

"Pre-conference informal consultations" by Brazil to begin on outcome document

Rio de Janeiro, 16 June (Meena Raman) – Brazil, in its capacity as Presidency of the Rio+20 Conference, has assumed charge of the process to produce the final draft of the outcome document for the consideration and adoption by the heads of states/governments at the Summit, which will be held from 20-22 June.

Mr. Antonio Patriota, the Foreign Minister of Brazil, told a plenary session of the 3rd and last Preparatory Committee meeting (precom) held late last night of Friday, 15 June, that work will start on Saturday, 16 June with the holding of “pre-Conference informal consultations led by the host country”.

Patriota told delegations to convene at 12 noon on Saturday so that Brazil can give the detailed programme of work. He said that the informal consultations will be inclusive and transparent and that all participants’ voices will be heard, as was the practice (in the informal negotiations held thus far).

The Minister further explained that the basis of the way forward will be the text that has been handed to Brazil (upon the conclusion of the precom). Brazil will examine the text and propose a consolidated text with the help of the Conference Secretariat and follow the practice in the precom.

Patriota said that there were only two and half days left for work on the text, which is expected to be finalised by the evening of Monday, 18 June. The Minister stressed that they “could not play with the deadline” as heads of states will be arriving and many delegations had expressed that they wanted to complete the document before their arrival.

At the final plenary of the precom convened close to midnight on Friday, Co-chair of the preparatory process, Mr. John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) invited facilitators of the 11 “splinter groups”

(informal open-ended groups) to report on their progress of work.

These groups were on sections I and II (dealing with “our common vision” and renewing political commitment); green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD); chemicals/desertification; sustainable development goals (SDGs)/means of implementation; sustainable consumption and production (SCP), water and climate change; jobs; SIDs/regions; oceans; gender/education/health/cities/transport/mining; poverty/food security/biodiversity/mountains and forests.

In the feedback from the facilitators, many of them expressed that progress was made, but it was clear that in some key areas, deep divisions remained.

In the sections I and II, which deals with “our common vision” and renewing political commitments, the facilitator from Algeria reported that only one paragraph had been agreed to and not much progress was made on Friday.

In IFSD, Norway, which facilitated the group, said that focus was on the functions of the IFSD and international environmental governance (IEG) and the form of the IFSD and IEG had not been addressed.

On the green economy, Canada, which facilitated the group said there, was considerable progress and important “framing paragraphs” on the green economy had been agreed to. Half of the section had been agreed to with the remaining areas not being as contentious.

In relation to the SDGs, Barbados, which facilitated the group, said that on the process to launch them, the facilitator had shared an informal proposal, which was “received with a lot of interest”, but there was no sufficient time to finish

the consultations. The facilitator added that if this issue was agreed to, it would “unlock” other issues in this section.

On the means of implementation, Barbados reported “good progress”. On the issue of ‘trade’ the Barbados said that he had proposed the option of deleting the entire section except for the first paragraph, which has been agreed to. This was received with “receptivity by most delegations”, he added.

On the finance section, he said that a resource mobilisation framework mechanism was proposed by the G77 and China and discussions around this were inconclusive.

Guatemala, who facilitated the ‘climate change’ section, said that all the views of parties were captured in the text and there were brackets in them, which required “balancing”.

Poland facilitated the ‘jobs’ section and said that the most controversial element was the reference to “green jobs”.

As regards ‘oceans’, Australia facilitated the group and said that the outstanding areas to be resolved were over “international agreements” and “marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction”.

Norway, which facilitated the ‘health’ section, said that one outstanding issue was that involving the TRIPs (Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights) agreement in relation to health and said that the G77 and the US are to consult among themselves over this.

Following the feedback from the facilitators, Ashe said that there was some progress, but there was still a lot of work to be done, with only 37% of the text being agreed to “ad referendum”. He said that the “current process” needed to come to an orderly end, having exhausted all possibilities open (to finalise the outcome document) and it was time to turn to the host country and incoming President of

the Conference to engage in an informal manner defined by Brazil.

When the informal plenary session convened in a formal setting, Mr. Sha Zukang, the Rio+20 Conference Secretary-General said that “we cannot congratulate ourselves” as in the final hours of the preparatory process, “we are not where we need to be.”

He stressed that the paragraphs that remained to be agreed were of utmost importance and were hard but must be addressed.

There were only two and half days left to finalise the outcome document and this must be the deadline. He said there was need for great political courage to make the Conference historic.

He said that it was important to renew the political commitments made and agree on a framework on actions as well as the means to implement the actions. There is need to agree to launch a process for the SDGs which forms an integral part of the post 2015 development agenda. Sha said that if we can agree to the action needed, we can agree to enhance the resource mobilisation (for this). He said developing countries will need support and that it was in everyone’s interest to advance and not retreat.

Sha said that the current economic path was not sustainable and there is need to support governments to green their economy and to implement green economy policies in accordance with their national priorities and support. He also said that an effective institution for addressing the sustainable development agenda was needed. Sha also referred to the need to launch the 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10 YFP) on sustainable consumption and production; address jobs, oceans, food security, access to water and energy. He appealed to countries to make a firm statement to the world that they were committed to a common future.