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A/CONF.48/PC/WG.1/CRP.4/Add.5
14 May 1971
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED
NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN
ENVIRONMENT

Intergovernmental Working Group on the
Declaration on the Human Environment

REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRE OF 21 DECEMBER 1970 CIRCULATED BY THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE IN CONNEXION WITH THE
PREPARATION OF A DRAFT DECLARATION ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Addendum

REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

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Costa Rica 2

COSTA RICA

[Original: Spanish]
12 May 1971

1 and 2. The Government of Costa Rica believes that a "Declaration on the Human Environment" emanating from the United Nations should be a document which demonstrates clearly and in practical terms the great concern of the international community about the deterioration of the environment and the problems it causes. It therefore believes that, in addition to being a document capable of inspiring a policy on the conservation and improvement of the environment which will be conducive to enhanced development of the human race, it must contain specific guidelines for individual, State and inter-State action, because, even if a short, simple declaration is more easily understood, it needs not only to be understood, but to be obeyed, and specific points are more practicably obeyed when they are based on universal principles which are not inconsistent with the legal systems of States.

3. The Declaration should contain a preamble alerting and calling the urgent attention of all the inhabitants of our planet to the constant deterioration of our environment, with special emphasis on:

- (a) The need to prevent air pollution;
- (b) The urgency of reforestation;
- (c) Water conservation and purification;
- (d) Preservation of the soil and subsoil;
- (e) Conservation of land and marine flora and fauna.

4. The articles of the Declaration should be organized by enumerating the rights and duties of man, States and the international community.

5. We hold that if a country is to develop economically and socially it must embody its goals in a scientifically-prepared national development plan, within which there must obviously be included measures designed, in some cases, to conserve and, in other cases, to improve the environment, which is, in the last analysis, part of the development process.

6. We believe that, for practical reasons, we need, rather than a definition of the human environment, a set of minimum conditions necessary to constitute a human environment which is at least acceptable, since it will be difficult to

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achieve the optimum and there will be greater advantage in knowing what these minimum conditions are than in knowing the exact definition of the concept of "human environment".

7. It is essential that the Declaration include reference to Man's right to live in an environment which favours the development of his physical, psychological and spiritual faculties, and one which gives him, his family and the community an adequate standard of living as a corollary of the full enjoyment of the fundamental human rights stated in article 25 of the Declaration of Human Rights, and that it therefore emphasize the duty of individuals, communities, States and international organizations to protect, conserve and enhance the environment. The importance of the participation of international organizations in the achievement of the foregoing objectives through their assistance to developing countries should likewise be emphasized.

8. If the Declaration is to be effective it must include universal and basic principles which States should recognize as guiding their individual and collective actions in preserving and enhancing the human environment.
