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01Oct88 CUBA: SUGAR CONFERENCE SAYS DEVELOPING NATIONS BEING HURT.

By Lionel Martin

HAVANA, Oct 1, Reuter - Low sugar prices, protectionism by industrialised nations and the loss of traditional markets are holding back developing countries from improving technology in the sugar industry, world experts meeting here decided. The problem is caused partly by the United States and the European Economic Community having cut sugar imports from developing nations while increasing domestic sugar production and introducing artificial sweeteners, a report released to delegates said. The five-day meeting organised by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) brought together 200 specialists from 40 countries.

The meeting, which ended on Friday, discussed ways poorer sugar-producing nations can cut production costs, which have at times been higher than market prices, and use sugar cane to produce items other than raw sugar.

The meeting proposed setting up committees to help underdeveloped sugar-producing nations through international cooperation, advice on technology and personnel training, and help in finding sources for financing.

UNIDO deputy director Anatoli Vassilev told delegates low world sugar prices made it virtually impossible for most developing nations to introduce technological changes which would lower production costs and help diversify products.

Jose Cerro, executive-secretary of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Sugar Exporting Nations, said a viable, international sugar agreement is needed to guarantee a fair minimum price for raw sugar on the world market.

The market price of a tonne of raw sugar which 30 years ago could buy six tonnes of crude oil buys less than one tonne today, Cerro said.

Cuban officials said the country has been using sugar cane in cattle feed and to produce paper and fiber board and forms of wax. Cuba has 17 experimental stations and 68 sub-stations working at improving sugar cane varieties, Cuban agronomist Jesus Fonseca told delegates.

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