SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES FORUM

Forum Summary

The Sustainability Issues Forum (SIF) was held November 20, 1997, in Vancouver, British Columbia, as part of the Peoples' Summit on APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation). Approximately 275 people attended the SIF and its five simultaneous workshops on agriculture, aquaculture/fisheries, cities, forests and mining issues. The Forum was the culmination of eight months preparation.

Participants came from various sectors and communities around the world - Asia, the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America representing local activists, fishers, farmers, academics, labour, religious, environmental and development NGOs and the community of Vancouver.

The SIF was co-hosted by the BC Council for International Cooperation, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (Asia-Pacific Working Group) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development. Funded separately from the Peoples' Summit, the SIF secured diversified funding from 12 sources.

Several integrated themes emerged from the 5 workshops that indicate there are profound similarities of the impact of APEC on communities in the South and the North. Some examples of these common threads are:

- The loss of sovereignty by local communities and peoples over resources and the environment, and the threats to livelihoods of millions of people, especially small scale producers.

- Globalization threatens local governments and democracies and therefore there is a need to build local economies and democracies.

Several general ideas emerged in these themes which included:

- a need to assert local culture and knowledge to fight globalization;
- people need to increase their knowledge and understanding of the impacts of globalization and the knowledge of the current changing global framework of which APEC is one mechanism;
- create strong links internationally to work together to promote a sustainable future;
- pursue the over-arching value of justice which puts people first in a people-centred development process which meets basic needs such as water, education, health, clean air, and security.