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Sustainable development: Harmony with Nature

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 19 (see A/66/440, para. 2). Action on sub-item (h) was taken at the 34th and 39th meetings, on 10 November and 6 December 2011. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/66/SR.34 and 39).

II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.2/66/L.42 and Rev.1

2. At the 34th meeting, on 10 November, the representative of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Georgia, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), introduced a draft resolution entitled "Harmony with Nature" (A/C.2/66/L.42), which read:

"The General Assembly,

"Reaffirming the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ('Johannesburg Plan of Implementation'),

"Recalling its resolutions 65/164 of 20 December 2010 and 64/196 of 21 December 2009 on Harmony with Nature and its resolution 63/278 of 22 April 2009, by which it designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day,

* The report of the Committee on this item is being issued in 11 parts, under the symbol A/66/440 and Add.1-10.



“Recalling also the 1982 World Charter for Nature,

“Recalling further its resolution 64/253 of 23 February 2010, entitled ‘International Day of Nowruz’, and its resolution 65/309 of 19 July 2011, entitled ‘Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development’,

“Taking into account the interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature, which took place on 20 April 2011, to commemorate the International Mother Earth Day and to advance the holistic thinking undergirding the concept of sustainable development,

“Noting the holding of the first Peoples’ World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, hosted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia in Cochabamba from 20 to 22 April 2010,

“Stressing the importance of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held from 4 to 6 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,

“Aware that mankind is a part of nature and that life depends on the uninterrupted functioning of natural systems which ensure the supply of energy and nutrients,

“Expressing its deep concern about the environmental degradation and the negative impact on nature resulting from human activity, and recognizing the need to strengthen scientific knowledge on the effects of human activities on ecosystems,

“Recognizing that gross domestic product is not an adequate indicator for measuring environmental degradation resulting from human activity and the work carried out by experts on the need to develop adequate tools to measure progress towards global sustainability,

“Also recognizing that the uneven availability of basic statistical data under the three pillars of sustainable development delays the implementation of sustainable development,

“Further recognizing that current consumption and production patterns worldwide are taking a heavy toll on the Earth and its resources, and that world consumption and production need to converge towards a sustainable range, with developed countries taking the lead,

“Recognizing that many ancient civilizations and indigenous cultures have a rich history of understanding the symbiotic connection between human beings and nature that fosters a mutually beneficial relationship,

“Recognizing also the work undertaken by civil society, academia and scientists in regard to signalling the precariousness of life on Earth, as well as their efforts to devise more sustainable models for production and consumption,

“Considering that sustainable development is a holistic concept that requires the strengthening of interdisciplinary linkages in the different branches of knowledge,

“1. Welcomes the second report of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature;

“2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to convene, at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, an interactive dialogue, to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 20 April 2012, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders, to discuss scientific findings in relation on how human activities are affecting ecosystem functions and natural environmental cycles;

“3. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund for the participation of independent experts in the interactive dialogue to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 20 April 2012, and invites Member States and other relevant stakeholders to consider contributing to this fund;

“4. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to continue making use of the existing information portals on sustainable development maintained by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat to gather information and contributions on ideas and activities to promote a holistic approach to sustainable development in harmony with nature being undertaken to advance the integration of scientific interdisciplinary work, including success stories on the use of traditional knowledge, and existing national legislation, with a view to making substantive contributions to the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and beyond;

“5. *Invites* the participants at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to consider issuing a declaration recognizing the rights of nature, its intrinsic value and the need to maintain its regenerative capacity;

“6. *Calls upon* donors, the international community and the pertinent bodies of the United Nations system to support the efforts made by the developing countries to develop and strengthen their basic statistical data on the three pillars of sustainable development and to provide capacity-building and technical support, especially to the developing countries;

“7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to identify new ways and means to use the work of experts to better measure the progress towards global sustainability for the benefit of Member States;

“8. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session a report on the implementation of the present resolution.”

3. At its 39th meeting, on 6 December, the Committee had before it a revised draft resolution entitled “Harmony with Nature” (A/C.2/66/L.42/Rev.1), submitted by Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Eritrea, Georgia, Guyana, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon, Nepal, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Suriname, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Subsequently Belize, Benin, Peru and the Philippines joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

4. At the same meeting, upon the proposal of the Chair, the Committee agreed to waive rule 120 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.2/66/L.42/Rev.1.
5. Also at the same meeting, the Secretary of the Committee read out a statement of the programme budget implications of the revised draft resolution.
6. Also at the 39th meeting, the representative of Bolivia (Plurinational State of) made a statement, in the course of which she orally corrected operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution.
7. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/66/L.42/Rev.1 as orally corrected (see para. 8).

III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

8. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Harmony with Nature

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,¹ Agenda 21,² the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,³ the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development⁴ and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (“Johannesburg Plan of Implementation”),⁵

Recalling its resolutions 65/164 of 20 December 2010 and 64/196 of 21 December 2009 on Harmony with Nature and its resolution 63/278 of 22 April 2009, by which it designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day,

Recalling also the 1982 World Charter for Nature,⁶

Recalling further its resolution 64/253 of 23 February 2010, entitled “International Day of Nowruz”, and its resolution 65/309 of 19 July 2011, entitled “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development”,

Taking note of the interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature, which was held on 20 April 2011, to commemorate International Mother Earth Day by discussing ways to promote a holistic approach to sustainable development in harmony with nature and sharing national experiences on criteria and indicators for measuring sustainable development in harmony with nature,

Noting the first Peoples’ World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, hosted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia in Cochabamba from 20 to 22 April 2010,⁷

Acknowledging the importance of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012,

Expressing its concern about documented environmental degradation and the negative impact on nature resulting from human activity, and recognizing the need to strengthen scientific knowledge on the effects of human activities on ecosystems,

¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

² *Ibid.*, annex II.

³ Resolution S-19/2, annex.

⁴ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

⁵ *Ibid.*, resolution 2, annex.

⁶ Resolution 37/7, annex.

⁷ See A/64/777, annexes I and II.

Recognizing that gross domestic product was not designed as an indicator for measuring environmental degradation resulting from human activity and the need to overcome this limitation with regard to sustainable development and the work carried out in this regard,

Recognizing also the uneven availability of statistical basic data under the three pillars of sustainable development and the need to improve their quality and quantity,

Reaffirming that fundamental changes in the way societies produce and consume are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development and that all countries should promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, with the developed countries taking the lead and with all countries benefiting from the process, taking into account the Rio principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as set out in principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,

Recognizing that many ancient civilizations and indigenous cultures have a rich history of understanding the symbiotic connection between human beings and nature that fosters a mutually beneficial relationship,

Recognizing also the work undertaken by civil society, academia and scientists in regard to signalling the precariousness of life on Earth, as well as their efforts to devise more sustainable models for production and consumption,

Considering that sustainable development is a holistic concept that requires the strengthening of interdisciplinary linkages in the different branches of knowledge,

1. *Takes note* of the second report of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature;⁸

2. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly to convene, at the sixty-sixth session of the Assembly, an interactive dialogue, to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 23 April 2012, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders, to discuss the scientific findings on how human activities are affecting the Earth's ecosystem;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund for the participation of independent experts in the interactive dialogue to be held at the plenary meeting to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 23 April 2012, and invites Member States and other relevant stakeholders to consider contributing to this fund;

4. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue making use of the existing information portal on sustainable development maintained by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat to gather information and contributions on ideas and activities to promote a holistic approach to sustainable development in harmony with nature being undertaken to advance the integration of scientific interdisciplinary work, including success stories on the use of traditional knowledge, and existing national legislation, taking into account that such a portal will be launched by 2012;

⁸ A/66/302.

5. *Notes* the ongoing preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012;

6. *Encourages* all countries and the relevant bodies of the United Nations system to develop and strengthen the quality and quantity of basic statistical data on the three pillars of sustainable development and invites the international community and the pertinent bodies of the United Nations system to assist the efforts of developing countries by providing capacity-building and technical support;

7. *Invites* the relevant entities of the United Nations system to work with other relevant actors, including non-governmental organizations, experts and the academic community, as appropriate, both to identify new ways and means to overcome the limitations of gross domestic product with regard to sustainable development and to better measure the environmental degradation resulting from human activity;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session a report on the implementation of the present resolution.
