

THE WATCHDOG

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil

A Parting Note...

We would have liked the final Watchdog Volume 3 to end on a high note of success, but the UN just isn't meeting our print deadlines.

Instead, we leave you with a tired and marginally cheerful adieu. Many thanks to all who helped the Youth Coalition for ICPD with all our activities these past 2 weeks.

After a respectable recuperation period, we will be publishing our Beijing+5 activities, including the Watchdog, on our website at: www.youthcoalition.org. Keep a look-out for announcements related to our future initiatives.

See you all next time around!

We're on the Web!

www.youthcoalition.org

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Things went from bad to worse here late last night, as the negotiations process finally slammed headlong into the brick wall of time constraint. After a fruitless Thursday morning and an only slightly more productive afternoon and evening, the process ground to a halt in the wee hours of this morning. Drastic shortcuts were taken because of time constraint to speed up the negotiation process.

Just before the start of negotiations in the night, NGOs had one moment of happiness resulting in loud applause from the balcony. This joy was caused by the comments of the chairperson urging the delegates to revert to the Beijing PfA when consensus could not be achieved. This happiness was short-lived and ended as soon as the negotiations began. Unfortunately this informal decision was used several times as a justification and a lame excuse to reject progressive language that went beyond Beijing PfA. For instance, in Paragraph 20 regarding the achievements on the human rights of women, there

was an endless discussion because the paragraph contained a line on sexual orientation which was proposed by JUSCANZ. Some countries, such as Senegal, wanted to delete the whole paragraph because they don't accept the term sexual orientation stating that it was not in the Beijing+5 PfA. One of the suggested solutions to this dispute was to replace the discrimination based on sexual orientation with the list of discriminations contained within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

By the end of this inconclusive discussion on sexual orientation, translation also came to an halt causing a new problem that took the centre stage of the house. Finally, the delegates decided to stay at the plenary and continue with the discussion without interpretation. At this point there were achievements, as one encouraging paragraph was passed that included the phrasing "adolescents continue to lack the education and services needed to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality".

It is probable that this achievement was not noticed by many people because soon after a new discussion on abortion was started. Most countries noted that abortion is a public health concern and efforts are needed to reduce recourse to abortion. Consensus was not close on this issue and after more than an hour of discussion, no compromise had been reached. A decision was made at this point to return to the small working groups and try and get to a quicker resolution of this issue. Whether this occurs will remain to be seen by the end of today.

Regardless, the ever-vigilant Youth Coalition for ICPD will be back, bright and early, in the halls of the UN to keep our eyes open for dangerous last minute tradeoffs and to encourage governments to put their last bits of remaining energy into producing a quality document that gives meaning to this whole process and honour to the phrase Beijing+5!!

By Philip Otieno, Marianna Nasser, and Liam Swiss