, while others who attempted to revive some of the debates on issues of principle which had been prevalent during the UNCED process, or to reintroduce issues which had been dropped from the post-UNCED agenda (trade and militarisation, for example) had little success. By contrast, through a combination of judicious probing and good fortune, the CSD Secretariat had gained the NGO partner it would appear to have been looking for.

In subsequent years the Secretariat continued to play a proactive role in initiating a series of events during annual CSD sessions which focused on the activities of major groups. During the 1994 meeting a day was dedicated to consideration of the role of local authorities; in 1995 the focus was on trade unions; and in 1996 on indigenous peoples. From 1997 onwards, the Secretariat also created space for dialogue sessions involving major groups organisations. The first of these, held in preparation for the General Assembly five year review of the UNCED agreements, entailed half-day discussions between each of the nine major groups and government delegates. These were held in parallel with other negotiations, and were poorly attended by government officials.

Since 1998, dialogue sessions with major groups have been held without any competing official events or negotiating sessions. These have been conducted with considerable preparation, involving eighty nominated representatives – twenty from each of four of the major groups. These have been from trade unions, the private sector, NGOs and one other, depending on the issue to be addressed. Papers are prepared in advance by each group, and discussion focuses on a particular theme: in 1998, this was the role of industry in achieving sustainable development; in 1999, the topic was tourism; in 2000 it was agriculture; and in 2001 it was energy. These include appraisal of what each sector is doing to meet challenges arising in the area under consideration, and the opportunity to raise issues and question the activities of the other sectors.

The CSD NGO Steering Committee has played a central role in co-ordinating these preparations, and bringing together the participants for the NGO 'team' in the dialogues. Interaction between major groups has led to some interesting developments. The 1998 dialogue session was marked by a call from NGOs for an official review of the efficacy of voluntary codes of conduct from the private

sector, which was supported by governments and endorsed by the CSD. This can perhaps be

understood as a revival of some of the organisational principles which characterised the NGO

networks active in the UNCED process. In drawing attention to the status given to these industry-led

initiatives, participating NGOs emphasised the overarching necessity for governments to provide a

strong regulatory framework. They also stressed the conceptual differences underlying the evident

tensions between NGOs and private sector representatives:

> The effort to establish a Multi-stakeholder Review of Voluntary Initiatives is nothing less than
> the effort to defend the voice of civil society at the United Nations. As industry sets up its
> partnership to coordinate its efforts to stabilize the globalization process, NGOs and trade
> unions must insist on mechanisms to communicate the needs and concerns of local
> communities and citizens.[123]

4.6 Wider impact of post-UNCED relations between the UN and NGOs

Space does not permit a detailed appraisal of the impact of UNCED on relations between non-

governmental actors and governmental or inter-governmental organisations, but this broader context

should be briefly sketched out. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stressed the significance

of the UNCED precedent in his *Agenda for Democratization*, published in 1996:

> With [UNCED], the United Nations began a series of international conferences that have
> brought together not only all States, but also relevant non-governmental organizations and other
> representatives of civil society, to focus on interlocking economic and social issues by
> considering their impact on the human person and human communities.[124]

In a wide range of UN-initiated international conferences during the 1990s, both the general principles

elaborated though UNCED regarding notions of social partnership with official bodies and the

'alternative' prioritisation of networking in order to promulgate shared norms globally are evident.

The translation of these perspectives to national contexts can also be discerned: the former in the

creation of National Councils for Sustainable Development to engage a wide range of social actors in

123 NGO Task Force on Business and Industry *Can Corporations be Trusted? Towards Social and Environmental Responsibility and Accountability in the Corporate Sector* p.61, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED) Amsterdam, February 1999.
124 Boutros-Ghali, Boutros *An Agenda for Democratization* United Nations New York 1996 p.22.

dialogue on sustainable development issues;[125] the latter in a growing focus during the 1990s on the destabilising impacts of processes of globalisation on social and environmental security.

4.6.1 UN Processes

Two instances of UN events and processes which addressed these issues are the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD – Cairo 1994) and the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD – Copenhagen 1995).[126] Martha Alter Chen records the development of a global campaign which had its origins in the polarised debate on population issues during UNCED. Collaboration between organisations which had been involved in the Rio process and the International Women's Health Coalition led to the formulation of the 'Women's Voices '94 Alliance' and the drafting of a 'Women's Declaration on Population Policies'.[127] Participating NGOs convened a series of events to review the Declaration, reaching 'remarkable consensus on key values (gender equality, reproductive rights and male responsibility) across the divides of ideology, culture and relative wealth and power'.[128] The capacity to create effective alliances and connect diverse policy areas characterised the women's movement during the series of UN conferences in the 1990s – one leading activist identified the promotion of a core set of shared values through these processes as a particular element in the involvement of women's networks:

> It is important to see this work as part of a move occurring with women internationally to claim all issues as women's issues and to claim a women's voice in shaping global policy. It isn't just human rights that women have targeted, but a kind of collective understanding on the part of women that we have to be more present in all the discussions of peace, democracy, development environment, human rights etc.[129]

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125 See for example d'Evie, Fayen, Mary MacDonald and Francisco Mata eds. *NCSD Report 1999-2000: National Experiences of Integrative, Multistakeholder Processes for Sustainable Development* The Earth Council, San José Costa Rica 2000.

126 A fuller list would include the mechanisms devised to promote follow-up to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the International Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification; the Global Environment Facility; the Conference on Small Island States (Barbados 1994); the Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (New York 1994); the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995); and the Second Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul 1996).

127 Alter Chen, Martha 'Engendering World Conferences: The International Women's Movement and the UN' in Weiss, Thomas and Leon Gordenker *NGOs, the UN and Global Governance* pp.139-155, *op. cit.*

128 *Ibid.* See also Keck, Margaret E, and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1998 pp.189-190 for an outline of the success of the transnational women's rights network in shaping key elements of the Cairo Plan of Action, and the relative ineffectiveness of the 'transnational network of pro-life or antiabortion activists' and the Catholic Church in influencing the final outcomes.

129 Bunch, Charlotte (leader of the Women's Caucus for the Vienna Human Rights Conference) 'Women's Rights as Human Rights: An International Lobbying Success Story' *Human Rights Tribune*, vol.2 no.1 pp.486-498 June 1993.

While these types of collaboration had occurred before 1992, in a number of particulars their

effectiveness was greatly enhanced by precedents established through UNCED.[130] The involvement of

large numbers of Southern organisations,the legitimisation of national-level participants, and the

blueprint of the Alternative Treaties process as a means by which to build credibility around an

alternative agenda all informed the activities of the women's movement in preparations for the Cairo

Conference:

> At Cairo, in particular, a coalition of NGOs and women's groups – above all, from developing
> countries, which suffer most from the problems of family size – played a major role in
> preventing the representatives of [governments] from making concessions to the Vatican, and
> other dominantly conservative and male religious groups, that tried to destroy the effectiveness
> of the Conference's final documents.[131]

The ICPD demonstrated the capacity of NGOs to have a significant impact in shaping global

negotiations when ideological differences between states on contentious issues were extreme. The

WSSD focused particularly on the role of civil society, addressing key areas of social policy

(employment, poverty and social integration). A number of negotiators and commentators

acknowledged that the attempt to articulate general principles governing the role of international civil

society, and the close inter-relations between domestic policy and the global context derived to a

significant extent from UNCED. For example, an informal seminar convened by the UN in Mohonk,

New York State and attended by representatives from leading NGOs, UN departments and

governments, identified 'global forces, essentially economic and financial' as an emerging set of

factors in international affairs which NGOs are uniquely placed to respond to:

> A number of organizations of civil society are observing these developments with concern,
> notably because of the linkage they perceive between global economic and political powers,
> structures and policies and social conditions of today and tomorrow. They consider it essential
> to be involved in international fora, to present their view on the state of the world and to
> contribute to strengthening the ability of the United Nations to develop its own philosophy on
> economic and social progress. Many of the non-governmental organizations involved with

130 A 1997 appraisal of the UNCED legacy by the Women's Environment and Development Organisation stressed connections with subsequent
conferences: ' Since Rio, other international gatherings have occurred that cannot be separated from an evaluation of post-UNCED progress. The
International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, in 1994, and the World Summit for Social Development, held in
Copenhagen in March, 1995, have gradually deepened, elaborated upon and extended the recommendations of Agenda 21 and other Rio accords. ... Five
years after Rio, though the consensus remains imperfect and can be strengthened, an irrefutable international political foundation has been built, largely by
women, to underpin the Initiatives of women around the world.' Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) 'Lighting the Path to
Progress: Women's Initiatives and An Assessment of Progress since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)'
submitted to the Earth Council Rio +5 Conference, Brazil 1997.
131 Toulmin, Stephen 'The Role of NGOs in Global Affairs' unpublished paper, University of California 1994, quoted in Rosenau. James *Along the
Domestic-Foreign Frontier: exploring governance in a turbulent world* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997 p.334.

economic and social development have been vocal proponents of participation, empowerment, capacity building and a concentration on the grass-roots. Some see this approach as a complement to the increasing globalization. Others would like to build a balance, a counter power, or even an alternative. Overall, most non-governmental organizations see themselves as watchdogs and supporters of those peoples who question the dominant trends, and those groups and nations that are left behind.[132]

It is ironic that the Social Summit, which considered in detail the role of civil society, and addressed issues of particular concern in both domestic and international politics, appears to have had so little impact on ongoing relations between the UN and NGOs. As noted in chapter 2, the Summit led to formation of the Social Watch NGO network, which aims to introduce the commitments and objectives agreed into Copenhagen into domestic policy. Nevertheless, awareness of the Social Summit is negligible in most countries, despite widespread interest in the phenomena of globalisation. It has been suggested that one factor in the apparent discrepancy between interest in these issues at the national level and the absence of widespread awareness and use of the framework established in Copenhagen is the lack of significant numbers of organisations able to make links between local activities and global change. While NGO networks collaborating before and since UNCED on issues of environment and development have been able to build broad-based international coalitions upon the implicit understanding of the relevance of the local to the global (and vice versa), groups focusing on poverty eradication or employment do not yet have this capacity. Juan Somavía, Secretary General of the WSSD, frequently drew the analogy between the Copenhagen Summit and the Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment, stressing that international collaboration on the social agenda was twenty years behind the systems and the shared conceptual framework evident in global environmental processes.

4.7 Conclusions

4.7.1 The Degree to which NGOs' Concerns were met in the Work of the CSD

As noted earlier, without exception commentators reviewing implementation of and follow-up to the UNCED agreements identified a lack of progress towards the objectives set out at the Rio Summit.

132 'Report of the Seminar on the Involvement of Civil Society in the Follow-up to the Social Summit' para.s. 3 & 4. Unpublished account of the meeting

Even for organisations which were prepared to accept the prevailing understanding of what could be achieved through the CSD, and the significance of realising adequate institutional arrangements, the reality must have been of mixed value. A review of the objectives advanced by the CAPE 2000 consortium of NGOs for the CSD in October 1992[133] demonstrates the gap between a relatively conservative assessment of the Commission's future capabilities and its actual achievements:

The CSD's mandate should not be limited to reviewing UNCED agreements. The General Assembly and ECOSOC did mandate the CSD to 'make recommendations, as appropriate, on the need for new cooperative arrangements related to sustainable development'.[134] However, this formula has not led to many examples of Agenda 21 being treated as 'a dynamic programme that could evolve over time' in the work of the CSD.[135] Annual sessions of the Commission have been characterised far more by attempts to renegotiate sections of Agenda 21 than by efforts to build upon existing agreements. In this respect, the CSD's mandate was agreed but has not subsequently been utilised.

The Commission Secretariat should have independence and stature to allow it to review the work of other UN bodies. The NGOs expressed concern that the Head of the Secretariat should deal directly with the heads of UN agencies and with the Secretary General through 'a revitalized Administrative Committee on Coordination', rather than having to report to the Department for Economic and Social Development, 'which might pose conflict of interest problems for the Commission and reduce its stature'. As an example of what this positioning would entail, they suggest a CSD review of World Bank and IMF lending policies and practices in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the Bretton Woods Institutions. In the event, the CSD Secretariat has had the capacity to liaise with other UN bodies through the ACC's Inter Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and its system of task managers. This has not been at the level of heads of agencies, however, and its effectiveness in challenging existing policies and prevailing practices has been negligible.[136] In practice the CSD Secretariat (and by association the Commission as a whole) has lacked stature and independence in its relations with other parts of the UN system.

prepared by UN staff, Mohonk Mountain House New York State, USA 22-23 June 1995. The full text of this report is reproduced in Appendix 12.
133 'Comments on the Commission on Sustainable Development' attributed to Cape 2000, op. cit.
134 A/47/191 para. 4 (c) Ibid. endorsed by ECOSOC in decision E/1993/207 (a).
135 'Comments on the Commission on Sustainable Development' attributed to Cape 2000, op. cit.
136 In an informal discussion in early 1999, a senior World Bank official expressed regret that the CSD secretariat had not acted in a 'proactive way' in initiating inter agency co-operation and pushing for involvement of the Bank in its work. He contrasted it with the Secretariat for the Framework Convention on Climate Change in this respect.

The CSD should adopt its own rules of procedure and adopt the arrangements for NGO accreditation used at UNCED. Apart from some significant modifications to the ECOSOC rules of procedure governing NGO involvement, the CSD is fairly rigidly defined as a subsidiary body within ECOSOC. Most of the innovative arrangements floated by NGOs and some governments for establishing more participatory processes for the involvement of major groups and the creation of an 'ombudsbureau' within the CSD structure proved unpalatable to the majority of governments. Despite this, the Commission has consistently been seen as a context in which new ways of working can be tried, and the panel sessions and intersectoral dialogues held in subsequent years can be understood to derive from these original aspirations.

Creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development presented a unique set of organisational challenges for the range of organisations involved in efforts to establish the new body. The solutions which were arrived at during the year following UNCED provided the basis for the work of the CSD for at least the following five years, and have thus warranted detailed consideration.

In some contexts, arrangements put in place in the years following the Rio Summit resulted in coherent arrangements which evidently reflect a well-understood and widely shared understanding of the role of the new body, and its relations with other parts of the international system. The restructuring of relevant parts of the UN secretariat, and the instigation of a system of task managers in other parts of the UN to provide *support for the CSD are examples of this. In other areas, the decisions* reached reflected disagreement between states and the absence of a common perspective on the issues under consideration. The debate on creation of the CSD had been hard-fought, and illustrated the widely divergent views on the appropriate means and context for follow-up to UNCED which were evident after the event.

Deliberations on the appropriate arrangements for NGO participation in particular revealed considerable differences and resulted in a muddled formula which contained a number of contradictions. National organisations were able to participate in regular UN sessions in large numbers for the first time, but the UNCED NGOs would only be able to attend CSD sessions and would be excluded from other UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) processes. The number of organisations participating in annual CSD meetings would be boosted by inclusion of 550 newly

accredited groups, but their rights to circulate documents and to address CSD sessions were more restrictive than those in other ECOSOC bodies.

In other words, in transforming the general principles for NGO participation outlined in Agenda 21 into specific arrangements, negotiating governments ran into difficulties in three areas in particular:

1. The broader implications of arrangements made in this context were often problematic. If accreditation of national NGOs were to become the norm in the UN, the impact in other policy areas (most notably human rights and disarmament) would have to be considered. There were also conflicts between the understanding of the nature and role of NGOs in existing UN procedural documents (most notably ECOSOC Resolution 1296 [XLIV]) and the more vague and expansive representation of the functions of the 'major groups of civil society' in Agenda 21.

2. The time available for arrangements to be finalised required governments to reach decisions before the first CSD session in June 1993. In practice this led to a number of ad hoc provisions which subsequently had to be revised, and conflated consideration of issues which might otherwise have been addressed separately (the status of the European Union and of NGOs during the ECOSOC organisational session, for instance).

3. Diversity among NGOs also presented difficulties. If the CSD were to deal in a consistent fashion with organisations from the nine major groups, and with organisations operating in local and national contexts as well as international, this would go well beyond the methodologies governing relations with non-governmental actors used in other ECOSOC Commissions. To what extent should the CSD take an active role in advocating networking in order to simplify relations with this burgeoning number of very varied actors? And how should dialogue within and between different sectors be incorporated into the regular work of the Commission?

Each of these problematic contexts arose from attempts to translate the impetus from the UNCED process into the regular work of the UN. In each, difficulties which had not been anticipated threatened to undermine realisation of the broader objective – to instigate ongoing, high level attention to issues of sustainable development as an integral part of the overall work of the UN. It is striking that, in each area the CSD Secretariat took a proactive stance. The Secretariat wrote to non-ECOSOC

NGOs accredited to UNCED and invited them to apply for Roster status, but took the unauthorised step of stating that their registration would apply only to CSD meetings.[137] The CSD Secretariat also played an active role in encouraging non-governmental networks to collaborate and focus on the CSD's agenda and advanced a model for such initiatives which, as we will consider, bears close similarities to the co-ordinating body which was formed in 1994.

We must therefore consider the Secretariat as a significant actor in the development of relations between the CSD and non-governmental sectors, and even in the elaboration of more formal associations between NGOs. Over the five years following its creation, the CSD Secretariat appears to have taken a consistent position, and advocated by various means the creation and maintenance of a structure for non-governmental collaboration which was consistent with its own requirements. While some parts of the UN system viewed NGOs as irrelevant, and others, such as the UN Commission on Human Rights, had developed working arrangements for their participation, the CSD Secretariat appears to be unique in playing an active role in attempting to influence the ways in which NGOs worked together and in taking a proactive role in arrangements for relations with the UN.

4.7.2 NGO Networking After UNCED

The INGOF process, and the subsequent event held in Manila in 1995, identified collaboration between existing international NGO networks as a means by which coherent responses to systemic problems in the global polity could be formulated. There was widespread support from participating organisations for the development of some form of coalition to identify and challenge the negative aspects of globalisation.

Yet the initiative foundered because of a number of endemic failings or weaknesses, which are present to some extent in all efforts to forge and maintain links between divergent international NGO networks. It was unclear whether the purpose was to provide a service platform, or to initiate a new political movement. No clear position was reached on whether to aim to achieve incremental change or to prioritise more holistic challenges to the prevailing international system. The best means of operating was also in doubt – some favoured a formally co-ordinated approach, while others felt this

137 United Nations Secretariat ECOSOC/NGO Unit, Notification, 3 March 1993, reprinted in Willetts, Peter ed. *The Conscience of the World op. cit.* pp.308-9.

would lead to unnecessary bureaucracy and would prefer *ad hoc* arrangements. Organisational questions also presented problems: should participants work through electronic communication, or rely instead on face-to-face meetings? Should the basic unit for collaboration be individual NGOs or networks?

Despite these difficulties, the INGOF process, and other related initiatives established during preparations for UNCED, provided significant precursors to more recent attempts to create the means by which networks of NGOs could collaborate effectively, such as Jubilee 2000,[138] the anti-MAI Coalition, and NGO coalitions formed around international events such as the series of UN Summits held during the 1990s, and the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organisation. Thus *The Guardian* emphasises the significance of Jubilee 2000 in resisting the negative impacts of globalisation: 'Not only has Jubilee 2000 been comfortably the most successful mass movement of the past 25 years, but it has also shown how the process known as globalisation is nurturing its own opponents.'[139]

Perhaps as notions of economic globalisation have become more tangible, the associations identified in the UNCED process between different policy areas have become more evident, and the general principles advanced in the Alternative Treaties have been realised in these collaborations. Conversely, one might conclude that these initiatives fail to build upon the challenge issued from the Global Forum for NGOs to advance programmes and principles to be pursued by civil society regardless of the activities of governments. Either way, although some measure of continuity can be discerned, many of the challenges posed to global civil society networks during UNCED remain unresolved.

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138 The Guardian emphasises the significance of Jubilee 2000 in resisting the negative impacts of globalisation: 'Not only has Jubilee 2000 been comfortably the most successful mass movement of the past 25 years, but it has also shown how the process known as globalisation is nurturing its own opponents.' Elliott, Larry 'Candle lit for debt relief's unfinished business' *The Guardian* 27 November 2000.
139 Elliott, Larry 'Candle lit for debt relief's unfinished business' *The Guardian* 27 November 2000.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

> We the people of the world will mobilise the forces of transnational civil society behind a widely shared agenda that bonds our many social movements in pursuit of just, sustainable and participatory human societies. In so doing we are forging our own instruments and processes for redefining the nature and meaning of human progress and for transforming those institutions that no longer respond to our needs. We welcome to our cause all people who share our commitment to peaceful and democratic change in the interest of our living planet and the human societies it sustains.[1]

> It is important that our visions of future global governance include roles for the people of the world. But it is vitally important that we build our visions of future roles for organisations from civil society on a solid understanding of the present. As always, it is necessary to know where you are *now* before you plan a journey into the future.[2]

The previous chapters have established a complex and often contradictory picture of the impact of civil society networks on the global politics of sustainable development. While the value of a strong focus on global networks has been emphasised, the inherent weaknesses and limitations of these structures have also been apparent. The particular value of such alliances to participants has often derived from their ability to challenge perceived shortcomings in inter-governmental decision-making; yet in many instances their own legitimacy as wielders of global influence has been questioned. On these grounds alone, any attempt to represent civil society networks as a kind of moral arbiter in global affairs would be open to sustained criticism.

It is important also to acknowledge the conceptual constraints which have characterised many of the examples and processes cited which tackle the impact of civil society organisations in global politics. Notions of political influence are still predominantly framed in the national or regional context. Distinctions between North and South, or between grassroots and global perspectives are still invoked

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1 International NGO Forum 'People's Earth Declaration: A Proactive Agenda for the Future' para.23, Rio de Janeiro Brazil 1992.

as chasms between different NGO groupings. Pressure to accentuate what distinguishes organisations from each other (to secure funding, widespread recognition and prestige) conflicts with efforts to establish common ground.

Despite these qualifications, there is sufficient evidence that global civil society networks have assumed increasing significance in a range of contexts, and that these structures impact on global politics in a multiplicity of ways which are not always adequately acknowledged. How are we to understand this influence? What trends and significant developments can be identified? A review of the material presented to this point will help to identify answers to these questions, and to set out some conclusions to this thesis as a whole.

5.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of International NGO Networks

From 19th to 22nd July 2001, tens of thousands of protestors and demonstrators gathered in Genoa to make their feelings known to leaders of the most powerful industrialised countries who were meeting as the G8. While most media attention focused on the actions of a violent minority, there was also growing interest in the phenomenon of a loose international movement built on opposition to economic globalisation as it is currently occurring. John Vidal, writing in the Guardian, drew a telling analogy:

> Just as the G8 leaders, world bodies and businesses talk increasingly from the same script, so the protestors' once disparate social and political analyses are converging. The long-term project of governments and world bodies to globalise capital and development is being mirrored by the globalisation of protest.[3]

The extent to which this is true is questionable – a number of prominent organisations did not participate in the main demonstrations in Genoa, and disagreements over tactics were widely evident. Nevertheless, the desire for, and prioritisation of this kind of convergence is significant. What are we to make of these trends? What recurring characteristics or patterns can we identify from the examples and processes explored earlier? A useful way to group the disparate points this raises is to consider the strengths and weaknesses demonstrated by NGOs collaborating internationally and the issues on

2 Alger, Chadwick F. 'Strengthening Relations between NGOs and the UN System: Towards a Research Agenda' in *Global Society* vol. 13, no. 4 pp.393-408, University of Kent at Canterbury UK 1999 p.408.
3 Vidal, John 'The battle for Genoa' *The Guardian* London 18 July 2001 p.15.

which tension or disunity is evident, as perceived by a range of commentators. General conclusions arising from the empirical and analytical material addressed earlier provides a useful basis for a more focused appraisal of the core themes of this thesis.

5.1.1 Strengths

For international civil society networks, the key determinant of their own relevance in global politics is the degree to which they bring vital perspectives, expertise and ideas to the global polity which would not otherwise be taken into account. Previous chapters have explored the particular significance of such networks to global processes dealing with issues of sustainable development. The intrinsic importance of devolving decision-making to the appropriate level, engaging all relevant 'stakeholders' in dialogue in order to reach broadly accepted solutions, and providing a global perspective on shared environment and development challenges are all elements of the established conceptualisation of 'sustainable development'. These have been advanced in an extensive range of United Nations agreements and texts from other inter-governmental and governmental institutions. As explored in chapters 2 and 3, this understanding has been contested by many non-governmental actors, who have suggested that the principal role to be played by transnational civil society alliances is to articulate the problems caused by processes of economic globalisation and to advance alternative visions and policies: 'most non-governmental organizations see themselves as watchdogs and supporters of those peoples who question the dominant trends, and those groups and nations that are left behind'.[4]

This divergence is central to an understanding of the politics of international NGO networks, and their wider significance in influencing the global politics of sustainable development. At this point it is important to note that both approaches recognise the necessity for civil society involvement in global dialogue, and consider its participation a prerequisite for the legitimacy of the polity. This common ground can be located in two factors which non-governmental networks are widely understood to contribute to the political process:

Complementary claims to representation. The authority of democratically elected governments in international decision-making rests principally on their claim to represent the interests of their

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4 'Report of the Seminar on the Involvement of Civil Society in the Follow-up to the Social Summit' para.s 3 & 4. Unpublished account of the meeting prepared by UN staff, Mohonk Mountain House New York State, USA 22-23 June 1995. The full text of this report is reproduced in Appendix 12.

electorate. Yet a multiplicity of other forms of authority have been identified which are also understood to legitimise the participation of different actors in global politics. Representatives from local government and trade unions have generally been elected, and claim a mandate to speak on behalf of their constituency which is comparable to that invoked by national governments. Actors with shared knowledge, or 'epistemic communities' as Peter Haas has defined them, are seen as legitimate participants because they bring valuable knowledge and expertise to international deliberations.[5] Non-governmental organisations point to the support of their members as one source of legitimacy, but more centrally to the relevance of the values they exist to advance. For example, the UNCED agreements acknowledge the interests of future generations and non-human species – NGOs which aim to safeguard such interests derive their legitimacy from their claims to represent these interests (although the means by which these claims could be verified and the accountability of such organisations may be open to question). Other groupings, such as indigenous peoples' organisations, women's groups, the private sector and parliamentarians all claim distinct validity as participants in global politics. These can all be understood as distinct forms of authority which cumulatively legitimise the international process with which they are associated. As a consequence, networks created to enable interaction between non-state actors at the global level may be considered as an intrinsic element in the overall legitimacy of the global polity.

Presenting a 'counter-narrative' to prevailing international processes. Widespread consensus can also be discerned to support the notion that transnational NGO alliances play a valuable role in introducing alternative perspectives to challenge ascendant ideologies or approaches. This may entail presenting a critique of a specific policy or set of objectives, or advancing a more sustained argument against the mainstream. One key context for this type of activity has been identified as arising from growing threats to citizenship rights at the national level, particularly as a result of economic activity which is beyond the control of any one government. To counter these trends, 'people interact on a global scale in order to develop new sets of rights and obligations that may or may not be enforced primarily within a national political context'.[6] By the same token, transnational networks may be identified as the source of momentum and enthusiasm behind the presentation of new priorities and imperatives at

5 Haas, Peter M. 'Do regimes matter? Epistemic communities and Mediterranean pollution control' pp.377-403 *International Organization* vol.43, no.3, Summer 1989.
6 *Research Activities 1995/6* United Nations Research Institute for Social Development report, Geneva Switzerland 1996. Located online at: http://unrisd.org/engindex/publ/list/progrep/res96/res96.htm. Accessed on 1 September 2001.

the global level. For example, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan focused on this aspect of NGO collaboration in his address to the UN-sponsored NGO Millennium Forum in May 2000:

> Surely such worldwide alliances among like-minded NGOs, which have already proved so successful on issues like debt relief and the International Criminal Court, are the shape of things to come – on a much wider scale and on a more continuous basis. They make you an effective force for dealing with governments, and with us in the United Nations; they allow you to expand your capabilities and your reach. I hope they will enable you to make a real difference on many broad issues in the future.[7]

5.1.2 Inherent Weaknesses

Factors widely understood as inherent limitations or weaknesses in international civil society networks also provide valuable means by which to understand broader questions in global politics. The assertions that civil society is 'still predominantly nationally framed'[8] and that 'the emergence of political internationalism and the creation of international governmental organisations' are required to give international NGOs 'contextual relevance and permanence'[9] were explored in chapter 2. Both infer that a gulf exists between the national and the global which civil society organisations are ill-equipped to bridge without the prior existence of an inter-governmental framework for their activities.

An additional shortcoming which has been widely noted in analyses of the activities of international NGO networks is their inability to establish and maintain links across diverse issue areas. Peter Padbury illustrates some of the consequences of this failing graphically: 'Every time NGOs start a new initiative, we have to start from scratch. The well-known and overworked people are called. We ignore the capacity of thousands of NGOs to analyze, to research, to mobilize, to influence, to implement, to learn, because we have not taken the time to get organized!'[10] Evidence from NGO collaboration in the UNCED context supports this contention: even though many organisations prioritised 'the building of equitable, transparent and mutually supportive relations between different

7 UN Press Release SG/SM/7411 GA/9710 'Secretary-General, Addressing Participants at Millennium Forum, Calls for Intensified "NGO Revolution"', 22 May 2000.
8 Shaw, Martin 'Civil Society and Global Politics: Beyond a Social Movements Approach' *Millennium* vol.23 no.3 pp.647-67, Winter 1994 p.655.
9 McCormick, John *The Global Environmental Movement: Reclaiming Paradise* Belhaven Press London UK 1989 p.102.
10 Padbury, Peter 'The Alternative Treaties Experiment' Foster, John and Anita Anand eds. *Whose World is it Anyway? Civil Society, the United Nations and the Multilateral Future* pp.414-423, The United Nations Association in Canada, Ottawa Canada 1999 p.419.

networks' which would be 'the foundation for á new era of cooperation',[11] no alliance which remotely realised this ambition was ever mobilised, either during the UNCED process or subsequently.

Three further inter-related factors are widely invoked by commentators which call into question the role of non-governmental networks in global politics:

Questions over legitimacy. Is there a valid scale for measuring the legitimacy of advocacy networks? On the one hand, we can identify deeply embedded values of accountability, participation, and equity, which cut across different groupings and issue areas; but on the other, the constituencies served, methods of working, and measures of success are widely divergent. In addition, many NGOs do not demonstrate these values in their own operations or decision-making structures. This diversity was noted earlier as a strength in that it helped to engage a multiplicity of different forms of authority in the global polity. However, problems arise when these sources of influence are perceived to be in conflict. Paul Nelson's exploration of the functioning of NGO networks lobbying the World Bank identifies tackling the 'diverse and often contradictory claims to legitimacy' as a key challenge to these alliances in their attempts to achieve effective self-governance.[12]

This presents a daunting challenge. While states' legitimacy as actors in global affairs is not contested by most IR theorists, and the influence of multinational companies derives predominantly from the economic ramifications of their activities, no clear form of validation exists which will fit all international NGO networks. On the contrary, to take the UNCED context as an example, the International Facilitating Committee (IFC) set up by the Centre for our Common Future, the Environment Liaison Centre International's International Steering Committee (ISC), and the UNCED NGO Strategy Group cannot be assessed using the same criteria. The IFC took a pragmatic stance, and derived legitimacy from its ability to bring diverse sectors together and feed their consolidated perspectives into the official negotiations – a role attacked as 'Green Pollution' by ELCI. The ISC prioritised the presentation of ideological alternatives to those in the mainstream, and emphasised the

11 Gross, Tony - member of the Executive Secretariat of the Preparatory Forum of Brazilian NGOs for UNCED 'Guest Editorial' Centre for Our Common Future *Network '92* No.3, COCF Geneva December 1990. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
12 Nelson, Paul J., 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Effectiveness: Who Speaks for Whom in Transnational NGO Networks Lobbying the World Bank?' Occasional Paper No.7 Harrison Programme on the Future Global Agenda, October 1996. Located online at http://www.bsos.umd.edu/harrison/papers/paper17.htm. Accessed on 3 January 2002.

importance of advancing the priorities of grassroots and Southern organisations.[13] The UNCED Strategy Group constituted a group of experts, with a detailed knowledge of proceedings and the capacity to operate effectively in influencing official negotiations; however, it was criticised at this time for being dominated by Northern organisations.[14]

While these distinct groupings co-existed uneasily during the Rio process, no appraisal of the degree to which they provided complementary services to NGOs and input to official deliberations was ever carried out, and no concerted attempt was made to build durable links between them. Failure to reconcile, or even to address these differences represents a serious weakness in self-governance.

Conceptual limitations. Coalitions formed or reinvigorated as a result of UNCED faced (and continue to face) a dilemma. They are challenged to take on the holistic perspective required by notions of sustainable development while maintaining a distinct focus on the issue, sector, or region which they exist to advance. Difficulty in balancing these two stances was evident in the Manila Meeting of NGO Networks, which attempted to transcend divisions and clarify the emergent common ground in shared efforts to contest the detrimental impacts of economic globalisation. This association ultimately proved too nebulous for participants (and more significantly still, for their funders).

The contrast with the development of a global coalition in another context is instructive here. Keck and Sikkink argue that opposition to violence against women emerged 'with remarkable speed' as a common advocacy position around which women's organisations in many parts of the world could agree and collaborate. They argue that women's groups were able to attract new allies and oblige human rights organisations to rethink their agendas by presenting new 'metanarratives' of violence and rights. These drew on correlations between violence against women and abuse of human rights, and thereby extended the international understanding of rights to incorporate opposition to physical injury of women. At the same time, the general framework adopted (opposition to physical violence against women)

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13 For criticisms of this stance see, for example, Seamus Cleary: 'Assertions that NGOs' proximity to the grassroots both enabled them to speak out and gave them the responsibility for doing so on behalf of the poor and marginalised groups with whom they were in partnership or, for more 'radical' groups, in solidarity, have never been satisfactorily supported'. Cleary, Seamus *The Role of NGOs under Authoritarian Political Systems* Macmillan Press Basingstoke UK 1997.
14 Record of conversations with UN Non-Government Liaison Service officials.

encouraged consideration of universal root causes, and reduced charges of cultural imperialism and the imposition of Western values.[15]

No comparable coalescence has occurred around issues of sustainable development. One reason for this is the amorphous, all-encompassing span of the concept, as noted above.[16] A second difficulty arises because 'sustainable development' itself is widely contested, a debate which will be revisited later in this chapter. Finally, charges of 'cultural imperialism' have never been comprehensively countered. The contrast with the emergence of a global coalition identifying common root causes in violence against women is particularly instructive in considering the last of these three. Women's groups have been able to locate oppressive practices in analogous patriarchal systems, and establish mutual understanding based on this commonality. Environmental groups have no comparable common ground, while Northern organisations focusing on international development have much more equivocal claims to articulate the interests of the world's poor in global politics. If a 'metanarrative' is to emerge in global advocacy work on sustainable development, a key element must be the involvement of organisations which have legitimacy as representatives of the most disadvantaged in the North.

Conflicting priorities. Two problems are inescapable for advocacy networks: first, if common ground is sought between participants, this frequently entails compromise and a dilution of the principles or the strategic approach pursued by individual organisations; second, accountability is not as fixed as it is for the network members themselves. These structural difficulties exacerbate inequalities between network participants, and in turn impinge upon the alliance's external effectiveness. Jane Covey elaborates the resultant challenges this highlights:

> Structurally, alliances incorporate many of the inequalities in wealth, power, knowledge and resources they are trying to reshape. Where many actors are involved, to what and to whom is the alliance accountable? Each member has unique interests in addition to those encompassed by the shared agenda. Competing interests must be negotiated and renegotiated in some fashion as the alliance carries out its campaign. As the alliance interacts with policy-makers and opponents, goals and tactics must be changed. Decision-making reflects the power dynamics of the alliance itself. To what extent do these dynamics perpetuate existing patterns of influence in

15 Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1998 p.195-6. See also Audie Klotz's discussion of US activists' successful reframing of apartheid as an issue of racial equality, which linked domestic civil rights activity with their campaign around South Africa. Klotz, Audie *Norms in International Relations—The Struggle Against Apartheid* Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1995.

16 Keck and Sikkink conclude that 'problems whose causes can be assigned to the deliberate (intentional) actions of identifiable individuals are amenable to advocacy network strategies in ways that problems whose causes are irredeemably structural are not. The real creativity of advocacy networks has been in finding intentionalist frames within which to address some elements of structural problems.' *Ibid.*, p.27.

society, albeit in the service of a shared purpose? To what extent is the alliance internally democratic?[17]

If unavoidable internal tensions on ideological or organisational issues are compounded by structural imbalances which disadvantage the less well-resourced participants, the credibility of the network itself and its more powerful members will be in question. These problems present a challenge to those involved with networks to establish credible, verifiable means by which objectives can be agreed and progress assessed through iterative processes.

We should also set Covey's analysis against two other factors: the emergence of communication tools by which network activities can be much more immediately and comprehensively accountable to participants; and the dearth of attention in much academic analysis of International Relations to the broader significance of international relations between non-governmental actors to the global polity. Gordenker and Weiss suggest that new technologies may oblige international networks to acknowledge new institutional imperatives: flexible new means for communication, coupled with existing norms of accountability will require them to regularise much more comprehensive interactions with local and national participants.[18] Michael Edwards and his colleagues suggest that unless financial support 'to promote the voices of smaller organisations and marginalised groups' is provided by wealthy NGOs, 'public questioning of NGO legitimacy and accountability will continue to mount, fatally undermining the credibility that NGOs will need if they are to play a part in global debates'.[19] There is little evidence from the periods examined in detail in this thesis to suggest that this threat to their credibility has provoked a shift in priorities from individual organisations and within international NGO networks.

5.1.3 Creative Tensions?

The significance of relations within transnational NGO networks to an assessment of their impact in any area of global politics has been emphasised in consideration of both the inherent strengths and the weaknesses evident in the material explored previously. Dialogue, information-sharing, and the

17 Covey, Jane 'Accountability and Effectiveness in NGO Policy Alliances' in Edwards, Michael and David Holmes eds. *Non-Governmental Organisations - Performance and Accountability: Beyond the Magic Bullet* pp.167-182, Earthscan London 1995 p.169.

18 Gordenker, Leon and Thomas G. Weiss 'Pluralizing Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions' in Weiss, Thomas G. and Leon Gordenker eds. *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* pp.17-50, Lynne Rienner Boulder USA 1996 p.35.

19 Edwards, Michael, David Hulme and Tina Wallace 'NGOs in a Global Future: Marrying Local Delivery to Worldwide Leverage' Conference paper (undated) http://www.soc.titech.ac.jp/ngo/g-future.html. Visited on 1 September 2001.

negotiation and promotion of norms in the global polity have been identified as particularly important functions such networks exist to play. In most instances, it is legitimate to stress that diversity in context, perspective, expertise, priorities or constituency adds further complexity to the internal politics of these networks. This presents further justification for paying more attention to transnational relations between non-governmental actors in academic understanding of international affairs. Examples of divergence within international NGO coalitions include the following:

Local – global. Keck and Sikkink identify the multiple interactions of global and domestic politics as key sources of change in the international system. Their focus on transnational advocacy networks leads them to conclude that 'complex global networks carry and re-frame ideas, insert them in policy debates, pressure for regime formation, and enforce existing international norms and rules, at the same time that they try to influence particular domestic issues'.[20] Princen and Finger suggest that the role of environmental NGOs is particularly significant in this respect – they are able to make links between biophysical realities and political processes, and between local circumstances and global decision-making. As a result, they constitute the principal motivation for action by articulating the problems to be confronted, generating pressure on governments to respond, and providing viable alternative models where possible. They conclude that their effectiveness depends upon activity at both extremes: 'NGOs make their contribution when they translate biophysical change under conditions of global ecological crisis into political change and do so at both the local and the global levels'.[21]

By contrast, as noted earlier, relations between the local, national and global levels have often been weak in international NGO networks, and uncertainty over their relative significance and resultant issues of accountability have sometimes undermined networks' effectiveness and credibility. The models inferred by Keck and Sikkink, and Princen and Finger assume an ability to transcend barriers between location, issue, and constituency which are not much in evidence in the UNCED process, or in some of the other contexts I have considered. Preparations for the Rio Summit provide one telling instance of an attempt to recognise civil society organisations' ability to deliver diverse perspectives from local and global levels and initiate pressure for change. The Bergen Conference organised by the UN Economic Council for Europe incorporated a 'new and unique participatory process', in which a range of civil society organisations negotiated with government delegations in an attempt to reach 'the

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20 Keck, Margaret E, and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics op. cit.* p.199.

broadest possible consensus'. It was anticipated that this approach was 'set to become the model for

the 1992 process'. Related initiatives would occur at national level, as part of a continuum intended to

build consensus at every level in preparation for the Summit.[22] Subsequent backtracking by the

UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong, and the absence of any strong lobby from NGOs to

support the Bergen model suggest that this initiative was not well-rooted in existing non-governmental

priorities. Shortly after this, a considered critique asked whether the principal purpose of UNCED was

to be the advancement of viable models for national-level sustainable development, with some co-

ordination globally, or the identification of international solutions to problems which transcend

national boundaries.[23] In attempting to operate on both planes simultaneously, UNCED would appear

to have conflated distinct policy levels without any clear recognition of the distinct necessities of each.

In tacitly accepting this process, NGO networks failed to assert the role Princen and Finger set out for

them.

As noted above, structural inequalities within international NGO alliances can compromise their

capacity to achieve the societal change they desire. These factors are particularly evident in relations

between small, grassroots organisations and large, well resourced transnational NGOs, where the

values and rationale of the dominant partners can subsume those of the others. Despite this, a strong

notional commitment to norms of accountability and equality is evident in the vast majority of

international NGO networks. A collection of documents constituting efforts at self-regulation by

NGOs collaborating at the international level has been collated by Tatsuro Kunugi and Martha

Schweitz. The authors conclude that:

> [a]lthough the texts and contents of these documents are important, what may be more valuable
> in the long term is the highly participatory process each adopting network or group has gone
> through in the course of reaching agreement on the text. In many cases, as explained in the
> accompanying commentaries, this has been an unparalleled exercise in self-identification of the
> groups of organizations, as they collectively try to define their purposes, their methods,
> standards, and values.[24]

21 Princen, Thomas and Matthias Finger *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global*, Routledge, London 1994 p.222.
22 Centre for Our Common Future *Brundtland Bulletin* No.8 *op.cit.*, June 1990.
23 Thomson, Koy 'The Two Faces of the UK National Report' Centre for Our Common Future *Network* '92 No.2 *op. cit.*, October 1990. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
24 Kunugi, Tatsuro and Martha Schweitz eds. *Codes of Conduct for Partnership in Governance: Texts and Commentaries* presented at the World Civil Society Conference, Montreal 7-11 December 1999.

In addition, networks dealing with environmental issues or sustainable development share at least a theoretical obligation to recognise the significance of the small-scale and specific, through devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level and acknowledging the particular needs of the local environment. Technological innovations are presenting new ways in which these principles can be translated into effective practice, and presenting new imperatives for international alliances.

The same principles of accountability and equity shape interactions between Northern and Southern NGOs within international networks. The existence of these shared concepts (sometimes spelt out in negotiated codes of conduct, but often assumed and not made specific), coupled with structural inequalities noted earlier provide sustained impetus for Northern NGOs to attempt to establish working relations with Southern organisations. Their own legitimacy as international actors depends to a significant extent on their capacity to develop mutually beneficial working relations with Southern partners. For the latter, access to the expertise, information, and resources of Northern groups can be beneficial. Participation in a global network can enable national organisations to benefit from the 'boomerang effect' noted in chapter 2, whereby links forged through the network lead to additional international pressure on the country's government to pursue particular policies. The EarthAction Network is an example of a collaboration predicated on this trade-off between needs and interests.

Such relations often support assumptions that expertise and influence are the preserve of Northern NGOs, while Southern organisations have little to offer but a clearly circumscribed understanding of their particular context and, through their endorsement, the capacity to confer greater legitimacy on the (Northern-led) policies of the network as a whole. Paul Nelson recognises the systemic imbalances which make it difficult for Southern organisations to access necessary information and relevant government officials, and prevailing assumptions that their main input to the policy dialogue relates to their domestic circumstances.[25] However, Nelson also identifies an instance where this imbalance is not evident in the leading role played by Southern organisations in building an alliance to support replenishment of IDA 11 (the World Bank's International Development Association). This occurred despite the initial hostility of US-based organisations in particular and demonstrates the capacity of

25 Joanna Kerr quotes a Nigerian activist who complained that northern NGOs claim to represent Southern groups in order to gain funding and influence: 'Why should we link hands? Local NGOs cannot get support for their work so we have to affiliate with international NGOs. Then we all hold up our hands to the 'gates of heaven'. When the international NGOs arrive at the gate, they drop us and do the talking on our behalf.' Kerr, Joanna 'Strategies for Action' in Kerr, Joanna ed. *Ours by Right: Women's Rights as Human Rights* pp.157-167, Zed Books, London 1993 p.166.

Southern NGOs to play the leading role in determining positions taken by a global coalition.[26] A comparable influence can be discerned in the UNCED process – Bill Hinchberger concludes that 'Third-World non-governmental organizations as a whole were credited with encouraging some of their more traditional northern counterparts to take a harder look at the social ramifications of the environment-development dichotomy',[27] while Martin Khor of the Third World Network states that:

> Northern officials and especially Northern NGOs have become much more sensitised to the development needs and perspectives of the South ... Many environmental groups which in the past focused only on saving plant and animal life have come to a new understanding that resolving environmental problems requires tackling North-South and rich-poor inequities at the same time.[28]

Conflicting imperatives should also be acknowledged: Southern non-governmental organisations participating in the global polity often have much closer relations with their governments than their Northern counterparts, identifying shared objectives from a common understanding of the (Northern) responsibility for resource depletion and the perpetuation of inequalities in use and access to resources, for example. In this schema Northern NGOs are not much better than their governments, advancing unrealistic visions of the South which maintain 'structural Southern underdevelopment and dependency'.[29] Tension can also arise between the national and global contexts in which NGOs are operating. For example, difficulties experienced by the Brazilian NGO Forum in delivering a 'grassroots perspective on environment and development issues' while strengthening international collaboration leading to 'the establishment of new, equitable and sustainable development paradigms' were explored in Chapter 3.[30] Problems in reconciling two distinct sets of objectives at national and global levels were not adequately acknowledged or tackled by the Forum's principal international partners.

The value of international NGO Networks. Questions also arise over the degree to which subsuming individual NGOs' perspectives in attempts to achieve a shared position or understanding dilutes their particular voice. Chatterjee and Finger suggest that this marginalises Southern organisations and

26 Nelson, Paul J. 'Conflict, Legitimacy and Effectiveness: Who Speaks for Whom in Transnational NGO Networks Lobbying the World Bank?', *op. cit.*
27 Hinchberger, Bill 'Non-Governmental Organizations: The Third Force in the Third World' in Bergesen, Helge Ole and Georg Parmann eds. *Green Globe Yearbook 1993* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993. Available on *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* CD ROM, *op. cit.*
28 Khor, Martin 'Third World Network's Analysis of the Earth Summit: Disappointment and Hope' *Terra Viva* 9 June 1992 p.8.
29 Krut, Rita *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making* United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Discussion Paper No. 83, Geneva Switzerland 1997. Available online at http://www.rrojasdatabank.org/toc83.htm. Accessed on 3 January 2002.
30 Brazilian NGO Forum 'Preparatory Forum of Brazilian NGOs' Bulletin 1, Sao Paulo Brazil October 1990.

reinforces the interests of 'rich and powerful lobbyists', while 'the culturally diverse environment and

development movement diluted its inherent strength stemming from its very diversity and unique

approach to local situations'.[31] By privileging a lobbying model which favours the rich and well-

connected, both NGO networks and those of the private sector have been able to satisfy the

requirements of their most influential constituents and establish for themselves a pivotal role in future

international diplomacy on issues of environment and development.

This seems to distort and over-generalise the roles played by, and the diversity that exists among,

NGO networks. Chatterjee and Finger downplay the significance of networks as the contexts within

which dialogues on issues of principle and the establishment of widely applicable norms are

conducted, and consequently posit a spurious polarity between a scenario in which a wide variety of

organisations with diverse perspectives are given a collaborative role in negotiating international

agreements and an assumed reality where NGO coalitions are complicit in ensuring the homogeneity

and sanitising of non-governmental input to UNCED.

An alternative articulation of the significance of NGO networks can also be discerned over this period.

Writing of the creation of the Alliance of Northern People on Environment and Development

(ANPED) in 1990, Tord Bjork concludes:

> So far the environmental and similar movements in the industrial countries have been fairly or
> very single-issue oriented. They also tend to become more and more specialized in a specific
> way of working. It has been easy to gain quick victories through this narrow issue orientation
> and specialization. But these victories tend to be unimportant as the bigger issues and problems
> are left unchallenged. To get a working cooperation between movements working with different
> issues as well as in different regions of the world is a way to counteract the political contra-
> productivity the specialization is creating in the long run. Without this is it hard to maintain an
> independent critical position towards international established institutions.[32]

Tackling 'the bigger issues' requires co-operation between organisations working on different issues

and in different parts of the world. This is a necessary precondition for the maintenance of an

'independent critical position'. Bjork's conclusion could be understood as the antithesis of that

propounded by Chatterjee and Finger – pluralism is of limited value if it is expressed through

31 Chatterjee, Pratap and Matthias Finger *The Earth Brokers: Power, Politics and World Development* Routledge London 1994 p.170.
32 Bjork.Tord 'Northern Alliance: Europe, North America and UNCED 1992 Alliance of Northern People on Environment and Development' written as 'a
contribution to the discussion between environmental federation in Sweden and ecological groups in Latin America prior to UNCED' unpublished 1991.
Available on Instituto del Tercer Mundo *The Earth Summit CD Rom: the NGO Archives* ITEM, Montevideo Uruguay 1995.

disjointed campaigns on unconnected issues. Interaction between organisations leads to development of a coherent ideological framework which can also function as a critique of the inter-governmental process. A rare example of such interaction is the production of *A Vision from the South – How wealth degrades the environment: sustainability in the Netherlands* by ANPED and the Dutch Alliance for Sustainable Development in 1992 for which authors from Brazil, Indonesia, Tanzania and India were invited to research Dutch society and assess its impact on the global environment.[33]

Others. Additional contexts explored previously include the divergence between ideological and pragmatic rationales evident in the functioning of the International Steering Committee and the International Facilitating Committee during UNCED preparations, and tensions between networks focusing on development and environment issues over the same period.

A theory of global politics which adopts a pluralistic interpretation of influence must attempt to tackle some of the broad conceptual contexts outlined above. How, for example, can notions of legitimacy and accountability be reframed so that a diversity of overlapping, at times conflicting versions are recognised as co-existing? Does analysis of the politics of international civil society networks provide useful analogies for the study of inter-state relations? There are instances in which attempts to negotiate international shared principles or plans of action by NGOs provide much more insight into conceptual difficulties and societal conflicts than corresponding dialogue between governments. The Alternative Treaties formulated at the Global Forum in 1992 can be interpreted in this way. Efforts by international NGO networks to transcend barriers between distinct issue areas may also prefigure comparable challenges arising in official proceedings. The potential for conflict between international investment agreements and global environmental conventions and social commitments was identified by the loose coalition of NGOs opposing the draft Multilateral Agreement on Investments before any coherent recognition of these difficulties was acknowledged by governments.

Technological advances, which are progressively transforming the activities of international NGO networks, present new challenges for the study of global politics. Networks are increasingly obliged to maintain regular contact with their members, and to devise means by which they can be answerable for their policies and activities. Does this presage comparable reinterpretations of the mechanics of ·

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33 Gomes, Mercio, Chandra Kirana, Sami Songanbele & Rajiv Vora *A Vision from the South - How wealth degrades the environment: sustainability in the Netherlands* International Books Utrecht the Netherlands 1992.

accountability for other actors? Changes in access to data and information are also significant: Jessica Mathews states that 'In every sphere of activity, instantaneous access to information and the ability to put it to use multiplies the number of players who matter and reduces the number who command great authority'. One consequence of this is a revised understanding of accountability for governments: 'NGOs' easy reach behind other states' borders forces governments to consider domestic public opinion in countries with which they are dealing, even on matters that governments have traditionally handled strictly between themselves'.[34]

Having established the key contested questions and issues which those involved in international NGO collaborations prioritise, it may be beneficial to revisit various theoretical understandings of global politics to assess the degree to which they accommodate issues raised here.

5.2 Creating space for civil society networks in global polity frameworks

5.2.1 A broader conception of influence – beyond the state-centric

In his principal work *The Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull is explicit about the fact that in considering international society he was dealing with a society of states. This society of states exists, he maintains, 'when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions'.[35] Bull rejected the notion of an international society made up of individuals, identifying the difficulties posed by the development of international human rights agreements as a clear indictment of this approach:

> Carried to its logical extreme, the doctrine of human rights and duties under international law is subversive of the whole principle that mankind should be organized as a society of sovereign states. For, if the rights of each man can be asserted on the world political stage over and against the claims of his state, and his duties proclaimed irrespective of his position as a servant or a citizen of that state, then the position of the state as a body sovereign over its citizens, and entitled to command their obedience, has been subject to challenge, and the structure of the society of sovereign states has been placed in jeopardy. The way is left open for the subversion

34 Mathews, Jessica T. 'Power Shift', *Foreign Affairs* vol. 76 No. 1 pp.50-66, Washington DC January / February 1997. Located online at http://www.yale.edu/ycias/stimson/stimson99/africa/power_shift.htm. Visited on 3 January 2002.
35 Bull, Hedley *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* 2nd edition Columbia University Press, New York 1995 p.13.

of the society of sovereign states on behalf of the alternative organizing principle of a cosmopolitan community.[36]

Bull implies that authority can shift from the state system to an 'alternative', presenting a dichotomy between these possibilities. Keck and Sikkink agree that non-state actors are beginning 'to undermine state sovereignty'. They suggest that 'new global actors' – most notably transnational advocacy networks – are contributing to the formulation of 'a new system with overlapping authority and multiple loyalty',[37] and place these phenomena in the context of the 'erosion of [state] sovereignty'.[38]

The assertion that some form of transformation has occurred in global politics which has led to the emergence of political actors other than governments is contentious. Robert Wolfe asserts that we have always lived in a 'multicentric world'. Change has occurred in 'our assumptions, now exposed as fictions. The actors of interest today are not new, but we literally could not see them within a Westphalian worldview.'[39] Wolfe argues that the state is only one of many sources of normative order, and suggests that we should 'see law and authority not only as derivatives of states, but of other sources as well, including the private sector'.[40] A further perspective on these developments is presented by Jan Aart Scholte, who writes of 'the general contemporary trend whereby 'international organisation' of the Westphalian system has mutated into 'global governance' involving complex interlinkages of states, multilateral institutions and civil society'.[41]

Wolfe also calls into question Keck and Sikkink's claim that state sovereignty is being eroded. In his consideration of various sources of authority, Wolfe introduces the 'lump of power fallacy', to show that governments' loss of authority is exaggerated. Those who are misled by the fallacy assume there is only a finite quantity of authority, and that it can be sliced up and assigned to different levels in the political system and to different political participants. When one level is given jurisdiction or authority, another must relinquish it. It is a 'zero-sum game'. But if we understand that this assumption originates in a state-centric perspective, we can see that authority and power can have several sources and can multiply as people come together for various purposes. NGOs, inter-

36 *Ibid.*, p.13.
37 Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders* op cit. pp.209-10
38 *Ibid.* p.215.
39 Quoted in Wolfish, Daniel and Gordon Smith 'Governance and Policy in a Multicentric World' *Canadian Public Policy - Analyse de Politiques*, vol.XXVI Supplement / Numéro Spécial 2. 2000 p.S60.
40 *Ibid.* p.S59.
41 Scholte, Jan Aart 'In the foothills: Relations between the IMF and civil society' in Higgott, Richard A., Geoffrey R.D. Underhill, and Andreas Bieler eds. *Non-State Actors and Authority in the Global System* pp.256-273, Routledge / Warwick Studies in Globalisation London 2000 p.271.

governmental organisations, central banks and multinational corporations have gained power and authority over the past twenty years, but not necessarily at the expense of the state. The state remains authoritative, but it must work with other actors. This is a 'non-zero-sum process'.[42]

Cooper and Hocking explore similar ideas about the authority of NGOs in their consideration of changes in the world of diplomacy arising from emerging awareness of NGOs' influence in international affairs. In considering the impact of anti-MAI [Multilateral Agreement on Investment] campaigners, they conclude '[t]o say that transnational NGOs have become more significant is not to suggest that governments no longer are endowed with abundant resources provided by the sovereignty-related rules in the international system'. On the contrary, the long term strategy of such organisations is to gain access and status within institutions conducting trade negotiations, and they require support from governments to achieve this. Consequently, 'in the complex interactions of contemporary world politics, it is often difficult to determine the points of discontinuity between governmental and non-governmental policy and processes'.[43] Yet despite this increasing interaction, the authors identify a central paradox in analyses which suggest that processes of globalisation have bolstered the positions of transnational NGOs, which have legitimacy and transparency in their activities 'unavailable to governments'. Cooper and Hocking point to 'a growing sense of unease and frustration over the loss of functions by governments', and conclude that 'there is a growing concern that any over-enthusiasm for the emergence of civil society masks a counter-productive anti-statist agenda'.[44]

Brad Roth proposes a reinterpretation of notions of sovereignty, based not on the Westphalian precedent so much as on events of the past fifty years – sovereignty is a 'dynamic principle' that has 'developed through the series of declarations, resolutions, and concrete acts associated with decolonization and the enhanced participation of the less powerful in world affairs'.[45] To frame the debate as sovereignty versus human rights is 'to ignore that sovereignty can itself be characterized as a

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42 Wolfish, Daniel and Gordon Smith 'Governance and Policy in a Multicentric World' *Canadian Public Policy - Analyse de Politiques. Op. cit.* p.S63.
43 Cooper, Andrew F, and Brian Hocking 'Governments, Non-governmental Organisations and the Re-calibration of Diplomacy' pp.363-376 *Global Society* vol.14 no.3, 2000 p.369.
44 *Ibid.* pp.369-70.
45 Roth, Brad R. 'What Ever Happened to Sovereignty? Reflections on International Law Methodology' in Ku, Charlotte and Thomas G Weiss eds. *Towards Understanding Global Governance: The International Law and International Relations Toolbox* pp.69-107, Academic Council on the United Nations System Reports and Papers no.2 Brown University, Rhode Island USA 1998 p.96-7.

human right', most clearly embodied in the right of self-determination enshrined in Article 1 of the two main human rights covenants.

These various arguments centre upon the ambivalence inherent in Hedley Bull's term 'cosmopolitan community'. Bull infers a relocation of individual rights from national to international level, which would consequently displace sovereign states from their central role in international politics. Keck and Sikkink believe that a new system with 'overlapping authority' is emerging. They focus on the impact of transnational advocacy networks, which include representatives from states and international organisations in their work. As a result, 'this process of negotiation within the emergent cosmopolitan community is not "outside" the state. Instead it involves state actors in active reflection on state interests as well'.[46] This should be understood as an extension of Krause and Knight's work on the 'state / society perspective', which considers that 'the state cannot be considered in isolation from civil society: it is defined by the series of links that form both the state and the societal groups'.[47]

5.2.2 International Relations theory revisited

To what extent does this formulation differ from the theoretical models developed in the study of International Relations considered in previous chapters? Three broad approaches have been explored: realism; regime theory; and global governance theory. The first two focus predominantly on the interaction of states, and posit a hierarchical, essentially static structure evident in their relations. Hedley Bull's defence of state sovereignty, noted above, illustrates the former, while Peter Haas outlines the assumptions underlying regime theory:

> Within the analytic framework explicitly or tacitly accepted by most proponents of international regime theory, regimes are valued as stable forms to order international behavior and mitigate conflict in an anarchic world.[48]

Haas suggests that regimes may contribute to the empowerment of new groups – 'epistemic communities' with particular expertise which connotes authority in international affairs. The involvement of new actors may transform regimes from static frameworks into 'evolving

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46 Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders op. cit* p.216.
47 Krause, Keith and W Andy Knight eds. *State, Society and the UN System: changing perspectives on multilateralism* United Nations University Tokyo 1995 pp.4-5.
48 Haas, Peter M. 'Do regimes matter? Epistemic communities and Mediterranean pollution control' pp.459-85 *International Organization* vol.43 no.3 Summer 1989 p.484.

arrangements that contribute to greater understanding, recognition of common interests, and convergence on a new set of policies'.[49] This suggests some similarities with the global 'cosmopolitan community' referred to above. However, Haas recognises only a small and circumscribed collection of experts as 'epistemic communities', and locates their influence directly with the authority of the state: 'under recent conditions of uncertainty ... leaders, in order to attenuate such uncertainty, may be expected to look for individuals who are able to provide authoritative advice, on whom to pin the blame for policy failure or simply as a stop-gap measure to appease public clamour for action'.[50] This constitutes a relatively minor adjustment to the established framework, not a radical reworking. Haas does not acknowledge transnational networks beyond this narrow clique of experts, who are able to function as international actors principally through the authority conferred by governments. He does not consider their interactions with other non-state actors worthy of any detailed appraisal. As explored in chapter 2, international NGO networks perform a diverse range of functions which do not all comply with this state-centric approach; it is also significant to note no clear hierarchy of authority can be corroborated from the activities of these alliances which might place collaboration intended to influence governments or inter-governmental bodies above other forms of interaction.

The third theoretical construct explored in earlier chapters is global governance. This cannot be reduced to a coherent set of principles or a framework for interpreting global politics – it has been employed in such diverse and often contradictory ways that any attempt to do so would be futile. Even so, it is still valid to assess the ways in which various theorists have interpreted the term, as this contested ground is central to the context for the thesis as a whole. Chapters 1 and 2 outlined some of the principal understandings of 'global governance', introducing Oran Young's notion of 'governance without government' in international affairs,[51] and the distinction drawn by James Rosenau: '[governance] is a system of rule that works only if it is accepted by the majority ... whereas governments can function even in the face of widespread opposition to their policies'.[52] These authors relocate authority in certain contexts from individual governments to a more diffuse level of interaction within international society. While regime theory posits the existence of international communities (perhaps including non-state actors) addressing the governance of particular issue areas,

49 Ibid. p.482.
50 Haas, Peter M. 'Obtaining International Environmental Protection through Epistemic Consensus' Millennium pp.347-363, vol.19 no.3, 1990 p.350.
51 Young, Oran R International Governance: Protecting the Environment in a Stateless Society Cornell University Press, Ithaca USA 1994 p.7.

this approach to global governance explores evidence for more holistic structures playing comparable roles. This shift in focus does not constitute a significant challenge to the state-centric presumptions underlying mainstream IR theory – the model is still implicitly hierarchical. Thus Don Hubert, in his consideration of means by which to gauge the impact of NGOs in global politics, concludes that '[a] focus on NGO effectiveness vis-à-vis states is crucial since global governance or social change, regardless of the specific definitions, will depend to some extent on the agreement of states'.[53]

Kees van der Pijl defines 'global governance' as 'the world-wide integration of economic, social and political organisation into a mediated complex of state and quasi-state authority'. From this Marxist perspective the capacity of NGOs or 'civil society' to constitute a viable political opposition is fundamentally compromised by their organisational limitations. The degree to which they are representative and accountable is frequently unclear, and the likelihood of co-option by the state, the 'international quasi-state' or international corporate actors is very high.[54] As with the above analyses, there is little scope for NGO networks to constitute a distinct and sustained sphere of influence in processes global governance.

An alternative understanding of 'global governance' is advanced in various contexts, which challenges the centrality of the state. The Commission on Global Governance states that '[a]t the global level, governance .. must now be understood as also involving non-governmental organisations, citizens' movements, multinational corporations, and the global capital market.'[55] Georg Kell and John Ruggie argue that the formation of a 'global compact', a set of norms designed to govern the behaviour of transnational corporations, did not require the involvement or the support of national governments.[56] Ruggie has championed the Global Compact through his role as advisor to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, emphasising that, while the nine core values comprising the Compact derive from various core agreements negotiated by states, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development, the authority and legitimacy of the Compact arise

52 Rosenau, James N. 'Governance, Order and Change in World Politics' in Rosenau, James N. and Ernst-Otto Czempiel eds. *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* pp.1-29, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK 1992 p.4.
53 Hubert, Don 'Inferring Influence: Gauging the Impact of NGOs' in Ku, Charlotte and Thomas G Weiss eds. *Towards Understanding Global Governance: The International Law and International Relations Toolbox* pp.27-51, *op.cit.* p.43.
54 Van der Pijl, Kees *Transnational Classes and International Relations* RIPE Series / Routledge Press, London 1998. See also Rowell, Andrew *Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement* Routledge 1996 p.162.
55 The Commission on Global Governance *Our Global Neighborhood* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995 p.3.
56 Kell, Georg and John Ruggie 'Global Markets and Social Legitimacy: The Case of the "Global Compact"', paper presented at the conference *Governing the Public Domain beyond the Era of the Washington Consensus? Redrawing the Line between the State and the Market*, York University Toronto 4-6 November 1999.

from the coming together of the United Nations and NGOs with corporate actors. The direct involvement of states is not necessary.

A further conceptualisation of global governance is put forward in the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs. This suggests that NGOs collaborate at the international level because states are 'unable to solve key global problems'. Consequently, 'the international NGO community sees itself – and is increasingly seen by governments – as part of embryonic institutional structures that will define a different form of global governance, a model in which citizen action occurs at the global level'.[57] This is a startlingly close echo of Hedley Bull's nemesis, the 'cosmopolitan society', and provides a further justification for privileging the interaction between non-governmental actors through various forms of international alliance as of intrinsic importance in understanding global politics.

Global advocacy networks coalesce around shared values and priorities. They often prioritise opposition to the detrimental impacts of neo-liberal economic globalisation, asserting principles of equality, self-determination, sustainability and other values which unite them. Michael Edwards *et al.* point to a set of challenges to such 'embryonic institutional structures' which emphasise the significance of their self-governance, and suggests that the opportunity exists for these networks to 'become vehicles for international co-operation in the mainstream of politics and economics', engaging in crucial challenges such as the relative importance of economic growth, political equity, and social benefit within and between societies.[58] The corollary of this is that NGOs have to demonstrate the principles they espouse in their interactions, using networks as the means by which to illustrate the viability of alternative approaches. Unless this happens in areas such as the provision of financial support to assist small and marginalised groups, members of international NGO networks will increasingly be seen as a self-serving elite, using status and credibility derived from principles not evident in their activities.

57 Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs *Democratic Global Civil Governance Report of the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs* Oslo Norway 1996 pp.3-5.
58 Edwards, Michael, David Hulme and Tina Wallace 'NGOs in a Global Future: Marrying Local Delivery to Worldwide Leverage' *op. cit.*

5.3 UNCED and Beyond: Precedents or Anomalies for the Study of Global Civil Society Networks?

> This is not the story of good NGOs confronting evil governments ... This is the story of humanity assuming responsibility for its own future through increasingly representative forms of political organization and through a fully engaged civil society.[59]

Understanding of the significance of UNCED has subtly shifted since the event. While attention in the immediate aftermath focused principally on the official texts and agreements negotiated between governments, or perhaps on the treaties and positions formulated by NGOs, now commensurate attention is given to the scale of the Summit, and the presence of huge numbers and diversity of interests. These are understood to constitute a significant phenomenon in themselves and a source of distinct legitimacy for what has been widely termed 'the spirit of Rio'.[60] Because sustainable development requires the acceptance that multiple forms of legitimacy exist, diversity assumes a particular importance – but the link between the two is often assumed and not substantiated. Subsequent initiatives at national level, such as the formulation of Local Agenda 21s and the creation of National Councils for Sustainable Development, which are predicated on the importance of engaging societal actors in efforts to achieve sustainable development, can be understood in part as the transference of that legitimacy to related processes.

Both the official UNCED proceedings and the International NGO Forum attempted to redefine civil society. In both instances, two factors combined to provide the impetus for this effort: first, the rationale of sustainable development, which emphasises the need to devolve decision-making, engage all social actors and acknowledge distinct needs and priorities; and second, the unprecedented nature of the event itself, which offered the opportunity to establish new understandings and imperatives which would resonate subsequently.

How should we interpret the impact of UNCED on theories of global politics? While the texts negotiated have been of questionable value in shaping understanding of the role of civil society in the global polity or at other levels of governance, the conflicts evident in the UNCED process between

59 Schweitz, Martha 'NGO Participation in International Governance: The Question of Legitimacy' Proceedings, Annual Meeting of the American Society of International Law, 1995.

different perspectives, organisational models, and ideological frameworks provide some valuable insights.

One clear lesson lies in the differences between the short term and the longer-term effects of UNCED, and the ways in which its significance has been interpreted subsequently. In the period before and immediately following the Rio Summit, the NGO Treaties and other means by which NGOs could articulate alternative visions and approaches to achieving sustainability were seen as major achievements. However, they quickly became marginalised as networks established to influence inter-governmental decision-making and streamline NGO interaction with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and other bodies assumed a more central role.

During the period from 1993 to the late 1990s, the notion of international NGO networks developing perspectives on sustainable development which were deliberately separate from inter-governmental processes was not widely supported. However, a number of separate alliances developed (such as the MAI Coalition and Jubilee 2000) which touched on issues of sustainable development, and drew on the legacy of the Alternative Treaties and similar initiatives. With hindsight, these networks picked approaches developed through existing, issue-specific networks (the International Baby Food Action Network, for example) and from the UNCED process (in that they focused on issues central to sustainable development). They were overtly political, building on conviction rather than pragmatism, but they addressed a limited agenda, rather than attempting to establish coherence across a broad range of issue areas.

A second significant focus has been on relations between Northern and Southern organisations. Again, there are precedents for networks functioning globally and involving NGOs from all parts of the world (on gender issues, at least since the second World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1985; the World Federation of United Nations Associations; and so on). Imbalances of power and capability in structures involving NGOs from North and South were identified earlier as the cause of particular problems within a number of global networks. Recurrent difficulties experienced by Southern organisations include the loss of senior staff to jobs in developed countries, and inferior communications technology. However, it is also significant to note that in a number of instances

60 See for example Mabey, Nick 'Rio +10: Doomed Wonkfest or Critical Political Opportunity?' Green Globe Task Force Discussion Paper, London August 2000.

Southern NGOs have assumed a leading role in the functioning of international networks. This was the conclusion reached by a number of commentators on UNCED and on the work of transnational NGO networks lobbying the World Bank, as noted earlier.

Is it legitimate to claim that sustainable development necessarily privileges Southern experience and perspectives? Certainly attention to issues of Northern over-consumption in general, and resultant problems such as climate change suggests that this is valid. A range of NGOs (most notably Friends of the Earth International) have asserted that Northern countries owe an 'ecological debt' to the South, resulting from the over-exploitation of limited environmental resources, and current and anticipated difficulties due to ecological degradation.[61] This perception of established and continuing injustice could help to fuel the types of financial and technical support from Northern NGOs to Southern, marginalised organisations identified by Michael Edwards *et al.* as essential if NGOs are to play a continued role in global debates.[62]

Thus on various issues of principle, Southern NGOs are already playing leading roles within international networks, and can be expected to continue to do so. Many Northern organisations, particularly those working on development projects, are increasingly challenged to use local expertise rather than employing Northern consultants. ActionAid has split up its programme departments and located them in its offices around the world, rather than having them all based in London. The International Institute for Environment and Development has appointed an Executive Board with participants from all regions of the world, in place of the principally European and North American body which took decisions previously. IIED has also initiated a series of Regional Advisory Panels, held to date in New Delhi, Accra and Buenos Aires, to help gauge the value of its work to Southern organisations and to explore areas for future policy work and collaboration.[63] In some instances, the implicit recognition that Southern experience should be privileged has resulted in tensions – ideological divisions in Friends of the Earth International were noted in Chapter 2; the Jubilee 2000 Coalition did not always endorse positions advanced by its members which collaborated as Jubilee South.

61 See for example the website 'Deuda Ecológica / Ecological Debt' maintained by Acción Ecológica in Ecuador: http://cosmosvisiones.com/DeudaEcologica. Visited on 1 September 2001.
62 Edwards, Michael, David Hulme and Tina Wallace 'NGOs in a Global Future: Marrying Local Delivery to Worldwide Leverage', *op. cit.*
63 International Institute for Environment and Development *IIED Annual Report 1999-2000* IIED, London 2000.

It is not clear whether these practical changes in the structures of individual NGOs and coalitions can begin to address systemic imbalances between well-resourced and well-connected organisations (principally based in Northern countries) and those which do not have adequate funding and have little capacity to engage with global processes (notably from Southern countries). However, evidence of action in reducing inequalities between Northern and Southern NGOs is increasingly seen as a central element in the credibility of better-resourced organisations.

One area in which dramatic change could occur is in communications technology.[64] The use of listservers and email was already evident among NGOs during the UNCED process[65] and has substantially expanded since. The accessibility of official documents and data, and the ability to share information quickly and extensively have had major impacts in all parts of the world. Although there are still huge numbers of people with little access to these technologies, their existence creates the possibility of much greater interaction in future. Helping to provide access to these technologies has become another responsibility incumbent on Northern NGOs in their dealings with Southern partner organisations. It is also transforming the nature of NGO networking, as noted in Chapter 2, by reducing the limitations of distance and increasing expectations that consultation will take place before significant positions or decisions are taken on behalf of the network as a whole. These trends look set to continue as access to communications technology increases and the extent of the possible and the accessible expands further. However, for the foreseeable future the vast proportion of the world's population will continue to be on the wrong side of the 'digital divide'.

5.3.1 What makes some international NGO networks succeed while others fail?

Of the range of networks considered, those which have been most successful exhibit a high degree of consensus on policy issues. IBFAN has functioned for over twenty years, and maintained the same core objectives and principles; more recent campaigns to eliminate Third World debt (Jubilee 2000)

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64 For example, the RING (the Regional and International Networking Group) is an alliance of principally Southern policy research organisations, established prior to UNCED to work on issues of sustainable development. For much of its existence, there has been little scope for joint projects as communications between members have been difficult and the potential for interaction between policy experts on a regular basis has been limited. More recently, the widespread adoption of email and the internet has resulted in dramatic improvements; concurrently, increasing interest in the potential of a global network of credible sustainable development research organisations has led to greater willingness from potential funders to take on the logistical difficulties in establishing effective collaboration.

and to support the creation of an International Criminal Court have been built upon a similar shared set of core values and goals.

On this evidence, *ad hoc* coalitions, created for a specific purpose, can be very successful. Time-bound campaigns to achieve specific objectives by a certain date and alliances pursuing limited goals or targeting particular actors provide tangible instances of success – not least because it is considerably easier to gauge their effectiveness than for networks with less clearly defined goals. The ongoing boycott of Exxon / Esso[66] is an example of an international collaboration to highlight the role of a particular company in shaping global policy. While this tactic may have a significant effect on the company targeted (such as change resulting from opposition to Shell's policies in Nigeria, for example), its effectiveness in galvanising industry-wide change is more open to doubt. Time-bound initiatives such as Jubilee 2000's campaign help to raise pressure for action to a peak which coincides with a particular opportunity for significant policy changes to be initiated. However, if it is anticipated that the campaign will subsequently die away, there is a danger that decision-makers may issue vague commitments and do little to realise them afterwards.

Conversely, those networks which have had least success (both in building stable coalitions between participants and in achieving well-defined objectives) have been those which lacked a coherent consensus on the principles which brought them together. These fall into two broad groupings – those which aim to play a facilitating role for a broad range of organisations and those which attempt to build links between organisations working in different issue areas. The former, such as the Centre for Our Common Future's International Facilitating Committee, emphasise access to decision-making and dialogue between different stakeholders as their principal rationale. The latter, the Rio-focused International NGO Forum for example, identify the need for broader alliances on issues of principle in order to articulate holistic visions which can be endorsed by from a diversity of perspectives.

On this evidence, it is possible to conclude that these types of general coalitions of NGOs can never succeed. Apolitical consensus is not possible on issue areas that unavoidably involve political *contention* and *opposing* values, as well as differences on questions of strategy and tactics. Broad

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65 For a more detailed account, see Preston, Shelley 'Electronic Global Networking and the NGO Movement: the 1992 Rio Summit and Beyond' in *Swords and Ploughshares: A Chronicle of International Affairs* vol.3, no.2, Washington D.C. Spring 1994. Available online at http://stile.lboro.ac.uk/~gyedb/STILE/Email0002089/m12.html. Visited on 1 September 2001.

networks cannot articulate a meaningful vision of sustainable development because the diversity among them on issues of principle, as well as differences of interest and knowledge, limit the scope and significance of their shared views. Both forms of alliance lack strong support from participants, who do not devote significant time or resources to sustaining the network. In turn, beyond the specific context of global summits or other similar rationales, it has proved difficult to gain secure funding to maintain such networks.

However, it is important also to recall the succession of analyses which emphasised the need for cross-cutting alliances. The UN CSD Secretariat stressed the need for a facilitating body to improve NGO participation in, and input to its annual sessions. Similar requirements have been expressed in the preparations for the 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development, to take place in Johannesburg. As noted earlier, Tord Bjork stressed that 'a working cooperation between movements working with different issues as well as in different regions of the world .. [is needed] to maintain an independent critical position towards international established institutions'.[67] A succession of commentators have identified the importance of articulating opposition and alternatives to current processes of economic globalisation as one of the principal motivations for NGOs to collaborate globally. Rita Krut asserts that 'the crucial role of civil society today is to advocate democracy against the rising anti-democratic tendencies of global capital',[68] which suggests a very broad remit.

Alliances which focus on these areas are increasingly active, most notably mobilising around meetings of the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund, and more recently at European Union summits and G8 meetings of leading industrialised countries. The World Social Forum took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2001 as a counterpoint to the concurrent World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland; it represents the most ambitious effort yet to explore alternatives to globalisation. Yet the messages emanating from these events and groupings do not represent a common vision, only a shared belief that the actions and decisions of global inter-governmental organisations and transnational companies are increasingly shaping the lives of everyone in ways which are detrimental and unaccountable. As such they function more as a magnet for very disparate

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66 Initiated because the company supported President Bush's election campaign and is a prominent member of the Global Climate Coalition, which has opposed most attempts to agree and implement multilateral commitments on climate change.
67 Bjork, Tord 'Northern Alliance', op. cit.
68 Krut, Rita Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making, op. cit.

viewpoints, which find common cause only in their opposition to certain institutions and the economic and social models they are advancing.

In the final analysis, UNCED failed – and was bound to fail – in creating general networks. However, it has provided inspiration to NGOs to establish and support alliances which address issues of a global nature. The current debate about the so-called anti-globalisation movement would seem to deny the conclusion that broadly-based networks cannot succeed. However, if this thesis is correct, specific campaigns, such as opposition to an MAI, reduction of debt or boycotting companies, will mobilise support, but a generalised anti-globalisation coalition will not materialise in any organised network of the diverse range of issue-specific NGOs.

5.3.2 Summary of research findings

At the beginning of this thesis a number of research questions were posed and introduced. It is useful now to reflect on the principal findings presented and the ways in which they address these initial challenges.

What is meant by 'civil society', and how is this relevant in the global context?

'Civil society' is a nebulous concept – it was recognised at the outset that the term encompassed a much broader range of social actors than 'non-governmental organisations', though the principal focus of the thesis has been on the latter.

Examples from a broad range of contexts have shown the impact of civil society organisations on policy formulation in inter-governmental processes, and the distinct prioritisation of other activities at the global level. These justify a more diffuse conceptualisation of 'influence' than in many analyses of the roles played by civil society organisations in global politics.

This broader perspective admits a consideration of tensions and conflicts between civil society actors as significant in understanding global political processes – this includes attention to tensions between NGOs and transnational companies (see 2.4.5 and 3.4.5.1). It also justifies the assertion that the activities of civil society networks at the global level are a significant arena for the contestation and propagation of norms.

In what ways does 'the environment' differ from more established concerns of international politics?

Notions of security and threats to stability arising from environmental change present very different challenges to those of more mainstream international affairs. Where under traditional models of security the country could be considered as a unit, and its interests determined and pursued by the government in international fora, here there are a multiplicity of perceived interests, all of which are legitimate given the complex and diffuse threats posed by environmental change. In the former, protagonists in international negotiations are exclusively governments, deriving authority through their ability to represent the interests of their citizens; in the latter, civil society as a whole is responsible for problems arising and should be actively involved in attempts to devise solutions.

Increasingly, this distinction is resulting in a shifting understanding of the mechanisms for addressing environmental problems at the global level – evident in the official preparations for UNCED (see 3.3) and more recently the World Summit on Sustainable Development, both of which sought to recognise and to allow space for the views of a range of social actors. This understanding has also extended to include non-governmental, parallel dialogues and processes which articulate diverse perspectives and priorities (see 3.4).

What is meant by 'sustainable development', and what has been the effect of its widespread acceptance in global politics?

The examples cited earlier demonstrate that sustainable development was initially understood to have two broad characteristics: first, it brought together concerns of environmental protection on the one hand and social and economic development on the other, and sought to find ways in which pursuit of both could be compatible; second, it was understood as an innately political construct, requiring choices, trade-offs and value judgments. However, sustainable development has increasingly come to be seen as representing a set of management tools rather than political choices – this is particularly evident in the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (see Chapter 4). Where values are invoked at all, sustainable development is now widely seen as a vague but worthy concept with which no-one could disagree – not as a set of policy options which could challenge or threaten dominant international economic and social institutions and processes.

The lack of coherence in interpretations of 'sustainable development' in itself contributes to the plurality of the political process and legitimises a much wider range of ideological and knowledge-based understandings than is possible in more consensual issue areas. Conversely, since the basic principles and objectives are disputed, the potential for unequivocal agreement around a negotiated policy framework is extremely limited. This creates considerable problems for civil society networks which have articulated common positions but have not been able to translate these into clear manifestos for action (for example the UNCED Alternative Treaties, see 3.7.1 and 4.2.1).

How have academic theorists explained the exercise of influence by non-state actors in international affairs?

The thesis illustrates how mainstream IR theory privileges the interaction of states and gives only peripheral attention to the activities of non-state actors and sociological studies have not extended consideration the relevance of 'new social movements' in global politics. However, a broad range of other analyses are also cited which have acknowledged the impacts of non-governmental actors in global politics and developed an increasingly useful set of tools with which these issues can be considered.

The current study contributes to this emerging body of thinking in two principal ways: first, it focuses mainly on the politics of environment and sustainable development and considers their particular significance to the more general trends and analytical approaches developed by others; second, it presents an extended empirical study of the various ways in which civil society organisations have interacted at the international level around the Rio Summit and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. The functioning of four principal NGO networks established prior to UNCED and the creation of the CSD NGO Steering Committee provide significant evidence of the motivations to collaborate and the simultaneous differences and divisions which impeded co-operation.

Which factors justify a focus on the impact of global non-governmental networks on global politics? What countervailing perspectives should be taken into account?

three further factors support a focus on networks of global civil society in addressing the central question posed earlier: first, the role of civil society in what could be termed the 'globalisation of

ideals'; second, the particular challenges and debates which arise from attempts to realise forms of 'self-governance' in the functioning of global networks; and third the broader questions of legitimacy and accountability which accompany the assumption of greater authority and influence in the global polity.

Eg table on UNCED networks, p.129

Eg. Nelson's 'sources of tension' p.65 & application to BNGOF p.124 on

What is the impact of civil society networks on the global politics of sustainable development?

Bullets on pp.53-4 re network functions

Eg. impacts on UNCED agreements – pp.146-157, including Alt Treaties

Eg. Manila meeting, p.75-77

Table on INGO networks, p.174

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Appendix 1

Environment Liaison Committee International 'Stop Green Pollution'

Nairobi Kenya August 15, 1990

The following is the statement from the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI), Global Coalition for Environment and Development (in special working relationship with UNEP) handed out to all of the delegates to the UNCED PrepCom meeting on 9 August 1990 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Stop Green Pollution

The world knows many forms of environmental pollution. A new, more insidious form is developing: green pollution. Based on false propaganda consumers are sometimes asked to buy certain products falsely claimed to be environment friendly. But for ELCI the strategy developed, now known as the "independent sector strategy", is yet another form of this green pollution.

This strategy implies two objectives, both denounced by ELCI:

- to promote the idea that everyone is working for the protection of the environment – implying there are no more polluters;

- to effectively disempower the environmental movement by forcing NGOs to bargain directly with the polluters and arrive at common viewpoint before being heard by public authorities, in this case governments.

What Are NGOs?

For ELCI, NGOs are non-profit, non-party political organizations including groupings such as environment and development, youth, indigenous people, consumer and religious. Organizations of industry, trade unions, parliamentarians, academics and local authorities are not NGOs.

ELCI Suspends Its Partnership With The Centre for Our Common Future

A number of NGOs see the Centre for Our Common Future as promoting this 'independent sector' concept. The Centre, with its pretence of serving the independent sector as a whole, has recently been strongly criticized by ELCI members in the North and South and by Friends of the Earth International.

Environment and development NGOs ask the Centre to adopt a policy of openness particularly in respect to the following questions: What is its constituency? Who constitutes the Board of Directors? Who are the donors? What is its role in the politics of the United Nations and of certain countries? Until further consultations with its members, ELCI suspends its partnership with the Centre and withdraws its support for the public forums being organised by the Centre.

ELCI will reconsider its position regarding the Centre at its Annual General Meeting in Cairo in November 1990.

The Mandate of the International Facilitating Committee

At the initiative of the Centre for Our Common Future, organisations belonging to the so-called 'independent sector' selected by the Centre, met in Nyon, Switzerland where they decided to form the International Facilitating Committee (IFC), a multi- sector coalition to facilitate and organise independent sector activities devoted to the UNCED 1992.

ELCI was invited to represent the environment and development NGOs on this International Facilitating Committee. ELCI is prepared to dialogue openly with other sectors of society, to discuss a general approach, and cooperate on specific issues. However, the Executive Committee of ELCI can only accept to participate further in IFC if the following conditions are met:

- the IFC, on which industry is represented by the International Chamber of Commerce, disassociate itself from the definition of NGOs given by the U.N. and appeal to the Secretary General and the Preparatory Committee to renounce this definition;
- the term 'independent sector' be replaced to underline the diversity of the different sectors;
- the IFC renounces its plan to organise a parallel forum in Brazil for ECO '92 common to all the different sectors;
- the composition of the IFC be reviewed.

If these conditions are met ELCI would be prepared to participate in the IFC with a view to defining the terms of the dialogue among the different sectors and identifying the points on which agreement among the various sectors is close enough to justify negotiating an eventual common position. ELCI would report to its constituency and to the Steering Committee of the NGOs Campaign Towards 1992 which comprises representatives from global and grassroots environment and development organisations.

Appendix 2

How to Develop a Code of Conduct for Voluntary Organizations

[paper prepared by ELCI, post-Rio 1992]

What is a Code of Conduct for Voluntary Organisations?

A Code of Conduct for VOs is a document consisting of a number of general principles which will serve as a guideline for Voluntary Organizations in defining their policy. The principles touch on issues such as accountability, transparency of operations, relations with other organizations and groups, etc.

Why a Code of Conduct for Voluntary Organizations?

There are several reasons why a Code of Conduct for Voluntary Organizations has become a matter of urgency:

- One is to properly define the identity of the NGO movement. During the UNCED prepcoms there was considerable uneasiness within the NGO community about being put in the same category with business and industry. To many NGOs it became clear that being defined in terms of "what you are not" is very confusing. Several, among them ELCI, decided to start using the term Voluntary Organizations instead.
- A second reason is the issue of representativeness. The establishment of some VOs has been clearly the result of peoples' movements campaigning for specific environmental or developmental goals. As a result of this it was perceived that the work of Voluntary Organizations in general is a reflection of democratic forces, wherever they are working and whatever they are doing. While this might be true for many VOs it is definitely not a claim that can be made by all. Many VOs have been initiated by individuals or small groups with genuine objectives to combat certain social or environmental threats, but without the support of peoples' movements. Some of these VOs are trying, through awareness raising, to mobilize peoples' movements, while others focus much more on non-profit consultancy work, lobbying advocacy etc. A method of categorizing VOs is needed to create more clarity in the definition of Voluntary Organizations.

- VOs are mushrooming everywhere. There is no doubt that most VOs are based on bona fide intentions. However it is also true that for VOs themselves, donors and other governmental agencies it is becoming increasingly difficult to assess VOs in terms of credibility, transparency, accountability, quality of work etc. A Code of Conduct would provide some useful guidance in working with VOs. In the future ELCI will use the Code of Conduct in setting up criteria for membership.
- A VO Code of Conduct will also raise awareness on the function and responsibilities of Voluntary Organizations in society which diverge from those of business, industry and governments. Industry is driven by the principle of profit and sees people as consumers whose purchasing power is to be tapped for the remuneration of invested capital. The modern state is driven by governmental control and people are perceived as citizens with democratic rights whose votes are needed to legitimize the exercise of state power.

The operations of industry and state, guided by the logic of profit and state power, do not necessarily follow the criteria of sustainable development unless people exercize their role as consumers and citizens to pressure industry and state to do so. This is where the function of VOs comes in. VOs are initiated by people who are concerned about certain developments they are confronted with in their everyday life or through media. VOs mobilize people as citizens and consumers in order to influence the functioning of industries and state. That is why VOs have their own mission in society which should not be seen as instrumental to the aims of governments or business and industry. A clear understanding of the role of VOs is often lacking. A Code of Conduct for VOs will provide more clarity for governments and business and industry on what to expect and what not to expect when they are cooperating with VOs.

What has happened on the V.O. Code of Conduct so far?

From late 1991 through the VO Conference in Paris several VOs have been working on a Code of Conduct. At the NGO forum during the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro an NGO treaty on the Code of Conduct was developed which, however, needs more elaboration. ELCI was given the task of coordinating the follow up of the alternative treaty on the VO Code of Conduct. This background paper is about setting up a network of VOs that will carry on the work which will result in a widely accepted VO Code of Conduct.

The Network

Objectives:

- to develop a VO Code of Conduct
- to promote the VO Code of Conduct and get as many VOs as possible to sign on to it
- to provide a useful set of criteria for identifying organizations to engage in partnerships and networking for sustainable development

Strategy:

ELCI will start a network of VOs who want to participate actively in developing the Code of Conduct. The working method will be "a conference on distance" with the purpose of drafting a Code of Conduct. The "conference" will be coordinated by ELCI. In concrete terms this means that ELCI will compile all the material that has been developed on the VO Code of Conduct, identify subjects for further discussion and circulate these to the VOs of the network. The VOs cans end their inputs to ELCI who will forward them to the network. The VOs can send their inputs to ELCI who will forward them to the network. If necessary special working groups will be established to elaborate specific topics, and a steering committee of selected NGOs will be identified.

Communication tools that will be used are:

- an E-mail conference on the V.O. Code of Conduct
- circular letters through which participants will be enabled to exchange views
- 5 regional meetings, one in each continent
- media strategy (both, public and ECO press)

This process will result in a final draft which will be presented at a Conference on the VO Code of Conduct to which all the VOs of the network and others will be invited. In this conference a consensus document on the Code of Conduct for VOs will be "negotiated". The Conference will also develop a strategy for promoting the VO Code of Conduct. Whether the Code of Conduct will be a document reflecting a number of principles to which VOs agree to strive for, will be decided at the Conference.

1) Activities

- an E-mail conference on the VO Code of Conduct
- circular letters through which participants will be enabled to exchange views
- 5 regional meetings, one in each continent
- a Global Conference on the Code of Conduct for VOs

2) Output

- A VO Code of Conduct and a strategy on how to promote it
- Increased awareness of the nature of Voluntary Organizations
- Improved transparency and accountability on the part of Voluntary Organizations

Code of Conduct for NGOs

Preamble

1.1 The following represents the work of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working from late 1991 through the NGO Conference in Paris, the outcomes of the Agenda Ya Wananchi, from meeting during the New York PrepCom and in the intervening months up to and including the Global Forum in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992.

1.2 The goal of this NGO Code of Conduct process is to eventually have a Code that NGOs can sign on to.

1.3 We pledge to continue to engage in the process to analyze and deepen this activity and make recommendations that groups may adopt.

1.4 There has been a dramatic growth of community groups and NGOs during the past 10 years. The work of community and citizen groups and organizations and NGOs now constitutes the best option for citizen action to change the forces against a sustainable future.

1.5 In order to build up our constituency base, to truly serve the people within our community / organization, certain ethical and accountable agreements need to be acknowledged.

Principles

An NGO Code of Conduct could contain the following principles:

National and local NGOs (in North and South) should:

- be rooted in issues at home
- have some definable constituency or membership
- have open democratic working systems, gender parity, consultative problem-solving, non-discriminatory practices
- have clear conflict of interest guidelines
- have a code of ethics for staff
- publish an annual report and audited financial statements
- be non-profit, non-party political
- foster justice and equity, alleviate poverty and preserve cultural integrity
- endeavor to enhance the total environment – physical, biological and human
- have a fair wage structure, with a credible scale between highest and lowest paid worker
- be truly with people and not impose their agendas on them

- base all their work on the resources available to the people, their expertize, existing institutions, culture and religions; be self-sufficient while remaining open to the assistance offered by their various partners
- avoid being corrupted both materially and spiritually
- facilitate people's efforts
- share information with all members; set up necessary mechanisms to gather and exchange experiences; and get actively involved in environmental education (awareness-building) and training
- articulate a broad political framework and code of ethics to guide their internal operations and their work with community groups and people's organizations, as well as their relations with the South, NGOs and the North
- ensure the highest levels of accountability, starting with their own constituencies – the people. This includes uncompromising evaluations involving the participation of the local populations.

Campaigns

Northern and Southern NGOs often have non-project or non-funding based relationships. Generally, these relationships are the basis for campaigns to protest certain social or environmental problems in a Northern or Southern country; or the campaigns may be on international issues, like the World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF).

This treaty should be designed to make clear the process of consultation and decision-making among all the participants to facilitate a process of dialogue between Northern and Southern NGOs on campaigns. At this point, we have only questions, not answers:

The overriding principle this treaty seeks to ensure is consultation among NGOs before anyone takes a position that might affect another. But that is not as easy as it seems.

If a group in one country sends out an international action alert about a problem in its country, what obligation does it have to first assure that there is a consensus among the NGOs in that country about that problem? Conversely, what obligation has a group that receives an action alert to first assure that the alert is the result of a consensus position in the country of origin before responding to the action alert?

Who has the obligation to compile a reasonable list of NGOs in each country (without a list it is not possible for groups elsewhere to consult with NGOs in one country before taking positions on issues that might affect that country)?

What constitutes reasonable consultation? How many groups is 'enough'?

How long should the consultation process be allowed to take? Can deadlines be set for responses if there is a hearing or legislative action coming up? What if there is no response – is that consultation?

Can a contract person be chosen in each region or country to facilitate communications and consultation? How would that person be chosen? In a crisis, may that person speak for their constituency without consultation?

What if groups within a region disagree? Who gets listened to? What if regions disagree?

Declaration of Solidarity

Before making public expression of solidarity for NGOs and individuals a proper consultation process should be undertaken to ensure the safety of the affected parties.

Regarding NGOs working outside their country

Northern and Southern NGOs should collaborate on the basis of:

- equitable and genuine partnership
- two-way flow of all information, ideas and experiences
- financial transparency

Southern NGOs not Northern NGOs have the major responsibility for activities within their own countries.

Northern NGOs when working in the South must have transparent advisory systems within the country of operation; there must be transparent criteria for selection of working partners.

Northern NGOs should monitor Northern government / corporate activity in their host country.

Northern NGOs in their host country should live in an appropriate comparative level as counterpart NGOs, not in expatriate style.

Northern NGOs should develop effective policy on international issues.

Because development groups get most of their funding from their national governments, most Northern NGOs hardly question the policies and activities of their governments in the South. On the contrary, they have become accessories to the hidden agendas pursued by their governments and transnational corporations in gaining control over the resources of the South. In order for Northern NGOs to be able to forge genuine people-to-people solidarity, they should:

- build a relationship that is based on mutual respect and collaboration as equal partners, and that fosters self-determination and self-reliance
- use their comparative advantage of easy access to information and pass it on to their partners in the South

- challenge their governments and educate the public in order to change the prevailing inequitable international economic order and development paradigms which have been largely responsible for the deteriorating global environment
- campaign for genuine grassroots democracy in their own countries
- campaign for sustainable life-styles based on their own local resources as much as possible, and paying fair (ecological) prices for imported products.

Action Plan for Follow-up

- Regional focal points to publicize and maximize NGO input
- Broad correspondence
- 1993 meeting to prepare final copy for widespread adoption.

Appendix 3:

UN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
RIO DE JANEIRO JUNE 3 - 14 1992

GREEN ALLIANCE REPORT

I.   SUBSTANTIVE OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE

Many people have written reports and summaries of the conference. Rather than do it again,
I thought it might be more helpful to provide a list of key documents.

- **UNCED Official Documents**

    - **The Climate Convention**
    - **The Biodiversity Convention**
    - **The Forest Principles**
    - **Agenda 21 (40 chapters - a list is attached as Annex I)**
    - **The Rio Declaration**

The NGOs who attended Rio as observers to the UK delegation have been sent preliminary
copies of the official documents, which will not available in final form until the Autumn.
The Green Alliance would be happy to copy the documents but would have to make a
charge. They can also be obtained via electronic mail: for details please contact
Poptel-GeoNet, 30 Naples Street London N1 5AA Tel: 071 249 2948 E-Mail:
GEO2:SUPPORT

Reports and Summaries

- **A Summary of 93 heads of state speeches written June 15; 8 pages; printed in the .
Brazilian Journal 'Terra Viva'.**

- **Earth Summit Bulletin Final Report written June 17; 19 pages; compiled by the
team who produced the indispensable daily Earth Summit Bulletin throughout the
Prepcoms and Rio;** for each chapter of Agenda 21, the Forest Principles and the Rio
Declaration it lists the essentials elements and summarises the final argument.

- **UK Department of the Environment Report written June 23; 12 pages; lists the UK
Government's objectives for the Earth Summit and summarises outcomes, including
chapter by chapter summary of Agenda 21.**

- **Address by Michael Howard at the Natural History Museum June 24; 10 pages;
gives initial Government views on Rio follow-up; brief dicussion of the Darwin
Initiative.**

- **Twelve Days of UNCED written July 8; 11 pages; written by the Issues Director of
U.S. Citizens Network; summaries final outcomes on the key issues; includes a brief
assessment of the NGO Global Forum and NGO performance in general.**

All the above are available from the Green Alliance office. The Earth Summit Bulletin and Twelve Days of UNCED are available on Greennet under gn.en.unced.news 'ESB NO.13 Final Report of UNCED' and gn.en.unced.gener 'Network Final Report on Rio' ·· ·· ·· ·· ·

RSPB and IIED have also produced reports.

II.   GOVERNMENT FOLLOW-UP

Priorities for follow-up are reflected (in very broad terms) in the Lisbon Declaration from the European Council, which the UK Government proposed.   A similar set of points appeared in the final communique from the Munich G7 meeting (copies of both attached as Annexes II and III).

In his speech to the Conference, John Major also announced three specific UK Government follow-up initiatives (A copy of the speech is attached as Annex IV).

(i) The Darwin Initiative

The attached sheet (Annex V) gives some details. The Department of Environment would welcome views from environmental groups, and will be holding a follow-up meeting in the ·Autumn. Please contact Kate Mayes on 071 276 8107.

(ii) Global Technology Partnership Conference

The stated aim is 'to ensure that developing countries can share the benefits of technology through partnership with British companies' and will have a broader relevance than just climate change, to which it was linked in the speech. It will be a one-off initiative, led by the DTI, and costing the Government some £1/4 - £1/2 million.

(iii) Global NGO Forum

This was presented in the speech as 'a major global forum of the NGO community to examine and clarify their role in the practical implementation of Agenda 21' and is scheduled to take place next year, possibly in June. The idea is select (or allow self-selection of) representative NGOs from different regions to come to London to talk about their experiences of Agenda 21 implementation. This could mean anything from grass-roots actions that they have been able to implement themselves, to the realities of lobbying governments on implementation. Then, these groups would be given the opportunity to present their conclusions to a mixture of UN and governmental officials.

The idea raises a number of difficult issues, including:

- Participation: there are a great many NGOs (especially if NGO is interpreted in the broad sense as including industry, science etc) and a great many countries - it will not be easy to come up with a 'representative' selection.

- Breadth of agenda: Agenda 21 and the other UNCED documents cover a vast range of issues - there would have to some selection and prioritisation.
- Format: detailed accounts of 'on-the-ground' experience in various countries, while interesting, may not have universal relevance. At the other extreme, discussion of the problems of lobbying governments could get very quickly into such universal issues as ᵈᵉᵐᵒᶜʳᵃᶜʸ ᵃⁿᵈ ᵃᶜᶜᵒᵘⁿᵗᵃᵇⁱˡⁱᵗʸ ᵇᵘᵗ ᵗʰⁱˢ ᵐⁱᵍʰᵗ ᵇᵉ ᶜᵒⁿˢⁱᵈᵉʳᵉᵈ ᵖᵒˡⁱᵗⁱᶜᵃˡˡʸ embarrasing by participating Governments, and potentially dangerous for some NGOs.
- Organisation: there is an issue over how far NGOs should be directly involved in the organisation, and how far NGOs outside the UK would be consulted.
- Timing: it is ambitious to think of organising an international event in less than a year.

A paper outlining the Government's thinking on the event is expected to be issued for consultation in the early Autumn.

The idea, and in particular its presentation, was not generally well received by NGOs present in Rio. Most felt that they should have been asked for their opinion, or at the very least briefed in advance of the speech. It was particularly embarrassing for the NGOs acting as observers to the UK delegation that they knew nothing of it, and had to deny any ownership of the idea to the press. Despite this initial reaction, many NGOs I spoke to felt it could be a useful exercise if properly handled.

The United Nations Association (UNA) hosted a preliminary discussion on the Forum at a meeting for UK groups who had attended Rio, on 31st August and have organised a further meeting on 4th September.

(iv) Second Anniversary Report on the Environment White Paper

Not specifically mentioned in the speech, but with obvious relevance to UNCED follow-up, is the second anniversary report on 'This Common Inheritance', the Government's White Paper on environment, which is due in early October. The issue for Government and NGOs alike is whether the 'White Paper process' can be adapted to produce the 'National Sustainability Plan' called for in several of the UNCED documents including Chapter 8 'Integrating environment and development in decision-making'. Since no-one has very developed ideas as to what a 'Sustainability Plan' would look like, this is a difficult question to answer.

In preliminary discussions with officials in Rio, some of the NGOs acting as observers to the delegation suggested that this year's anniversary report should at least start to acknowledge that there are policy areas outside those traditionally in the remit of environment that are crucial to achieving 'sustainability'. At national level these include most notably transport, energy, industry and agriculture policy as well as aspects of economic policy such as internalising environmental costs and valuing environmental resources.

At international level, many NGOs want to see addressed the UK's role in policy areas such as trade, aid, debt, technology transfer, and in institutions including the UN, World Bank and IMF; the rationale being that all these are central to 'development' and thus 'sustainable development' in both industrialised and less industrialised countries. One possibility is that the second anniversary report could have at least a chapter acknowledging these issues, with a view to expansion in subsequent reports. The orginal White Paper did include a chapter on 'Britain and the World Environment' which touched, albeit briefly, on debt and population

as well as dealing with global environmental resources . The first anniversary report had a similar level of coverage.

The DOE issued a note asking for comments on the second anniversary report process (this has been circulated to the 'Putting our own House in Order' group). However, they have consistently made it clear that this October's effort will look very much like last year's, and that effort to produce a 'National Sustainablity Plan' will not begin in earnest until next year. ~~ ... . DOE ... been canvassing the views of some groups as to what a sustainability plan should include.

III. NGO ROLE IN FOLLOW-UP

The participation of a large number of NGOs in the UNCED process, and the issue of participation in follow-up, have raised some key questions. I thought it might be helpful to lay some of these out below.

Definitions

In the past the term 'NGO' has been used primarly to describe pressure groups, or public interest groups, working on environment and development issues. *At the 1990 Bergen Ministerial conference on environment, five groupings of NGOs were recognised - environment (taken to include development), youth, industry, science and labour. In the UNCED process, all these groupings were recognised. The NGOs with observer status on the UK delegation also included representatives of local authorities and of one of the opposition political parties. Some groups now disagree with this broad interpretion of the term 'NGO' and would prefer it to be brought back to apply primarily to environment and development interests.* To avoid confusion, I will refer to 'environment and development groups' in the following discussion.

Coverage

The UNCED outcomes (the two conventions, forest principles, Rio declaration & Agenda 21) amount to a huge agenda and encompass national and international actions. Can, or should, environment and development groups cover the whole agenda? The 'UNEP-UK NGO Agenda' and 'Putting our own house in order' both lay out actions to be pursued by Government, but both are partial. On the other hand, in as much as both are selective, they could be seen to represent priorities. This could be more important than full coverage.

One action that might be helpful would be to compile a database of which groups are covering which areas. The Green Alliance did this for work on the 1989 Environmental Protection Bill, and it proved useful for highlighting significant gaps.

Linkage

UNCED has highlighted the fact that environment and development NGOs in the UK operate largely in isolation from each other. Involvement in the UNCED process has begun to bring the two communities together. Issues where there are clear overlaps of interest, if not always

stance, include those to do with the international economic order (ie. debt, aid, trade); those to do with institutions delivering sustainable development; and concepts such as Primary Environmental Care (PEC) which are seen to have Northern as well as Southern relevance.

Given these new linkages, the question arises: how are the full range of environment and development groups to be co-ordinated in pursuit of follow-up activities, if at all? The experience of UNEP-UK has been that it is difficult to co-ordinate a broad range of groups over the full agenda - there is simply too much to disagree on as well as agree on. Even pulling together the comparatively small number of environment groups involved in 'putting our own house in order' involved sustained effort.

It might be worth considering pursuing follow-up in theme-specific groups. This approach evolved spontaneously during the PrepComs amongst international NGOs eg.' there was a poverty and consumption group, a climate group, an institutions group etc. In Rio, such 'ad-hoc' groups produced 'alternative treaties' ie. NGO versions of the subjects under discussion by governments; they included treaties on waste, consumption and lifestyle, trade, and debt. Some of these may form the basis of on-going international networks. The Green Alliance has run successful subject-specific joint lobbying efforts in the past, in particular on pesticides regulation. The advantage is involvement only of people who are really interested; the disadvantage could be failing to acquire a rounded view of the agenda. In this country, groups are already underway linking aid and environment, and looking at the development of the proposed UN Sustainable Development Commission.

Central to the issue of linkage is what linkage is expected to achieve. Pure sharing of information and updating is relatively easy, but may be considered to be too time-consuming to be worthwhile. Producing common positions and platforms undoubtedly has an effect on government, but the effect needs to be considered relative to the time and effort needed to achieve consensus. Agreeing priorities areas for action without necessarily agreeing joint action is another possibility.

Consensus-building brings in another major question that arose during the UNCED process - can NGOs with very different interests work together? This is particular pertinent where the broad definition of NGOs is being used ie. involving industry, science and union interests.

Relationship to Government

Having NGOs with observer status on the UK Government delegation was an experiment on both sides, but one that was not very fully debated within the NGO community before the event. Here the term NGO was used in the broad sense, and the government gave observer status to fourteen individuals, including 2 from environmental groups, 2 from development groups, 2 from local authorities, 2 from industry, 1 from unions, 1 from the scientific community, 1 from youth, plus representives from UNEP-UK, United Nations Association, and the Labour Party.

Some of the UK environment and development groups present in Rio seemed unaware of the exact nature of the access gained by those attached to the delegation, so it was difficult to have a constructive debate about the implications of such access. Access was actually more limited than many people thought - for instance, those with observer status had access to the conference working sessions (otherwise closed to NGOs) but did not have access to the

confidential official briefing documents - in fact on occasion the press were given more detailed information than the NGO observers. If the experiment is to be repeated in other fora, more attention must be paid to discussing the pros and cons of the relationship.

For UNCED follow-up, the question is what form of dialogue should exist between NGOs and Government. This brings in all the questions raised under 'linkage' above, with the added dimension of having to ensure that coherent positions are presented to policy makers. It will also be important to get the Government to clarify what *they* expect from liaison eg. how far they expect consensus between the groups coming to them; what subjects they want covered; which bits of the Governmental machinery should have the views of NGOs fed into them; what definition of NGO is being used. Groups might also want to consider at what point they might want to terminate the relationship if no concrete improvements in Government policy can be identified.

UNEP-UK

UNEP-UK were responsible for a consultation process amongst a broad range of NGOs in preparation for UNCED, and for feeding views into the UK Government. A number of groups have been circulated with a questionnaire asking for details of existing networks and liaison arrangements, in order to discuss what groupings might be appropriate for UNCED follow-up. For details, please contact Richard Sandbrook at IIED, 071 388 2117.

Julie Hill
The Green Alliance
July 1992

Appendix 4:

STICHTING GREENPEACE COUNCIL
GREENPEACE international

21 October 1992

[NOTE: this letter was sent to representatives of 175 governments at their permanent missions to the UN in New York City. This copy is being sent to several UN officials, NGOs and others. For more information, contact Clif. Curtis. or his assistant, Lydia Oberholtzer, in Washington, D.C. (Tel: 202/462-1177 Fax: 202/462-4507).]

Re: UNCED/UNGA: Commission on Sustainable Development

Dear [representative]:

I am writing to convey to you the initial views of Greenpeace International on the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). It is my hope that these views will be given sympathetic consideration by you and your government in the forthcoming UN General Assembly discussions.

The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro this past June was an historic occasion. Representatives of governments, the UN system, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry, media and others differ as to the "success" or "failure" of UNCED, depending on their criteria. But no one has questioned the critical importance of that first global summit of the post-Cold War era in focusing attention on, and heightening awareness of, critical environment and development issues.

The challenge that faced UNCED was nothing less than to rescue the planet and its capacity to support human life — to seize the moment and set in motion the economic, political, social and technological transformation that the world plainly requires. For Greenpeace International, the challenge and opportunity for UNCED was, and remains, the pursuit and achievement of ecologically sound and socially equitable development. It is our hope that you, and your government, will support and champion actions and reforms that are desperately needed to achieve such development.

At this 47th session of the UN General Assembly, there are a number of important UNCED-followup tasks facing governments. Among others, those include: creation of a negotiating process leading to a convention on desertification by June 1994; decisions regarding the future negotiating process for the climate change convention; direction

regarding UN conferences in 1993 concerned with small island developing States, and with straddling and highly migratory fish stocks; much greater financial commitments by the North to assist the South, broadly defined, in meeting UNCED-related initiatives; and the establishment and strengthening of institutional structures within the UN system that focus on UNCED concerns.

In this letter, Greenpeace International asks you to consider and support the establishment of a strong, effective Commission on Sustainable Development, building on the framework agreed to in Agenda 21. While other important UNCED-related actions are needed, in our view the General Assembly's actions on the CSD, in combination with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's UNCED-related decisions, will be interpreted internationally as a key indicator of governments' commitment to UNCED implementation.

The Secretary-General's second round of UN reforms in the next 2-4 months is critical to effective implementation of UNCED within the UN system. Given their relevance to UNGA actions, the sooner those decisions are made, the better. In New York and elsewhere, though, anticipation is tempered by concern as to whether the Secretary-General's actions will be a sufficient response to the challenges at hand.

Despite the importance of the Secretary-General's reform efforts, it is clear that the General Assembly needs to adopt, expeditiously, an enabling resolution formally establishing an effective CSD. Hopefully, such a resolution will quickly be agreed to in the Second Committee's working group chaired by Ambassador Razali of Malaysia, and adopted by the full General Assembly this year, thereby allowing the Commission to be addressed at ECOSOC's early 1993 organizational session, and to hold its first meeting by May of 1993.

There are a number of CSD issues that require resolution by the General Assembly, building upon the Agenda 21 framework agreed to by governments in Rio de Janeiro. Of those, Greenpeace International would like to highlight for your consideration and support a few issues pertaining to the mandate, structure, rules of procedure and NGO participation. (For your convenience, attached is a copy of the Agenda 21 text on the CSD).

* Mandate

As stated in Agenda 21 (38.13), the CSD would have several related functions. The central issue for Greenpeace is whether the CSD has, as a minimum requirement, a clear mandate to ensure effective implementation of Agenda 21. It should not be a token gesture, nor a sort of government "greenwash". It must have a real institutional, as well as moral, authority and power of initiative. By way of example, we consider that the CSD must be given both the capacity and authority to:

- monitor Agenda 21 implementation, especially on financial and technology transfer issues, and provide oversight with respect to next steps in relation to the climate and biodiversity conventions and forest principles;

- assess and comment on the quality and adequacy of government, international agency (World Bank, IMF, UNDP, UNEP, FAO etc.) and private sector implementation of Rio commitments; and

- pursue other important subjects ignored or downplayed by UNCED (e.g., environment/development impacts of international trade, consumption patterns, aid, debt, and transnational corporations).

From Greenpeace's perspective, the CSD is best suited to monitor and assess the role of international agencies and transnational entities. Certainly, national governments have to make major commitments to UNCED implementation (e.g., Northern reform of consumption patterns), and the CSD must not ignore those. But given the potential for information and work-related overload, the CSD is likely to be most effective or useful in focusing on international initiatives.

Monitoring and assessment by the CSD, for example, need to include the World Bank and other Bretton Woods institutions. Given the extremely disappointing level of financial commitments made, to date, by the North to assist the South in the implementation of UNCED initiatives, the need for effective, targeted assistance by those institutions is critical.

Unfortunately, the commitment of institutions like the World Bank to reforms in governance and other areas remains suspect, at best. The Bank has yet to adopt, for example, a policy on global warming or provide borrowers with least-cost analysis, including demand-side management, for energy projects. Strengthened institutional connections between the Bretton Woods institutions and UN departments, agencies and programs are needed, and the CSD could assist in that effort.

* Structure

A number of CSD issues involve matters of structure. As used here, structure includes the rank of the CSD's chief executive officer, and its institutional home within the UN system.

With respect to the level of the head of the Commission, our view is pretty basic: s/he has to be of sufficiently high rank to ensure that those in charge of key UN departments and agencies will take that person, and his/her staff, seriously. From that perspective, given the rank of others who oversee departments and agencies that carry out important UNCED initiatives, the CSD should be headed by a UN official at least as high in rank as Director-General. Along these same lines, if the Secretary-General's reforms were to include creation of a new Deputy Secretary-General position encompassing environment/ development responsibilities, that individual also should head the Commission's Secretariat.

Regarding its institutional home, in Greenpeace International's view the CSD Secretariat needs to be an independent unit, reporting directly to the Secretary-General. While some have suggested the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD) as the most

appropriate "home", we believe such placement would hinder the Commission's review and monitoring functions of that Department, as well as other UN bodies it would be dealing with (e g , UNEP, UNDP and UNCTAD -- each of which are outside DESD; have their own governing boards; and report directly to the Secretary-General).

* Rules of procedure

Under this heading, several issues will be considered, including which rules of procedure the Commission will use, what reporting or decision making requirements will be followed, and what access and role NGOs will have. In Greenpeace International's view, the procedures chosen on these issues are among the most critical to be decided by the UNGA.

Regarding the rules to be used, there are three options: ECOSOC's rules; the rules of procedure of functional commissions; or rules to be drawn up by the CSD itself; once constituted. Given the special tasks facing the Commission, there is a lot-of-merit in that body creating its own rules of procedure. The CSD will be dealing with an evolving agenda of issues and actors, as well as evolving ways of working with different parties. While operating within its terms of reference, it needs the freedom to adapt, and to shift directions without the risk of delays occasioned by going back to ECOSOC for approval. It also would facilitate flexibility in responding to Agenda 21's call for strengthened participation in the Commission's work by relevant intergovernmental organizations and NGOs.

The rules of procedure, broadly defined, also should address reporting and decision-making mechanisms and requirements. While the CSD would report to ECOSOC "in the context of the Council's role under the Charter vis-a-vis the General Assembly" (38.11), Greenpeace International believes the CSD also needs to ensure effective interactions with the General Assembly and the Security Council. Along those lines, we support the idea of a special session of the UNGA focused on UNCED implementation, no later than 1997.

Concerning decision making, new approaches are needed, and should be considered within the CSD. Having observed and participated in the UNCED process, as well as many other -issue-specific treaty and other negotiating forums within the UN system, Greenpeace International believes that, while consensus decision making plays an important role, it can, on occasion, substantially hinder and undercut necessary reforms. This recommendation further attests to the importance of broader reforms, including the UN Charter review in conjunction with its 50th anniversary. - e.g., the need to revise the Security Council's permanent member "veto" power rule, as well as voting requirements (e.g., qualified majority and/or two-chamber approaches) in the UNGA and other Charter bodies.

* NGO participation

Concerning NGO participation, Agenda 21 is straightforward in saying that NGO access to UNCED-related forums like the CSD will adhere to "accreditation based on the procedures used in [UNCED]" (38 44). That approach makes a lot of sense, and was reaffirmed by very

positive statements regarding NGOs made in Rio de Janeiro last June by dozens of heads of state/government. At present, ECOSOC's rules only address the more traditional categories of international NGOs. Those organizations, which includes Greenpeace, certainly are relevant, but such procedures exclude critically important local and national NGOs from both the North and South.

While we agree with the use of UNCED procedures as the basis for CSD accreditation of NGOs, that in no way means that UNCED was a "perfect" model for future relationships among NGOs and the CSD, other parts of the UN system, and governments. In the UNCED process, for example, many working groups where important issues were negotiated were inappropriately closed to NGO observers. As the rules of procedures are developed, it is essential that the CSD be "transparent", ensure public access to information, and provide assistance to NGOs wanting to participate (e.g., through an Ombudsbureau).

On each of the above issues, it is Greenpeace International's hope that you, and your government, will give serious consideration and support to the approaches we have recommended. In this regard, it is our hope that you will convey our views to your capital. Moreover, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in New York to discuss these matters further.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the UNCED legacy is one contributes significantly to solving the environment and development challenges in way benefit all the planet's inhabitants.

Sincerely yours,

Clifton Curtis
Political Division
Greenpeace International
(202) 319-2473

Attachment

Appendix 5:

* Bread for the World * Center for the Development of International Law * Environmental l
Environment and Energy Study Institute * Friends of the Earth * International Council of V.
* National Audubon Society * National Wildlife Federation * Natural Resources Defense Cou
* Panos Institute * Sierra Club * Union of Concerned Scientists * United Nations Associatioi

Washington, October 23, 1992

Dear Colleagues:

At the first meeting of the UN General Assembly since the Earth Summit, the
implementation of UNCED agreements will be debated. The centerpiece of this debat
be the creation of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

On November 2, we expect the General Assembly to start three to four days of gi
debate on UNCED follow-up. Negotiations over the CSD and other UNCED follow-i
then move into a special working group of the GA Second Committee, which will mei
through November and into December. A primary task of the working group will be t
negotiate a resolution establishing the CSD. We understand that Ambassador Ismail Ri
of Malaysia will head this working group. The language pertaining to the role of the .
nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other major groups and the stature, scope,
openness of the new body will feature prominently in these discussions.

As you know, pressures to return to "business as usual" already threaten to under.
much of the momentum created by UNCED. There is still time for NGOs and others
make their views known when the debate begins in the GA. It is vital that the voices
perspectives of the independent sector be heard, by both governments and the UN Sec
General, expressing support for the establishment of an effective CSD and for the acti
participation of NGOs and major groups in the work of the new Commission.

We urge you to communicate with your governments before November 2 to discu
their positions regarding the CSD. We hope that you will voice your support for provi
which allow for full participation of international, national, and local NGOs and majoi
groups in the works of the Commission (as was agreed to at UNCED). If you think :
may be able to come to New York to observe the General Assembly negotiations in
November and/or December, 1992 — or send another representative — we urge you to
so. A strong NGO presence in New York could prove to be decisive.

What is at issue? We believe that among the important elements that should be
addressed in the CSD resolution are:

The mandate:
> Chapter 38.11 of Agenda 21 recommends the creation of a CSD to "ensure
> effective follow-up of the Conference, as well as to enhance international
> cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for
> the integration of environment and development issues, and to examine the
> progress of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and

international levels. "

38.11 recommends that "the Commission should provide for active involvement of organs, programs and organizations of the UN system, international financial institutions and other relevant intergovernmental organizations." Therefore:

1. The mandate should be broad enough to allow the Commission to grow into an effective and respected political force in the United Nations.

2. The mandate should not be limited to reviewing the agreements reached at UNCED, but should be forward-looking, including new agreements based on evolving political, economic and social concerns and emerging scientific understanding.

Organization:
    1. The Secretariat of the Commission should have the resources and staff it needs, and independence and stature within the U.N. system to allow it to review the work of other U.N. bodies.

2. The CSD should be truly "high-level," preferably with a ministerial segment.

3. The CSD should adopt its own rules of procedure (which would give it the authority to establish its own NGO participation procedures, set up subsidiary bodies or initiate consultative processes involving other international organizations and NGOs and other independent groups, and make studies and recommendations on its own initiative).

4. The CSD should, as agreed in Chapter 38 of Agenda 21, use the NGO accreditation procedures used at UNCED. This will ensure that NGOs that participated in UNCED will be able to participate in the work of the CSD. Additionally, the UNCED accreditation procedures should be used to accept other "relevant and competent" NGOs for the CSD meetings and the working groups it may set up. (Paragraph 38.44 also recommended that procedures should be established for an expanded role for NGOs within the UN system.)
    Additional procedures will need to be developed for receiving meaningful input from NGOs such as the working-party model used in the UNCED pre-paratory process, and the "Ombudsbureau" proposed by the Netherlands.

5. The CSD should have the mandate and resources to provide and receive information to and from governments, UN bodies, other international organizations, including public financial institutions, international agreements, and NGOs.

While some issues related to the CSD were already addressed by governments during the negotiations of Chapter 38 of Agenda 21, many important questions were left open for resolution by the General Assembly. In a few areas, there may be attempts to renegotiate issues agreed to at UNCED. For example, although Chapter 38 specifies that NGOs should participate in the UN's follow-up to UNCED, based on the UNCED accreditation procedures, some are proposing that the CSD use the rules of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). These rules favor well-established international NGOs and are likely not to enable full participation of national and local grassroots groups.

We would like to have your comments on the above outlined points. Also, please tell us of any points we may have overlooked. We hope that this material can be of help to you in your work. Please feel free to share this letter with all who might be interested in this matter. If you have developed proposals and recommendations to your government or the UN Secretary General, please send a copy to: Angela Harkavy, National Wildlife Federation, 400 16th St. NW #502, Washington DC, 20036
Tel:(202)797-6609 — Fax: (202)797-5486 electronic mail-- econet:nwfip

Sincerely,

Nancy Alexander, Bread for the World (BFW)
William Pace, Center for Development of International Law (CDIL),
      International NGO Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters
Scott Hajost, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)
Gareth Porter, Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI)
Jim Barnes, Friends of the Earth (FOE)
Delmar Blasco, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
Charlotte Fox, National Audubon Society (NAS)
Barbara J. Bramble / Angela Harkavy National Wildlife Federation (NWF)
Elizabeth Barratt-Brown, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
Donald Edwards, PANOS Institute
Larry Williams, Sierra Club
Alden Meyer, Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)
Kathy Sessions, United Nations Association USA (UNA)

NOTE from International NGO Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters
(INTGLIM):
    ■ Let's communicate! We have established a conference on econet for
    exchange of information and analysis about the Commission — entitled
    "unced.csd" — which might be of some benefit.

Appendix 6:

Creation of an Interim Networking Group of NGOs to Monitor Establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development

[Document prepared by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) end of 1992]

International NGO Network on the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

During the 47th UN General Assembly debate and negotiations on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and indigenous peoples from many regions of the world met. They agreed to continue to organize as an interim networking group to monitor the proceedings at the U.N. as it establishes a Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), until the first substantive session of the CSD concludes.

The primary purposes of the networking group will be to provide information-sharing, clearing house and networking services. NGO-CSD will also help facilitate and organize the input of NGOs and indigenous groups during the establishment of the CSD. NGO-CSD will work with other similar working groups, networks and organizations to hold meetings and provide fora for NGOs and major groups to discuss issues relating to the CSD.

The NGO-CSD will not take positions or speak on behalf of the group, except in relation to the following:

1   To work to achieve open and inclusive policies and procedures for the involvement of NGOs and major groups in the work of the CSD, based upon the procedures used in UNCED.

In particular, taking into account the rules of procedure for UNCED; decisions 1/1 and 2/1 (especially paragraphs (2e) and (4)) of the Preparatory Committee for UNCED; paragraphs 38.11 and 38.44 of Agenda 21, NGO-CSD will work for the adoption of procedures which provide that NGOs and major groups which were accredited to UNCED shall be deemed to have satisfied the requirements for accreditation to the CSD. It is vital that the Secretary-General, ECOSOC and the

CSD adopt procedures which will allow UNCED accredited NGOs and major groups to participate in the initial meetings of the CSD

2   In addition, the UNCED procedures for the accreditation of NGOs and major groups should be the basis for accrediting NGOs and major groups who apply to participate in the CSD in the future

3   Building upon the precedent implemented during PrepCom IV of UNCED, NGO-CSD will work for adoption of arrangements and procedures by the CSD which will allow NGOs and major groups participating in the meetings of the CSD to receive documentation and to hold NGO-Government dialogues and NGO forums utilizing the conference and interpreting facilities of the UN.

We invite other NGOs and major groups from all regions to network with us on the wide range of issues relating to the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to support the mandates above.

Appendix 7:

REPORT ON THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

KATHY SESSIONS

JULY 1993

Exactly one year after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and
Development (UNCED), the new United Nations Commission on Sustainable
Development (CSD) held its first substantive session at U.N. headquarters in New York
from June 14-25. The CSD was created to review progress towards the goals established
at UNCED — particularly the implementation of Agenda 21, the broad action plan
adopted at UNCED — as well as a forum for ongoing discussion of sustainable
development issues.

I attended the CSD session as a non-governmental member of the U.S. delegation, having
been nominated by the Citizens Network for Sustainable Development (a broad coalition
of U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations, of which UNA-USA is an active member)
and selected by the Department of State. Among my functions: serving as a liaison
between nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the delegation, including organizing
regular meetings between delegation members and NGOs; advising the delegation on
substantive issues, including preparation of a paper on options for CSD intersessional
activities; and observing CSD meetings. The other public sector member of the U.S.
delegation was Norine Kennedy of the U.S. Council of International Business.

Attending the CSD session were representatives of the 53 states which currently sit on the
Commission, as well as representatives of other interested states, international
organizations, and some 300 accredited NGOs.

WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE SESSION

The Commission opened with a ceremony featuring speeches by the CSD Chairman,
Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia; U.N. Under Secretary General for Policy
Coordination and Sustainable Development Nitin Desai, speaking for the Secretary
General; Ambassador Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg, Brazil's Permanent Representative to the
U.N.; and Vice President Al Gore. Gore's speech emphasized the urgency of global
environmental and population problems and called for greater national responsibility and
new international partnerships. The speech was very well-received, both because the
presence of the Vice President was seen as a demonstration of keen U.S. interest in the
CSD and because it represented the first time a U.S. spokesperson in a U.N. setting so
openly acknowledged the disproportionate impacts on the earth of persons living in the
United States and other industrialized countries.

After the opening, most of the session was devoted to negotiations over the ways in
which the Commission will do its work. Given that the CSD's primary mandate is to
review national and international implementation of Agenda 21 — which includes some
2500 recommendations in 150 program areas — this was no small task. Because the main
focus was on procedure less than substance, the negotiations tended to be somewhat dry
and tedious. Many participants, including numerous veterans of the UNCED process,
appeared to have hoped for a more substantive session, particularly given that the CSD
meeting was the first global gathering on sustainable development since UNCED. And
few participants — either from governments or NGOs — came sufficiently prepared for the
procedural agenda. The procedural focus, coupled with perhaps unrealistic expectations,
exacerbated latent suspicions that the Commission might prove to be a "talk shop"
producing little of substance.

Further dampening the tenor of discussion was the scarcity of financial resources available for sustainable development. At UNCED, governments had agreed that significant new funds would be necessary to implement Agenda 21 and the other Rio agreements, but few industrialized countries were unable to come up with significant pledges at that June 1992 meeting. One year later, not only were new pledges apparently not forthcoming, but cuts to existing development assistance had just been announced at the United Nations Development Program's Governing Council meeting just preceding the CSD session.

Despite these concerns, the results of the negotiations on the CSD's working methods were generally quite positive, including agreements on:

(1) a three-year agenda, through which the Commission will review in- depth roughly a third of Agenda 21 each year from 1994-1996, followed by an overall review of Agenda 21 in 1997 in preparation for the General Assembly's Agenda 21 review that year. Under this three- year agenda, each CSD session will focus on certain "cross-sectoral" issues, such as finance, technology, poverty, consumption, and roles of major groups; as well as on certain clusters of "sectoral" issues. The sectoral clusters scheduled for consideration in 1994 are (a) health, human settlements, and freshwater; and (b) toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes.

(2) reporting processes to channel information on efforts to implement Agenda 21 into the CSD for its review. The annual reporting processes, intended to focus on those issues under consideration by the CSD that year, will include submissions both from national governments and from international organizations. The CSD secretariat will receive and analyze these submissions and produce consolidated reports of efforts to implement Agenda 21 at the national and international levels. Non-governmental organizations may contribute to these reports, both through submissions to national governments and through submissions directly to the CSD secretariat.

(3) intersessional meetings to prepare for the next annual CSD session. The Commission agreed to establish two intersessional working groups, one to tackle issues of financial resources and the other to focus on issues of technology transfer, cooperation and capacity-building. These working groups, under the direction of the CSD's bureau of officers, will be made of governments who will nominate experts to participate; they are ad hoc, intended as experiments in intersessional preparation rather than as permanent fixtures. A number of governments made offers to host expert meetings on the sectoral issues being taken up by the CSD next year as well; while these meetings will not be part of the official CSD process, they are expected to provide considerable substantive input to the CSD's work.

The Commission also negotiated decisions on issues of financial assistance, technology, and progress made by the U.N. system in incorporating UNCED decisions.

The June session took some important first steps towards establishing the CSD's standing as a forum which will review the performance of relevant U.N. agencies and programs and of international financial institutions. Some twenty-two representatives of U.N. bodies attended the CSD session, making presentations of their respective organizations' efforts related to sustainable development, and engaging in dialogue with CSD members and NGO observers. Several of the CSD decisions include specific policy recommendations to other international organizations, including to the Global Environment Facility, reaffirming initial hopes that the Commission may become an effective mechanism for monitoring international organizations' performance as well as for building consensus on new directions for international policies and activities.

On Wednesday and Thursday of the last week of the session, the CSD held a high-level segment which was attended by some 46 ministers from national governments as well as 40 ambassadors and numerous NGOs. The ministerial meeting was surprisingly lively: while some ministers could not refrain from reading prepared statements, many offered strong comments affirming their governments' commitment both to the CSD and to implementing sustainable development at home, and pledging to use the CSD as a forum to give political direction to the international system, not just as a meeting of technicians or diplomats.

A long series of offers by ministers to host experts' meetings began to seem almost like a battle for greatest demonstrations of commitments, perhaps topped by the statement on the last afternoon by U.S. Under- Secretary of State-Designate Tim Wirth announcing a joint U.S.- Colombian partnership to help prepare for the CSD's intersessional working group on technology issues. (This offer had considerable political symbolism: suggesting a new North-South partnership, with Colombia having served as the chair of the Group of 77 developing countries; and the issues of technology transfer having been among the most contentious for the Bush Administration during the UNCED process.) Pledges for increased financial assistance by Japan, among others, also were well-received. Another positive feature of the ministerial session was the inclusion of NGO and indigenous spokespersons in the ministers' meeting and the broad acceptance of the contributions to be made by NGOs.

NGOs AT THE CSD

There were some three hundred-odd accredited NGOs at the Commission meeting, about 130 of which were U.S.-based. NGOs held daily strategy meetings every morning, organized into about 20 meetings each day of various regional and sectoral caucuses, produced oral and written statements, observed CSD sessions, and lobbied government delegates. UNA-USA and the Citizens Network for Sustainable Development collaborated with the Earth Council, the United Methodist Church's Women's Division, the Quaker UN Office, the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC, the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) to operate an NGO Host Center across the street from the UN, providing meeting space, daily calendars, briefings, and other information services for NGOs attending the CSD meeting. Participation of Southern NGOs was facilitated by travel funds provided through NGLS (from the Government of Canada and Cape 2000), the Netherlands Committee of the IUCN, WEDO, UNA-USA, and others.

The majority of the NGOs in attendance were advocacy groups; many of these had participated in the UNCED process, and many came to the CSD meeting with a specific issue of primary concern (e.g., forests, structural adjustment, climate, militarism). Many of the NGO meetings were only indirectly related to the CSD negotiations, given greater NGO interests in (and knowledge of) sectoral and political issues rather than procedural ones. The absence of a functioning NGO coordinating committee also meant that considerable time was spent discussing ways in which the NGOs might self-organize.

These constraints notwithstanding, a number of NGOs made effective interventions into the official process. And the relationship between NGOs, the CSD secretariat and governments was quite positive, with a number of ministers at the high-level segment affirming the importance of NGO participation in future CSD sessions.

There's work still to be done: while many NGOs at the CSD session, particularly those from developing countries, expressed a desire for better communication, information-sharing and strategizing among NGOs interested in the CSD, the June session ended with no organizational plan for ongoing NGO work. It is also important that

efforts are made to reach out to nongovernmental groups and institutions with expertise in the specific issues to be considered by the CSD next year, to ensure that those with the most to contribute to the process each year are involved.

US DELEGATION

The U.S. delegation enjoyed an unusually warm reception to its statements at the CSD session, marking a distinct change from the experience of the Bush Administration throughout the UNCED process. Delegation members held regular meetings with U.S. NGOs, including one led by Ambassador Elinor Constable and two by Under-Secretary of State-Designate Tim Wirth. Statements made by the Vice President, by Wirth, and by EPA Administrator Carol Browner -- emphasizing national responsibilities and international partnerships -- were all very well-received, both by NGOs and by other governments. The main criticism heard concerned the lack of new U.S. financial assistance, a criticism made of most industrial countries. During negotiating sessions, U.S. representatives at times appeared to be reviving old U.S. habits, for example by objecting to the inclusion of references to "lifestyles" in the guidelines for national reports on sustainable production and consumption patterns (then later withdrawing the objection). These incidents were, however, overshadowed by the very positive reactions to perceived changes in U.S. policy and attitude.

What remains to be seen is whether the new rhetorical commitments -- to the CSD, to sustainable development, to new approaches to international negotiations -- will be backed up by actually policy changes and financial offerings. The first test will be the success of the U.S.-Colombian partnership to prepare for the intersessional working group on technology transfer and cooperation.

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For a more complete summary of the June 1993 CSD session, see "Earth Negotiations Bulletin," Vol. 5, No. 12, 28 June 1993, published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development. Available from IISD, 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0Y4, Canada, or on the APC's econet computer conference "csd.general".

Appendix 8:

CONTEXT

The International NGO Forum (INGOF) is a group of existing networks, coalitions and initiatives wh are interested in working together internationally on alternatives to the dominant economic developm models. Its focus is to develop a credible set of alternative proposals to the present social economic political system which is inequitable and unsustainable. It will link international, national and local organizations who are working in research, analysis and practical experimentation in order to learn fr experience and propose and test alternatives. The process within the group aims to be open, democra and transparent.

The process began during the preparatory phase of UNCED and created a series of NGO statements called the Alternative NGO Treaties. The Treaties were intended to be agreements on principles and commitments for NGO action on environment and development issues regardless of what government decided at Rio. A number of the NGO Treaties have been used successfully in many countries in a variety of ways since they were developed in Rio. However underlying many of the Treaties is a common thread illustrating the lack of substantive credible alternative models.

FOUR PROPOSITIONS UNDERLYING THIS PROPOSAL

I) The cause of the environment/development crisis in the world is based in the dominant econom model. Therefore NGOs need credible and coherent alternatives to propose, which we do not ye have.

II) NGOs and people's organizations can help develop this alternative vision.

III) An innovative dialogue/"negotiating" process (using facilitators and regional and gender balanced coordinators) was developed for preparing the Alternative Treaties. This can be further refined ar used to help the NGO discussion of fundamental alternatives.

IV) In this way, the International NGO Forum (INGOF) can help NGOs step back from the busy cr of immediate lobbying and public education, to facilitate a dialogue among South/North/East/We NGOs on new fundamental alternatives. The results of this dialogue will feed into ongoing NGC work on the CSD, the Social Summit and others.

PROPOSED ELEMENTS FOR WORKPLAN

The objective is not to duplicate initiatives of other networks or occupy their political space. Instead, will draw upon work that is already being done (including the NGO Treaties). The process will bring together groups who want to work together and contribute to the development of fundamental altern: tives. There are several key pieces of the new paradigm that are missing and need special attention. Conversations so far indicate a strong interest in the following topics being included in the work pla:

1. Accountable, democratic decision-making institutions, for both governments and NGOs, includin financial institutions.
2. Alternative economic models that promote socially and ecologically sustainable development.
3. Visions and values of sustainable communities in sustainable societies. Elements of sustainabilit

PROCESS TO GET STARTED

I. Planning meeting in each region:
    agree on a process to identify groups who would like to work together internationally to develop
    alternatives.

II. Regional and Sub-regional meetings
    (funds received will support meetings in the South, Eastern and Central Europe):
    - to share experiences, successes and failures in using the treaties so far, and the participants' ideas on how to adapt them for future use.
    - to discuss their goals for international cooperative work.
    - to decide on the priority subjects for an international work plan on fundamental alternatives.
    - to select a mechanism for coordination of action (i.e. regional committee or existing network, etc.)
    - to decide which organizations want to cooperate on this work plan and how they want to contribu
    - to discuss resource needs (capacity building needs)and other concerns that would facilitate inter-
      regional NGO cooperation on this joint work plan (for example, funding needs to support NGO
      input into the work plan, or perhaps negotiation of an NGO Cooperation Treaty).
    - to decide on a member for each sub-region to replace existing INGOF Steering Committee, and
      delegates to attend Inter-regional meeting.

III. Inter-regional Meeting.
    - to discuss input from regional and sub-regional meetings.
    - to agree on how NGO networks and regions can cooperate on a joint work plan (perhaps an NG
      Cooperation Treaty).
    - to agree on a set of priority issues for the work plan.
    - to agree on the first stage of the work plan, including division of labor.

The process will bring together groups who want to work together and contribute to the development c
a larger alternatives

Time Line

The proposed phase II of the INGOF process would culminate with the Inter-regional meeting, plannec
to take place in October or November 1994. The INGOF process should allow the NGO community to
articulate some fundamental alternatives and a plan to work together on them by then. The process
should be useful to participating NGOs and networks in their work around different UN and internatio:
negotiations. For instance, it is proposed that NGOs collaborating in the INGOF process aim to make
collective contribution on fundamental alternatives to the Social Development Summit.

NOTES:

1. The INGOF steering committee has selected a five-member "executive committee" composed of o:
    co-chair from each continent.

2: See attached for a list of current members of Steering Committee.

3: If your NGO or network is interested in participating in that process, contact a committee membei
    your respective region.

Appendix 9:

Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development
Division for Sustainable Development
Human Development, Intitutions and Technology Branch

DRAFT

FRAMEWORKS FOR THE LONG, MEDIUM AND SHORT-TERM ON MAJOR GROUPS RELATED ACTIVITIES OF THE CSD SECRETARIAT

Designing Sustainable Development Division functions related to Major Groups

A Preliminary Proposal

UNCED achieved two very important results beyond the adopted resolutions: (i) an unprecedented involvement and commitment by non-governmental actors and organizations both in the Conference preparatory process and at the Conference itself, and (ii) raised expectations of the global community regarding the UN system's ability to maintain and foster the sustainable development momentum achieved at Rio.

One of the most extraordinary aspects of the UNCED process was the quantity and quality of non-governmental actor involvement both in the conference preparatory process and at the Rio conference itself. This unprecedented participation created a refreshing feeling of a global community reaching for the same objective which in turn is at the root of the sustainable development momentum that is expected to carry Agenda 21 activities into fruition.

Agenda 21 recognized this phenomenon by dedicating 9 of the 40 chapters to the role of non-governmental actors which the Agenda collectively refers to as "major groups." Similarly, The CSD, at its first session, adopted its Multi-Year Thematic Programme of Work in which activities related to the role of Major Groups in sustainable development are placed within a separate cluster rather than dispersing them throughout the other clusters. The CSD Secretariat, especially its Sustainable Development Division, should also reflect this international recognition regarding the role of non-governmental actors as it designs its work plan based on the clusters.

The raised expectations of the global community regarding the UN's ability to move the world into a more environmentally sustainable future is another important fact that should steer the Division's current design of its coordinating and monitoring functions. One of the most highlighted expectations stem from the "new" role of the non-governmental actors and organizations as recognized by Agenda 21 and the Programme of Work of the CSD. The global community feels that the UNCED tradition and the Agenda 21 have provided the basis of a truly international partnership towards the most important goal in human history and expects the CSD and its Secretariat to be the protector and nurturer of this partnership. In designing the Division's work framework, these expectations should also be kept in mind very clearly.

This note is a proposal on how the CSD Secretariat, especially its Sustainable Development Division, might organize its work related to the Major Groups Cluster so as to respond to the observations above.

Analysis of the chapters under Cluster E on Major Groups, and the CSD's Programme of Work, show the following synthesis of tasks to be of importance in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the role of major groups:

- Collecting, analyzing and reporting of information on major groups' contributions to progress under particular thematic chapters or clusters

- Enabling linkages between major groups, as well as linkages between major groups and governments and international organizations (including information and institutional networks)

- Enabling greater inputs from major groups to sustainable development decision-making at national, regional and international levels

- Enabling greater sharing of human, financial and information resources for education, environmental awareness, training, and other sustainable development activities between non-governmental and governmental actors

The first task in this list is the main function of the Sustainable Development Division as the substantive arm of the CSD Secretariat. (The main function from hereon is referred to as the "substantive services.") In other words, the Division's primary responsibility is to present to the CSD, as best as it can, the progress achieved under each theme so that the Commission can make informed decisions when setting global environmental sustainability priorities at each annual session.

The last three broad tasks, however, hint that the Division's "coordinating and monitoring" role will be incomplete if it were satisfied with accomplishing its main function alone; that, in fact, the substantive function would benefit greatly if it is carried out in tandem with the other tasks rather than separate from them.

More specifically, the Division may choose to focus on its monitoring mandate and be a passive observer and reporter of major groups' activities. Or it may choose to focus on all of the tasks above and therefore take an inter/active role: facilitating the ways and means that would lead to progress as well as monitoring and reporting the progress achieved. Choosing such an active role by the Division may help achieve several objectives simultaneously including:

(i) better and more direct access to information needed for various progress and monitoring reports.

(ii) fulfilling the expected role of being an active facilitator and mediator of sustainable development activities of major groups at all levels,

(iii) providing the missing link as a central exchange forum for information, activities, networks, resources and the like, between major groups and governmental inter-governmental organizations, and,

(iv) better fulfilling the expectations of Agenda 21 and the global community from the CSD and its Secretariat in general.

Such an active role would indicate, two other services provided by the Division in addition to its substantive services; that is, information services and support services. (See the figure attached for a schematic view) Brief descriptions and activities under each of these functions are provided below. The examples are based on the suggested activities of chapter 27 on the role of NGOs although the same examples are useful in the context of all other chapters on major groups

Information Services

Coordination of sustainable development activities will require the highest possible level of information flow among all the relevant actors. The CSD and its Secretariat as the main coordinating body can provide services that enable and enhance a two-way forum of dialogue not only between major groups and the CSD but also exchange of information:

- between major groups (for example, between women's groups and industry),
- within major groups (for example, between women' s groups across countries and regions), and.
- between major groups and governments at the regional and international levels.

The service could involve such tools as data-bases, or recurrent or non-recurrent publications that increase access to available experiences, skills, resources. as well as lead to greater sharing of sustainable development concerns, problems and solutions.

For example, Chapter 27 has a number of specific activities to be carried out by governments and international organizations, including reviews of:

- existing mechanisms for NGO input into IOs
- mechanisms for NGO input into Governments
- communication between NGOs: national with case studies. regional and international
- formal procedures for NGO involvement and contribution to recommend improvements
- financial and administrative support for NGO contribution
- national education systems to identify ways to expand NGO role

From these a number of information service projects can be derived:

- Informing major groups on the thematic programme of work of the CSD to enable better local groups to effectively organize activities around the themes.

The Division. in cooperation with the existing NGO/major group liaison services of the UN system, can prepare brief information packages to mail out to as many major groups as possible. informing them of the selected themes for 1994-1997. This would help direct the activities to contribute to the selected themes and therefore to progress in these areas.

The Division may also consider submitting articles along the same lines to major

newspapers and journals in order to disseminate the sustainable development priorities as adopted by the CSD. Similar articles can be disseminated through the existing publication services of the UN DPI and its field offices.

Establishing database(s) of environment and development NGOs and make the data-base contents available globally

Data base would contain, among other things, names, specialized contact person(s) along major group labels or environmental themes, addresses and other contact information, level of participation in international and regional organizations, specific contributions to Agenda 21 chapters and themes, particular expertise areas, procedure for sharing with other non-governmental organizations.

The data base(s) can be the basis for the Division to conduct referral services to NGOs and other major groups around particular themes, problems, and solutions. The data-base can also help run regular analyses of the state of non-governmental organizations vis a vis their role in sustainable development. (This activity would closely involve the existing information and data-base formats such as that of the NGLS, Centre for Our Common Future and others. Although there are already some electronic networks of environmental and development NGOs their accessibility is often more favorable in the industrialized countries and they are often based on commercial electronic services which may not be affordable by many developing country NGOs.)

- Monitor and survey NGO activities regularly (every 3-5 years for example) to assess the followings:
  - access and participation in the international and regional inter-governmental bodies,
  - access and participation in local problems and solutions
  - access to sharing with each other (cross-major group interaction)
  - real and perceived barriers to their increased participation in the international regional bodies
  - real and perceived barriers to sharing with other major groups regionally and internationally
  - the critical success factors in those cases where new connections with inter-governmental organizations or other major groups were made ·

These surveys would not only help update information in the data-base(s) and enhance the information included in the progress reports prepared for the CSD but they could also be the basis for regular publications available to both governmental and non-governmental groups/institutions.

The surveys could also be further developed into detailed case studies that focus on success and failure experiences on NGO involvement in national, regional and international processes on sustainable development. The results of the case studies can be disseminated among governmental and non-governmental groups/institutions either as background papers at inter-governmental meetings, or as case-study publications. (the

case studies can be carried out as joint projects of the Division and Major Groups, or they can be commissioned out to outside experts)

Support Services

Under this category the Division would have a catalytic role that facilitates major groups' role and contribution to the national, regional and international sustainable development activities. As such, the Division would take the lead to suggest (and help organize) various local, regional and international meetings, workshops, round-tables and seminars around the identified themes of the Multi-Year Thematic Programme of Work of the CSD.

These events would increase direct linkages between NGOs that are normally not accessible to each other (due to geographical, financial and other reasons for example). It would also increase direct interaction between NGOs and other major groups which is largely lacking at present. (For example, although it may be the case that environmental NGOs know and work with each other but they are less likely to know and work with Industry Groups, or Farmers or Local Authorities.)

Particular examples of support services could include, among other things:

- activities under thematic clusters could include

  - Round-table on Clean technology assessment— perhaps regional. (might produce a report/glossary of terms or a booklet on technology assessment methods for use by other groups in local training programmes)
  - Training seminars for/by NGOs in developing countries on specialized sound technology assessment methods (toxics, metal processing, leather industry and others. The Division could suggest experts· for the training courses, help with funding etc)
  - Regional or national seminars on improving the NGO involvement in the national or regional inter-governmental process (related to decision-making cluster)

- activities that bring together several major groups

  - Regional conference(s) on health and environment with Industry and Local Authorities. Women's Groups
  - Forum on Sound Human Settlements with Industry (Professional societies of Engineers and Architects) and Local Authorities·
  - Round table of Agri-business representatives with Farmers groups on management of toxic chemicals

- activities that increase the interaction between CSD and the non-governmental communities

  - Meetings with one major group, one specific theme and the CSD Bureau (open to

interested governmental representatives).These could follow particular themes or thematic clusters:

THEMES: Women and Environment involving Women's group representatives (could coincide with the Women's Conference); Energy and Environment involving energy industries; City Design and Environment involving Local Authorities.

CLUSTERS: Health and Environment involving Medical communities; Land and Farmers etc.

▫ Meetings that combine several major groups, on one theme and the CSD Bureau—
For example, meetings on Toxic chemicals involving industry, environmental NGOs with particular expertise in toxics, and farmers

▫ Meetings of Major Groups as a whole and the CSD Bureau
This would be a "mirror CSD" involving major groups as representatives of countries rather than Governmental representatives (draw back is the national selection process to identify which non-governmental organization should represent the country at the Commission.)

▫ Regular exchange forum mechanisms
Such as Non-governmental advisory Councils. (UNCTC/TCMD's *Corporate Responses to Agenda 21* paper reported several proposals from the industry along these lines.)

Substantive Services

The main duty of the Division is to assist the Commission in reviewing what is being done in the field so that the Commission can take decisions that enhance the positive developments, prevent the negatives and set the optimally beneficial sustainable development priorities for governments and international organizations and by extension for the major groups. Since the role of major groups in the actual implementation process is of paramount importance, it is crucial for the CSD Secretariat especially its Sustainable Development Division to organize its work programme as an interactive process. Thus, the Division would be able to accomplish more than re-reporting of the reports received from other UN bodies and national governments. In this context, the contribution of the above activities is clear: they bring in tangible information from the NGO and other non-governmental communities based on their survey, networking and interaction through facilitated events.
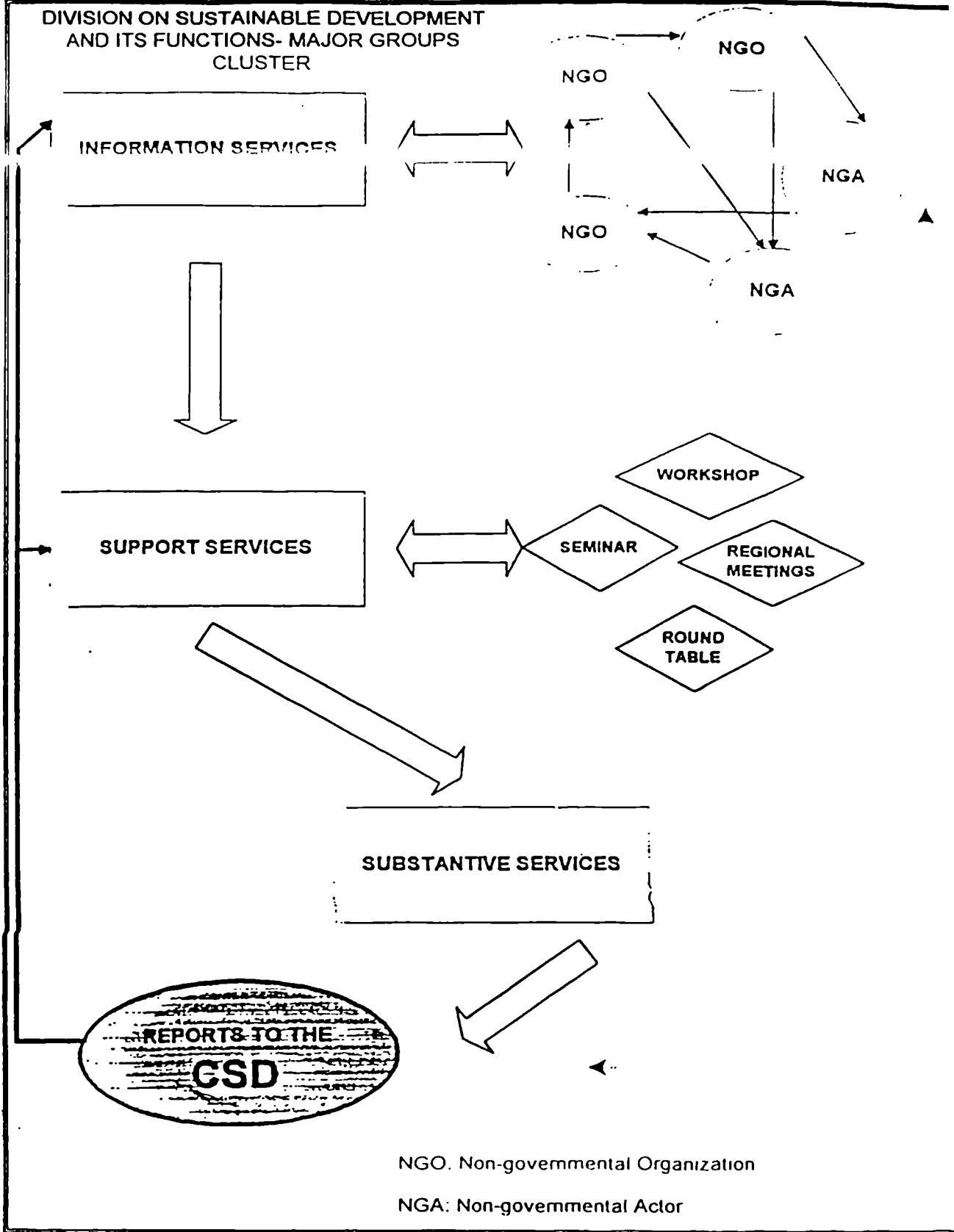
Conclusion

The above indicates that, vis a vis the major groups, the Division can and should assume a greater role than what its obvious reporting role may suggest. Since the Division's resources are limited, a broader role as described above needs to draw upon the existing mechanisms and to start on a

small scale designed to grow over the years. Initial steps would involve designating the major groups focal point(s) within the Division; and setting up coordination meetings with the NGO units at the UN Headquarters (DPCSD NGO Liaison Office, UN NGLS Office, UNDP NGO Unit could be the initial targets for such a meeting).

Agenda 21 can only be implemented if contributions from all actors are enabled. Its extensive nature may tend to paralyze individual actors who will need support and leadership on a consistent and continuos basis. Though simple, the most necessary message for Agenda 21 implementation is that it can be done. In this context, the already visible commitment of thousands of non-governmental organizations and groups to sustainable development activities should not be taken lightly as true sustainable development is a social and economic transition which means local involvement. However, how the DPCSD in general and the Sustainable Development Division in particular approaches to catalyzing greater interaction between major groups and between the CSD and the major groups will determine the outcome. If the Division has a passive role and limits itself to summarizing the collected reports the outcome would be mere maintenance. An active role, on the other hand, would be making a change.

DIVISION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS FUNCTIONS- MAJOR GROUPS CLUSTER

INFORMATION SERVICES

NGO

NGO

NGO

NGA

NGA

SUPPORT SERVICES

SEMINAR

WORKSHOP

REGIONAL MEETINGS

ROUND TABLE

SUBSTANTIVE SERVICES

REPORTS TO THE CSD

NGO. Non-governmental Organization

NGA: Non-governmental Actor

Sustainable Development Division
Human Development, Institutions and Technology Branch

Functions related to Major Groups[1]

I   Introduction

This paper presents a brief background and outline for a work programme to deal with the Agenda 21 cross-sectoral issue of Major Groups.

Non-governmental organizations and other major groups have been a key player in the UNCED process. Letter and spirit of Agenda 21 as well as the deliberations of the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development acknowledge the important role of major groups and call for their active involvement in the implementation of Agenda 21 (Major groups are involved in nearly all of Agenda 21 activities, 9 of 40 chapters of the Agenda are exclusively dedicated to Major Groups).

While the involvement of major groups in intergovernmental processes is not a new phenomenon at all, it appears that this issue for the first time is not considered as a mere "add-on" to other issues. Rather, the involvement of major groups must be considered as a "stand-alone issue" which deserves particular and separate attention in addition to its obvious linkages to substantive issues.

Major Groups have actively pursued and welcomed the invitation of the UNCED process. They will amplify their role by adopting more effective means of articulation and coordination and by demanding even broader access to the inter-governmental process based on their substantive role in the implementation of Agenda 21. Some of them have established themselves as effective channels for the "grass roots" level in the implementation of Agenda 21 and are ready provide vital information for the UNCED process. Others - particularly groups in many developing countries - are calling for support from the international community to fulfill their missions in the process of promoting sustainable development.

II   Functions of the Secretariat - (HDIT Branch of Sustainable Development Division, DPCSD)

The most obvious function of the secretariat in dealing with Major Groups is the report function. The issue of major groups has to be addressed

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[1] References to "Major Groups" in this paper refer to the definition of Agenda 21. In this definition the following groups are specified: Women, children and youth, indigenous people and their communities, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological community, farmers

- as a distinctive part of the annual overview reports to be presented to CSD on progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21

  as part of the thematic reports corresponding to Agenda 21 sectoral issues

Following the spirit of Agenda 21 the secretariat has to adopt an additional function which goes beyond traditional reporting and can be labelled as support function. Under this function the secretariat is expected to serve as a protector and nurturer of a new partnership comprised of major groups and the traditional governmental and inter-governmental machinery. The secretariat is required to

- encourage and promote the active, full and informed participation of major groups in the process of implementing Agenda 21

Report and support functions are not disconnected but two sides of the same coin: Traditional reporting as pure collection of information will be not possible facing a heterogenous variety of major groups. Reporting is to be understood as an interactive process in which the generation of information has to be stimulated and encouraged by the secretariat. Such interaction will further strengthen the role of major groups in the process of Agenda 21 implementation. In this respect the secretariat has the opportunity to play the role of a catalyst in an ongoing interactive process.

III   Work Programme

The work programme of the secretariat will include the following tasks

(1) Collecting and synthesizing information about the involvement of major groups through:

   (a)   monitoring of annual country reports on the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21
   (b)   collecting information related to Major Groups from all United Nations bodies
   (c)   interacting with major groups directly and ask for specific information (in the form of meetings, workshops, individual requests or surveys)
   (d)   interaction with United Nations task managers for different aspects of Agenda 21

(2) Providing information in the form of

   (a)   mandated reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development
   (b)   listings of major groups working in different fields and characteristics of their major activities (case studies, success stories, etc.) to be provided to Major Groups UN task managers for different issues of Agenda 21 implementation on others

(c)   general information about the UNCED process and the implementation
        of Agenda 21 (basic information as well as information about ongoing
        activities like inter-sessional working groups, etc) to be provided to
        Major Groups and others

        Such information under b and c could have the character of recurrent
        publications (bulletins, newsletters, etc.) or could be made available
        upon request (database searches)

(d)   articles to be published in journals and newspapers

        It should not be overlooked that dealing with Agenda 21 is one of the
        very few occasions where the work of the secretariat in the economic
        and social field has "news-character". The public interest in the
        implementation of Agenda 21 should be actively satisfied by the
        substantive units in the secretariat

(3) Supplementing task 1 and 2 the secretariat will

(a)   participate in Major Groups Meetings and Conferences to work as a
        multiplier for the objectives laid down in Agenda 21 and in decisions
        of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to advise major
        groups with regards to effective access to the intergovernmental
        machinery
(b)   organize for different topics conferences involving major groups to
        facilitate interaction and communication among them and with the
        UN system and the exchange of information
(c)   mobilize special support to major groups in developing countries in
        the form of logistical inputs, information and fund raising, as possible

IV   Organization of Work

The work of the secretariat will be facilitated by creating an identifiable focal point
serving as a visible partner for the UN system itself and for major groups. Given the
scope of the task the focal point should consist of at least two professional staff
and should make use of existing NGO focal points within the UN system. As
immediate actions the focal point/unit will

(a)   liaise with the existing NGLS within DPCSD
(b)   identify other relevant focal points throughout the United Nations
        System and will
(c)   try to set up a working strategy which will make the most use of
        possible cooperation within the United Nations System
(d)   produce a directory of Major Groups involved in issues relevant for
        Agenda 21 (taking stock of existing directories and data bases)
(e)   start fund raising and partnerships to conduct workshops

(f)   provide detailed break downs for the work plan as specified in the
       work programme above

Dealing with major groups will involve considerable staff resources both for
analytical and technical work (e.g. set up of data bases). Since this man power is
not available within the division it urged to allocate funds for consultancies
immediately.

Required investments will have a high return in terms of both promoting the
implementation of Agenda 21 and increasing the visibility of the secretariat

Project 1: Identifying the Major Groups

Starting on a small scale and building over time.

Criteria: could be the Themes for each year (indicates inter-Branch decision on how to)

could be based on who can be reached now (indicates a level of arbitrariness)

could be based on the nine major groups cluster without a thematic basis but trying to reach to more than those who are available (indicates a possible gap of information for the thematic reports but is likely to provide information for the overview report)

Venue: field offices of UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank, Regional Commissions, NGLS network, and other NGO networks

Output 1: information for the thematic reports; Output 2: Directory of Major Groups

Project 2: Identifying Programmes and Projects relevant to Major Groups needs

Survey of what programmes for sustainable development exist in the intergovernmental arena, showing level of resources allocated, available funding and cooperation potentials

Venue: UN Agencies, funding institutions, non-UN international and regional organizations

Output 1: Guidelines for increased access to potential funding and cooperation opportunities for Major Groups

Output 2: Inputs to CSD reports under future recommendations/potentials for cooperation and collaboration for governmental/non-governmental partnerships

Project 3: Identifying the collaborative efforts in the Major Groups sphere

Survey of collaborative programmes involving, for example, developed country industries and developing country industries etc.

Venue: Interviews and survey of target major groups

Output 1: Inputs to the CSD reports on major groups' cooperation and collaboration

Output 2: (publication) Sustainable development cooperation in the Major Groups sphere

Project 4: Evaluating the potentials and bottlenecks in greater Major Groups involvement in Agenda 21 implementation

Survey of the identified Major Groups in terms of their level of access to governmental and inter-governmental process, including the problems encountered.

Targets: could include reviews of accreditation processes used by UN and non-UN international organizations, by Governments; surveying the perceived and real bottlenecks experiences by the Major Groups, assessment of innovative approaches that increase Major Group participation in national and international processes.

Output 1: Guidelines for increased participation of Major Groups

Output 2: Inputs into the CSD reports

ITEM 2
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION THROUGH EXISTING NETWORKS

Some questions for discussion:

1- does your organization have a network of major groups, especially reaching those in developing countries?

2- which possibilities exist for cooperation with the CSD Secretariat in disseminating information?

3- what would be the procedure to start the process?

4- can you suggest other organizations for CSD Secretariat to contact to increase its outreach activities?

ITEM 3
JOINT PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Some questions for discussion

1- what are your views on the ideas presented in the frameworks?

2- do you feel these ideas are useful? If yes which particular ones seem to be on target in terms of what you feel are areas that need urgent assistance?

3- what are your expectations from the CSD Secretariat in terms of facilitating Major Groups participation and contribution to the CSD process and the overall sustainable development efforts?

4- do you have on-going programmes related to Major Groups in which you would need CSD Secretariat's inputs, assistance and/or participation?

LIST OF ACTIVITIES FROM THE FRAMEWORKS

INFORMATION RELATED

from Short-term list

1- Identifying the Major Groups- survey (thematic and/ or group focus)

2- identifying the programmes and projects relevant to major groups -- survey

3- identifying the collaborative efforts among major groups -- survey

4- evaluation of bottlenecks and potentials in major groups involvement in Agenda 21 -survey

from medium-term list

5- collecting and synthesizing major groups involvement
        a. monitoring information in country reports
        b. collecting information through UN agencies
        c. direct contacts with major groups
        d. interactions with Task Managers

6- Providing information to major groups and from major groups to CSD
        a. reports to CSD
        b. master lists major groups for use of UN agencies and major groups
        c. information to major groups on on-going activities (CSD meetings, intersesional meetings, country of UN agency sponsored meetings etc)
        d. articles in newspapers and journals and other publications

from long-term list
7- packages of information on thematic information needs, tailored to the area of each major group (cross-referenced activities check-list)-- also includes # 6.d

8- databases on major groups available for increasing links between major groups -- related to # 1 above

9- monitoring and surveying major groups activities in Agenda 21 regularly with periodic publications -- related to # 1,2,3, and 4

Support and Facilitation related

from the medium-term list

10- organize conferences involving major groups to facilitate interaction and communication

11- mobilize logistical inputs, information and fund raising to support activities of developing country Major Groups

from the long-term list

12- Thematic meetings (examples only-- not a work programme) ·
    a. Round table on clean technology assessment
    b. training seminars in developing countries on technology assessment methods
    c. regional and international seminars on improving national and regional major groups
nvolvement

3- Two or more major group meetings
    a. regional conference on health with Industry, local authorities and women's groups
    b. forum on Human settlements with industry based professional societies of engineers and architects and local authorities
    c. roundtable of agri-business with farmers groups on sound management of agricultural chemicals and alternative methods

14- meetings with CSD and Major Groups
    a. One target major group, one selected theme and the CSD Bureau ·
        eg: Health and environment with women medical professionals and the CSD
    b. several major groups, one theme and CSD Bureau
        eg: Toxic chemicals with industry, environment and development NGOs with
        expertise in toxic chemicals and the Bureau
    c. meeting of major groups with the CSD
        eg: "mirror CSD" with non-governmental sectors representing their countries with the CSD Bureau (open to governmental representatives)
    d. regular exchange mechanisms between standing Major Groups committees and the CSD
        eg: Business Advisory Council
        eg: Indigenous People Advisory Council etc.

Appendix 10:

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CONSULTATION WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS/
MAJOR GROUPS

NON-PAPER

Major groups, including non-governmental organizations, play a significant role in facilitating the global transition to sustainability. The CSD, its bureau and its secretariat value the working relationships with major groups. This paper proposes some modalities for making this important partnership work.

A.   Background

1.   In February 1993, ECOSOC adopted supplementary arrangements (ESOSOC decision 1993/215) regarding the representation of and consultation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/major groups solely for the Commission on Sustainable Development. These have been used as basic guidelines in developing the recommendations for this paper and include the following: ·

   (a)   Representatives of NGOs/major groups may, at their own expense, make written submissions to the Commission and its subsidiary organs through the Secretariat in one of the official languages of the U.N. Those written representations will not be issued as official documents.

   (b)   Representatives of NGOs/major groups may be given an opportunity to briefly address the meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary organs. The Chairman of the Commission or its subsidiary organs may request the NGOs/major groups concerned to address the meetings through one or more spokespersons.

   (c)   Representatives of NGOs/major groups shall not have any negotiating role in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary organs.

   (d)   The Commission may consult with representatives of NGOs/major groups either directly or through a committee or committees established for that purpose.

   (e)   The Commission should encourage equitable representation of NGOs/major groups from the developed and developing countries and from all regions.

   (f)   Representatives of NGOs/major groups are invited to consider or continue organizing themselves in various constituencies and interest groups and to set up non-governmental networks, including electronic networks, for the exchange of relevant information and documentation.

   Other key considerations in establishing consultations with NGOs/major groups considered in this paper include:

   (a)   Equitable representation of all NGOs/major groups. This includes environment and development NGOs, business and industry, women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, local authorities, farmers, workers and their trade unions and the scientific and technical community.

(b)   Timing of consultations.

(c)   Costs of consultation mechanisms.

B. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

  I. **NGOS/MAJOR GROUPS INPUTS DURING SESSIONS AND INTERSESSIONALLY**

     1.   **Written Inputs**

     (a)   Where possible, NGOs in consultation with the Secretariat should provide a standardized format/guideline for input from representatives of NGOs/major groups on CSD issues. The format should include: the name of the NGO/major group and whom they are representing (if this is a regional, individual or group submission); statement of the issue(s); relationship to the agenda; and any specific recommendations. Submissions from NGOs/major groups should be encouraged on a regional basis and/or constituency basis and they should be as concise and brief as possible.

     (b)   Input on substantive issues could be provided to the Secretariat (preferably to a substantive contact person, not an NGO/major group contact) and would, as appropriate, be used in the preparation of Secretariat documents. A list of all NGOs/major groups substantive submissions, relevant to the Commission's work, including names of organizations and a contact person for each, should be compiled and made available to the Commission at its relevant session.

     (c)   NGOs/major groups are encouraged to coordinate inputs among themselves - either related to substantive issues or regionally. NGOs are encouraged to establish advisory committees constituted on a regional or constituency basis to facilitate their communication with the Secretariat and CSD during sessions and intersessionally.

     (d)   Advisory committees would need to be constituted of representatives of NGOs/major groups including representatives of environment and development NGOs, business and industry, women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, local authorities, farmers, workers and their trade unions and the scientific and technical community. This will require that NGOs/major groups organize themselves in order to provide representatives to advisory committees.

Appendix 11:

CSD NGO Steering Committee Terms of Reference
Approved 26 May 1994, NGO Plenary Meeting CSD-2

What follows is the agreed terms of reference for the CSD NGO Steering Committee. This body facilitates the involvement of NGOs and other Major Groups in the CSD.

NGO Steering Committee Structure

1   It has been the sense of the collective gathering at the CSD2 (1994) that it is important that we organize ourselves in such a manner that enables us to continue collective work between meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development.
2   We have identified as follows a series of tasks and activities that should be conducted by such a Steering Committee.
3   To enhance the flow of information about the CSD process to regional, focal points and networks for NGOs, Indigenous Peoples and Major Groups and their constituents.
4   Steering Committee members will serve as focal points to ensure participation of issue and regional networks within the NGO community through their ability to disseminate information using communication tools such as mail, telephone, fax and E-Mail.
5   To help coordinate the transmission of positions generated by regional and national networks and major groups to the CSD during intersessional and CSD meetings.
6   To aim to assist efforts of regional networks to organize capacity building and consultative regional meetings.
7   To help monitor and disseminate reports from UN conferences, conventions and intersessional meetings and assure wide distribution of said information and outcomes.
8   To prepare for the subsequent meeting of the CSD, and to insure maximum preparation for and participation in said meetings.
9   The activity of this committee would in no sense be one of political nor policy representativeness for the NGO community. No such mandate would be delegated to the committee and political representatives or interventions will remain the domain of the entire NGO and Major Groups community.
10 Individual NGOs and groups, as always, will determine their own politics and policies, and will not be excluded from NGO participation, regardless of their activity with the Steering Committee.
11 The composition of the continuing Steering Committee of NGOs participating in the meetings of the CSD.
12 The Steering Committee shall consist of regional representatives and representatives of caucuses of major groups accredited and participating in the CSD meetings.
13 The following regions have been identified and approved: Africa, Pacific Ocean, Caribbean, Latin America, Asia, Indian Ocean, North America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Australia and New Zealand and the Multi Region (Northern and Southern).

14 Should other regions want to be recognized they should come with a proposal to the CSD community. Focal points designated at CSD will consult with regional and national NGOs and networks to determine their participation at CSD, and the definition of 'regional' for the purposes of accessing the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may re-determine the regions at each assembly with regard to number, size and representatives etc.
15 The Major Groups identified are those recognized in Agenda 21 and other sectoral groups as needed.
16 Each category shall by an electoral process identify a representative and one alternate, and a process for their replacement, to serve on the Steering Committee.
17 The Steering Committee shall serve for the period from one CSD meeting to the next CSD meeting. There will be a meeting at the beginning of each CSD to confirm the representatives during the first week when a new representative shall be elected.
• On the last day of the Steering Committee at each CSD, a Northern Co-Chair and a Southern Co-Chair shall be provisionally selected by the constituted committee.

Appendix 12:

Report of the Seminar on the Involvement of Civil Society in the Follow-up to the Social Summit (Mohonk Mountain House, New York State, 22-23 June 1995)

Background

A common feature of all international conferences organized by the United Nations on matters of development and social progress is the difficulty to give sufficient attention to their implementation and follow-up. The Seminar on the Involvement of Civil Society in the Follow-up to the Social Summit, held at the Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, New York on 22 and 23 June 1995, brought together representatives of governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to develop ideas for the implementation of the objectives, commitments and policy recommendations adopted by the Social Summit. Participants served in their individual capacity. No attempt was made to reach consensus on all points raised. This report, prepared by the Secretariat, aims at reflecting the views expressed and the suggestions made during the two days of discussions.

The World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen, Denmark from 6 to 12 March 1995, reviewed the current global social situation and focused its attention on three core issues: poverty, employment and social integration. The participation and contribution of organizations of civil society in the preparation for the Summit and in its deliberations in Copenhagen, demonstrated, as had already been done in Rio for the Conference on Environment and Development, that an active partnership between government and non-governmental forces was feasible and useful.

Global forces, essentially economic and financial, are becoming increasingly pervasive and powerful. They reflect, and propagate, a liberal view of global economics, including open markets, growth, competition, free trade, structural adjustment, and the free flow of capital. They lead to an increasing concentration of economic and political power and to an increasing conformity in culture and aspirations. Some governments are active instruments of this process of globalization. Others are trying to capture some of its economic benefits. Very few are willing, or in a position, to keep a margin of autonomy in their policy making or to offer an alternative. International organizations are also invited to join the dominant current, either to contribute to its universalization, or to mitigate its negative social effects.

A number of organizations of civil society are observing these developments with concern, notably because of the linkage they perceive between global economic and political powers, structures and policies and social conditions of today and tomorrow. They consider it essential to be involved in international fora, to present their view on the state of the world and to contribute to strengthening the ability of the United Nations to develop its own philosophy on economic and social progress. Many of the non-governmental organizations involved with economic and social development have been vocal proponents of participation, empowerment, capacity building and a concentration on the grass-roots. Some see this approach as a complement to the increasing globalization. Others would like to build a balance, a counter power, or even an alternative. Overall, most non-governmental organizations see themselves as watchdogs and supporters of those peoples who question the dominant trends, and those groups and nations that are left behind.

Thus, many non-governmental organizations are concerned with the choices societies and the world are making and which shape the future of humankind. They seek to promote a new, global notion of the common good. They wish to avoid a narrow structural or legal approach to the search for the common interest. They strive to change the relationships between people and power.

Within national boundaries, governments know that they alone cannot confront all problems of society. They need to enlist citizens' participation and the assistance of all elements of civil society whose role is to complements public activities, to make proposals, to represent those who have no voice and, sometimes, to disagree and dissent. This is a healthy and necessary process, in a context of consensus building. The tendency toward polarization and exclusion is getting stronger and needs to be resisted. Consensus must be achieved through dialogue and co-operation.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action explicitly place poor and disadvantaged people and their organizations in the arena as actors and contributors to social progress and development, and strongly proclaims the need to involve the civil society in the follow-up to the Summit. The practical modalities for this involvement need to be clarified. For example, at the international level, can the doors of the United Nations be open to every organization which seeks admittance? Is it desirable to have community organization involved in United Nations discussions? The task is to translate the opening of the United Nations which occurred during the Social Summit and other recent conferences into permanent arrangements for participation and partnership.

Clarifying the Concept of Civil Society

Although it has been used with increasing frequency in recent years, including in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the concept of civil society remains unclear, conceptually and politically, and has different meanings in different contexts:

(i) As a concept, several "definitions" coexist:

    1) the "third sector"; the first being government and public authorities and the second private business; a shortened formula for the distinction is: from the State: public action for public

good; from the Market: private action for private good; from the Civil Society: private action for public good;

2) everything which is not public;

3) everything which is not military.

(ii) Politically, the notion and practice of civil society is ambivalent:

1) in some regions it emerged in the context of the struggle against military dictatorship; it is largely equivalent to democracy, participation and respect for human rights; it evokes the notion of full citizenship;

2) in other political and historical settings, "civil society" can become a tool for maintaining the status quo in the distribution of power; for example, a strong concentration of the activities of the actors of civil society on welfare and social sectors leaves critical economic and financial decisions outside the reach and understanding of the majority of people; at the international level, the same applies with regard to the process of "globalization" and the relationships between rich and poor countries.

(iii) "Civil society" may have a different meaning in developed and developing countries, in countries with a welfarist political philosophy and in countries with a liberal tradition, as well as in countries with a centralized government apparatus and in countries with a decentralized distribution of administrative power.

It is difficult and perhaps unwise to look for a universal definition of civil society. One needs to consider the individual national context in which civil society functions. The community of non-governmental organizations is not uniform; it has various interests and a great diversity of forms, strategies and activities to address the vastly different conditions in different countries. It is useful to look at how non-governmental organizations are being developed and used by people in their own contexts. An overly precise definition would stifle this diversity. However, it is useful to describe the characteristics of civil society. Civil society is made up of voluntary associations formed for purposes of common interest or collective action on the sphere between the family and the market and the family and the state. Ideally, an organization of civil society is private but with a public purpose, oriented towards the public good, not-for-profit, accountable, committed to transparency, civilian and civilized, and dealing with problems and conflicts in a consensual and non-coercive way. It must also have a degree of representativity. Actually, for this type of organization, the term "public interest organization" might be better than "non-governmental organization".

1) Civil society is "non-governmental", but not just residual. It should be defined by what it is rather than by what it is not. It should not be presented in a defensive manner. To improve social conditions and to gain economic and political power, those who are excluded need to be organized, at both national and international levels.

2) The finality, or raison d'etre, or philosophy of a voluntary organization, the motivations of those who create it, are most important factors. Non-governmental organizations are generally motivated by a desire to alter current social structures, to compensate for the centralization of

power in many societies and to mitigate the shortcomings of markets and the political process. Many organizations seek to advocate for or represent the interest of people who are removed from the centres of power. They attempt to identify who is absent or left out, in every policy arena.

3) A non-commercial objective is a prerequisite for organizations of the civil society. Business enterprises should not be grouped together with volunteer or representative organizations, nor should they be considered a part of civil society, with the possible exception of non-profit business organizations and co-operatives. Businesses or their industry representatives and organizations which seek to promote business interests are motivated by private gain rather than the public good. Organizations of the civil society are more interested in democratizing the market, breaking down privileges and monopolistic tendencies.

4) Civil society is marked by autonomy. Its organizations are independent and internally democratic, not relying for their existence on the dictates of government or the financing of the private sector.

5) The legitimacy of the organizations of civil society stems primarily from their contribution to the common good. In addition, organizations are legitimate when they represent faithfully and democratically their constituents. The objectives of these, however, have to be compatible with the promotion of good relationships between social groups and with the standards of what constitutes a good society.

6) The representativeness of non-governmental and other organizations of civil society is particularly important when they seek to participate in national and international deliberative, legislative or executive organs. Representativeness may also be determined by recognized standing within a particular field of competence; otherwise, and notably at the local level, all citizens of good will should have the capacity to play a role and exert their responsibility.

These issues of legitimacy and representativity will become more and more relevant as organizations of the civil society gain more of a role in the process of governance. Questions such as the capacity of these organization to express the aspirations of people, while providing information and education, will become increasingly relevant. Governments have to balance the demands of very different groups and attempt to be broadly representative. It is also important to recognize that non-governmental organizations are not perfect and do not constitute a "holy world". They are always in danger of becoming authoritarian and bureaucratic.

Governments remain ultimately responsible for providing public services and clear distinctions of status and roles between governments and the civil society must be maintained. Governments lead, decide, mediate, raise resources and shape policies. Civil society cannot replace public authorities and is not an alternative to government.

Organizations of civil society have a critical role because of their reach, of their capacity to represent people who are excluded from the dominant culture, and also because of their expertize and experience. Non-governmental organizations can mobilize the poor, organize the delivery of services,

and assist in the evaluation of programmes and contribute to the development of new policies. Above all, they can identify and publicize the social problems of their communities. Non-governmental organizations also have a role in disseminating information and expanding the knowledge of the disadvantaged.

Overall, civil society is about developing citizenship. By nature, civil society must promote democracy, a better distribution of power and opportunities, and the control of people over their own lives and destiny. Voluntary associations and organizations of all types mediate the relationship between citizens and the State. They also generate a pressure for good governments at all levels of society.

On matters of social development, there is no need nor real usefulness for an adversary relationship between the State and civil society. Partnership, which does not mean automatic acquiescence, should be the overall framework for the relationship between public authorities and non-governmental organization. The search for common grounds and the common good implies mutual respect and a clear recognition of different roles. Even in highly democratic societies where levels of information and participation are high, the State should not abandon its main functions and social responsibilities to the civil society. The "privatization" of services should be seen in the perspective of a redefinition of the role of the State towards greater guidance to the society and all its actors. For example, in education, as well as health of social welfare and benefits, there are many possible combinations of responsibilities and roles for the State, the civil society and, in some cases, the private sector.

It was suggested that civil society had four main functions:

1) to elaborate policies and initiate movements which lead to policy changes;

2) to implement policies, act as a bridge between communities and government, and deliver services;

3) to monitor implementation and help determine whether policies are in the interest of people;

4) to mobilize people at the community level. III. Implementation and Follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development

All institutions, groups and individuals, including the private sector, which is profit oriented, and the media, which aim at providing information, have a contribution to make to the common good and to the implementation of the goals and objectives adopted in Copenhagen. It is particularly important to underline that the private sector, although generally considered as different from the civil society, should play a role in this follow-up to Copenhagen and should recognize the very important responsibilities it has for the future of all societies, notably with regard to employment.

Non-governmental organizations can contribute directly to the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action by creating a "social watch" to keep track of the status of implementation and follow-up. It is well known that a sort of "collective amnesia" can be the next stage after the adoption

of very generous objectives and commitments. Civil society can serve as a reminder that the implementation of the commitments made in Copenhagen is a matter of necessity.

National level

There is a pressing need to take concrete action to begin the process of implementation. Immediate tasks, to which the civil society ought to contribute, include the elaboration of national plans or strategies for social development and the adoption of targets and a set of measures for the reduction c extreme poverty and of inequalities by 1996. Other tasks include, for those countries interested to do so, the application of the 20/20 concept for an increase in the share of resources to be devoted to soci; programmes.

The setting up or strengthening of national co-ordinating mechanisms, including commissions or committees, with the organized and active participation of non-governmental organizations, might be a first step. It might be useful to review at the national level the experience achieved with the implementation of previous United Nations conferences, notably the Rio Conference on Environment and Development. A major function of such national arrangements is to contribute to the process of consensus building around the principles, goals and commitments adopted in Copenhagen. The monitoring of the outcome of the Social Summit at the national level might, in a number of cases, imply the development of appropriate indicators of social conditions and social problems.

Co-ordination mechanisms. for non-governmental organizations themselves, are sometimes necessary and useful. This may require the strengthening or development of umbrella mechanisms or networks of non-governmental organizations around specific issues and the creation of alliances. Through national seminars or Round Tables, non-governmental organizations which participated in Copenhagen could report back to other non-governmental organizations, share experiences and provide ideas for the elaboration of national plans of action.

Examples could be derived from the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local and national levels. In Agenda 21 nine major groups were identified as having a role to play in the implementation of the Rio Programme of Action: women, farmers, local authorities, indigenous people, youth, business and industry, workers and trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and scientific and technological communities. Comparable groups could be instrumental for the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. It was noted that religious institutions had a very important role in most societies.

There is a need to produce a methodology for a "people's follow-up" to the Social Summit. This could be initiated through dissemination of the results of the Summit in easily understood language. It was suggested that non-governmental organizations at the national level should prepare a "User's Guide to the Social Summit".

It was pointed out that the United Nations organizations, agencies and programmes should assist local and national non-governmental organizations, particularly in developing countries, to participate in the elaboration of national plans for implementing the Copenhagen outcome. Resident co-ordinators had a particular role to play in this regard.

The civil society, as well as the business community, have a role to play in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the commitments adopted in Copenhagen. In particular, non-governmental organizations should contribute to the political efforts which are required to convince the Bretton Woods institutions that they have an essential role to play for social development, including through changes in their policies.

It was noted that 91 national reports had been produced in the context of the preparation of the Summit. The general availability of those reports in electronic format would be helpful. They provide a picture of current national social policies and objectives. They could also be used as a benchmark to measure progress.

Regional level

Regional co-ordination and co-operation are essential to the successful implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Partnership among governments, the private sector and the civil society, is possible and useful at the regional, as well as the national and international levels. The regional commissions of the United Nations should play a role in promoting regional co-ordination and co-operation. It was suggested that consideration be given to the accreditation of local, national and regional non-governmental organizations directly to the regional commissions.

Non-governmental organizations do attempt at rationalizing their activities at the regional level. They should be encouraged to continue these efforts which are important for representativity and participation into the work of inter-governmental institutions. The regional commissions should play an active role in this process.

International level

While implementation at the national level should receive priority, action at the international level is also required to support national initiatives and to counter the growing concentration of economic and financial power. Action at the international level implies shared responsibilities by governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

Intergovernmental structures

Some participants considered that the existing intergovernmental structure of the United Nations was no longer adequate to serve the current needs of the international community. In particular, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development were perceived as increasingly ineffective. Other participants, while agreeing on the need for a review of the agenda and method of work of the various inter-governmental fora, believed that revitalization was possible and saw in the follow-up to the Summit a perfect opportunity. One of the underlying principles of the Social Summit was consideration for the need to create new forms of governance. The presence of

non-governmental organizations in inter-governmental bodies could help create a "political space" which would facilitate exchange of views on issues of development and social progress.

Commission for Social Development

A suggestion to combine the Commission for Social Development with the Commission on Sustainable Development was not generally favoured. Such a merger could actually result in a further weakening of the status of social development in the United Nations. It was, however, recognized that the Commission was grossly under-utilized, that its debates were not focused and that the attention given to specific groups was currently detrimental to its voice being heard within the United Nations system on overall issues of social progress.

At its last session, in April 1995, the Commission had called for an "opening of its debates to experts and representatives of the civil society". This was a most important matter which was to be considered by ECOSOC at its forthcoming 1995 session.

The notion of "experts" should be understood as referring to persons having a specific knowledge on the issues before the Commission, notably the question of social integration. Experts can be from governments and public services, from the academic world and the research community, or from private associations and organizations, including non-governmental organizations.

At this juncture, representatives of civil society participating in the work of the Commission are non-governmental organizations accredited with the Economic and Social Council. This participation is rather weak, in terms of numbers of NGOs attending the session of the Commission, and takes the traditional form of delivery of statements. To strengthen this participation of the civil society, a first option would simply be to encourage accredited NGOs to participate more actively in the work of the Commission. This participation could then be organized in a variety of ways, including panels or consultative groups. Another option would be to identify broad categories of NGOs and members of the civil society, such as youth, organizations involved in development matters, religious groups, trade unions and similar organizations of workers and farmers, business organizations, media, consumer groups, etc. It was stressed that the elaboration of such categories would have to be done with the full participation of all concerned. Within each category, mechanism of "selection" would have to be elaborated by the organizations themselves for ensuring a representative participation in the work of the Commission. These and other options should be actively pursued, once the Economic and Social Council provides the necessary overall guidelines.

Apart from a better representation of experts and elements of the civil society, the Commission could be strengthened through the political support it should receive at the national level, and through the degree of attention it should also receive within the United Nations. Support should also be given to increasing the membership of the Commission and to making its meetings an annual event.

The follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development should become central to the agenda of the Commission. This agenda should reflect the relationship between the globalization of the world economy and the structural causes of social problems. The United Nations should identify a place within its intergovernmental structures where governments and the United Nations system, including

the Bretton Woods institutions, would be requested to report on their actions to implement the Programme of Action and on the social impact of their policies and programmes. Non-governmental organizations could also report on their activities and on their perception of the results of the policies of governments and the United Nations system. The Commission for Social Development could conceivably play this role.

In order to encourage greater participation of experts, academics and interested individuals, and to encourage more media attention to the discussions of the Commission for Social Development, it was suggested to hold a series of public hearings on topics of relevance and importance during sessions of the Commission.

Some participants considered that the Commission could not and should not be responsible for the entire follow-up to Copenhagen, although it will make important substantive inputs. *The Economic and Social Council should oversee system-wide co-ordination, and the follow-up to Copenhagen should occur primarily within the framework of the Agenda for Development.*

Consideration should be given to the activities that should take place between the annual sessions of the Commission. It is important to establish institutional arrangements and mechanisms to promote a continuous dialogue. Suggestions were made for the organization of intersessional meetings on specific topics. Expert meetings could also consider issues identified by the Commission. A steering committee on non-governmental organizations could also be a useful mechanism.

Other arrangements

The participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development provides an example to be considered for the Commission for Social Development. There are, however, sometimes practical difficulties with the large number of non-governmental organizations which are interested in attending the meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

It was noted that non-governmental organizations could be given access to the deliberations of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Even of more obvious relevance would be access of non-governmental organizations to the Bretton Woods institutions. In this regard, there was an interesting precedent with the Global Environment Fund, in which a day is devoted to open dialogue with non-governmental organizations. Participation by non-governmental organizations in trade negotiations and deliberations concerning peace and disarmament is weak, at best, and not very transparent. Further consideration should be given to modalities for the participation of non-governmental organizations on the work of the World Trade Organization.

A forum of civil society, that is, a separate parallel conference of non-governmental organizations, should meet each year, prior to the General Assembly, to discuss current global issues. This forum would offer direct access for organizations of civil society to the United Nations system.

It was also suggested that non-governmental organizations be allowed the right to "question time" to address government delegates; in addition, non-governmental organizations could be given the opportunity to contribute their views in writing through a "shadow report" on specific issues. Other participants felt that these suggestions were not workable.

Arrangements within the United Nations system

(a) A secretariat

It was felt that there was a need for a strong "focal point" within the United Nations to carry forward the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. A permanent secretariat should be established as one of the actors responsible for the follow-up to the Social Summit. It would provide support to governments and the civil society and serve as a clearinghouse for information.

The United Nations Secretariat should seek a variety of sources of information in preparing documentation for intergovernmental bodies. One suggestion was to "sub-contract" assignments to non-governmental organizations and research institutions for the collection of data and information. Consideration should also be given to an involvement of civil society in the drafting of reports for intergovernmental bodies. One possibility was for the Secretariat to send questionnaires to non-governmental organizations to obtain information and views, and then to involve them in the drafting of documentation. This would be particularly helpful to non-governmental organizations without standing representation in New York.

It was suggested that the cost of documentation could be reduced substantially if more widespread use were made of the Internet and other means of electronic communication. Similarly, it was suggested to create or strengthen a data base of non-governmental organizations, to provide easy access to information about the registered organizations and their objectives and activities.

(b) Interagency arrangements

A working committee on the follow-up to the Social Summit could be established. It would be composed of relevant United Nations programmes and agencies, government delegates and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The purpose of this committee would be to oversee the distribution of responsibilities for follow-up activities and to provide on-going co-ordination of the implementation. Currently, it would seem that agency responsibilities are scattered throughout the text of the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

As was done with the Commission on Sustainable Development and the implementation of Agenda 21, a system of "task managers" within the United Nations system could be established for the follow-up of the Social Summit. The implementation of special aspects of the Programme of Action would be entrusted to these task managers who would also serve as focal points to keep a record of activities,

provide information and gather feedback from all the actors involved. Such division of labour ought, however, to be compatible with the holistic approach recommended in Copenhagen.

A priority for international co-operation is to provide international support for the elaboration and implementation of national plans of action to eradicate poverty. The United Nations system should come together to provide assistance and stimulate the development of national plans. It was suggested to establish a committee of agencies to identify how each can contribute to support countries to implement the Copenhagen Programme of Action. The donor community should also be approached for commitments on resources targeted to implementation.

At the operational level, non-governmental organizations can assume greater responsibility in the implementation of programmes and projects because they often possess expertize, devoted individuals and highly motivated staff. Sometimes, such organizations have also reached a high level of efficiency.

Accreditation of non-governmental organizations

(a) Views regarding the accreditation process

The current arrangements for accreditation of non-governmental organizations to the Economic and Social Council are generally perceived as unsatisfactory. There are no clear guiding principles on which organizations should participate. At present, an organization which is interested in receiving accreditation applies and is considered on its individual merits. Little thought appears to have been given to how the United Nations might require the participation of organizations with a particular expertize or experience for its deliberations on issues of development and social progress. Furthermore, a periodic review of the list of accredited organizations would be useful. Also, accreditation should bring more responsibilities and more benefits to all concerned.

Currently many of the rules and procedures regarding consultative status are not being respected. This has led to confusion. It is important to maintain proper order in the functioning of the intergovernmental bodies and adequate responsibility on the part of the non-governmental organizations. If no norms are established, no transparency is possible. Accreditation needs to be simple, clear, effective, and adequately implemented.

Participants considered the current arrangements for accreditation with its different levels of status – Category I, Category II and Roster – and wondered whether this system was necessary or whether there should be a single consultative status for all non-governmental organizations. It was suggested that perhaps an overall list of acceptable non-governmental organizations themselves would then be free to determine their degree of participation in individual meetings based on their own criteria, such as their resources or degree of interest or involvement in particular issues. It was recognized that organizations with specific interests can be accredited to individual United Nations programmes or specialized agencies and may not want or need to be involved in the deliberations of the intergovernmental bodies.

Several participants stated that there is a need for consistency and fairness in applying accreditation rules to all organizations. Reference was made to the important work currently taking place in the open-ended working group on the review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations.

Non-governmental organizations working at the United Nations could establish improved organizational structures, including expanded caucuses on specific issues, co-ordinate more actively their activities and introduce more rigour into their participation. However, any attempt to organize civil society to enable it to take part in the follow-up to the Summit should emerge from the civil society itself and not be imposed on it. This would be in line with the intrinsic capacity of civil society to organize itself, within the framework of the United Nations.

Another aspect of accreditation is whether the national branches or affiliates of international non-governmental organizations or networks should be eligible for accreditation in their own right. Some participants felt that this was, in effect, double representation. There are different roles and purposes for different non-governmental organizations at different levels. The overall goal should be to create space for those groups which don't have power and the most important consideration is the degree of flexibility afforded to non-governmental organizations to participate.

Increasingly, the informal benefits of participating in United Nations meetings – such as the sessions of the functional commissions of ECOSOC – have begun to outweigh the formal benefits. The opportunity to interact with government representatives and present views directly to them is becoming more important than delivering a formal speech.

As noted above, there is a difference between civil society and the private sector. However, the participation of the private sector in the work of the United Nations and in the implementation of the objectives of the Social Summit is critical. To keep the distinction while ensuring a participation of all actors, it was suggested that those organizations which represent businesses or are primarily concerned with promoting business interests should be accorded a different consultative status. It was mentioned that the tri-partite structure of the ILO seems to work in a satisfactory manner.

(b) Organizations which participated in the Summit

The status of the non-governmental organizations which were accredited to the Summit remains an open question. Should they be eligible for Economic and Social Council Roster status? Should a distinction be kept between non-governmental organizations accredited to conferences and non-governmental organizations involved in the regular work of the United Nations? An aspect of this question is the time required to gain Economic and Social Council status.

Should all non-governmental organizations which participated in the preparations for the Summit seek accreditation with the Economic and Social Council, a number of bottlenecks might be created, including with regard to meeting facilities and requests for documentation. It was suggested that, in practice, many organizations which would seek accreditation would not actually attend meetings. To restrict them in advance, however, would create problems. Perhaps it would be best to adopt a

generous policy concerning accreditation, while allowing the individual non-governmental organizations to work out for themselves their attendance and degree of involvement.

It was suggested that a possible answer to the question of how to maintain a relationship with those non-governmental organizations which participated in the Summit would be to offer those organizations the option to be accredited directly (and only) to the Commission for Social Development. Ultimately, however, there should be no linkage between the accreditation of non-governmental organizations with the Economic and Social Council and the follow-up to the Summit. All non-governmental organizations with an interest in social issues should be encouraged to participate in the implementation of the objectives and commitments of the Summit, irrespective of their official status with the Economic and Social Council. All elements of society, including the private sector – large and small corporations, farmers and trade unions and co-operatives, as well as the media – have a role to play.

List of Participants

Ms Bella Abzug (Women's Environment and Development Organization)
Ms Lisa Antonsen (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark)
Mr Toolsyranj Benydin (World Federation of Labour)
Mr Vagn Berthelsen (Danish Association for International Co-operation – MS)
Mr Jan Birket-Smith (NGO Forum '95)
Mr Roberto Bissio (Development Caucus)
Ms Feng Cui (Permanent Mission of People's Republic of China to the UN)
Mr David Freedman (International Labour Organization)
Mr Branislav Gosovic (South Centre)
Mr Robert Harris (Conference of NGOs – CONGO)
Mr Tony Hill (UN NON Government Liaison Service)
Mr John Hope (United States Mission to the UN)
Ms Maria-Elena Hurtado (Consumers International)
Mr Dirk Jarré (International Council on Social Welfare)
Ms Dienebou Camara Kaba (Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire to the UN)
Mr David King (International Federation of Agricultural Producers)
Mr Bernd Marin (European Centre on Social Welfare)
Mr Mazlan Muhammad (Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the UN)
Mr Horacio Morales (Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement)
Ms Janet Nelson (UNICEF) Ms Susanne Paul (NGO Committee on Ageing)
Ms Patti Petesch (Overseas Development Council)
Ms Huguette Redegeld (International Movement ADT Fourth World)
Ms Marcia Rivera (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencas Sociales)
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Mr Bruce Thordarson (International Co-operative Alliance)
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