Environment and development: common platform for EU preparation for UN session, June 1997

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OBJECTIVE: the communication seeks to set out the guidelines for European Union preparation for the UN General Assembly Special Session to be held in June 1997 on the review of Agenda 21 and related outcomes of the Rio Conference (June 1992). SUBSTANCE: The document seeks to establish a common platform for the discussions by the Member States before the June 1997 meeting in New York and gives a list of objectives for the European Union for the special session in New York. Three types of recommendations are proposed: -a) Recommendations concerning the EU aims on the nature of UNGASS: . the Union should support the guidelines of the special session at Head of State level, . the Rio conclusions should be reviewed in five years time, . the priority for UNGASS should be the implementation of Agenda 21 and making it more operational, . UNGASS should set the Work Programme for the next cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), . EU negotiators preparing UNGASS will need to coordinate with those dealing with UN reform, to ensure a consistent approach (in particular in the financial field), .UNGASS will need to consider the future role of UNEP and the institutional aspects of environment policy, . civil society must be able to contribute to UNGASS. -b) Recommendations for EU aims for the Political Declaration: . harmonious and sustainable development can be guaranteed only through the integration of economic, social and environmental aspects in a democratic framework, . operational coordination of actions must be based on respect for subsidiarity (in particular at regional level), . the level of aid should not fall (rather, the least developed countries should benefit from additional aid), . development aid has become more environmental since Rio and encouragement should therefore be given to generalizing best practice in this field, . UNGASS should urge governments to strengthen the environmental dimension of their policies, . greater coherence is needed in the implementation of projects which have emerged from UN conferences, . the progress made since Rio with the launch of the World Bank/IMF Debt Initiatives must be continued, . trade and environment must play a mutually supportive role in favour of sustainable development, . the private sector must play a key role in relation to sustainable development (national and foreign investment is needed in this field). With regard to environmental priorities the Community wishes to draw UNGASS' attention in particular to: . the need to give greater attention to renewable energy conservation and self-sustaining energy conservation, . forests (which is one of the main topics of UNGASS), . desertification and freshwater scarcity and the consequences on an international scale, . waste (in particular radioactive waste). -c) Recommendations on the role of the Commission for Sustainable Development and its work programme: the Community recommends reducing the number of decisions and making the texts adopted clearer. It must be ensured that decisions are implemented and regional activity is encouraged. The CSD should play a part in promoting regional projects and should see its role strengthened as a forum for exchanging ideas. The UN General Secretariat should produce a report to promote sustainable development. Clear objectives should be defined before the next series of special sessions, which should include discussions on oceans, forests and freshwater with a focus on urban and agricultural problems and the links to soil erosion and food security.