

## A. HISTORY OF THE SUMMIT

In 1972, Stockholm, Sweden, hosted the first *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*, which was attended by 113 delegates and two heads of state (Olaf Palme of Sweden and Indira Gandhi of India). This first-ever world conference on the environment raised a generation's awareness of an issue hitherto little talked about, the global environment. The Stockholm conference secured a permanent place for the environment on the world's agenda and led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Although the international nature of the environment was now understood, environmental concerns were compartmentalized at Stockholm, where issues like pollution and species problems were high priorities.

Since the 1972 conference there have been a number of significant international conferences, as well as a number of international environmental agreements, some of which have been ratified by Canada. In 1976, the first-ever global conference on human settlements was held in Vancouver; and 1977 marked the important United Nations (UN) Conference on Desertification in Nairobi, as well as the UN Water Conference at which the *Mar del Plata Action Plan* was adopted. Other major international agreements include the 1978 *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement*; the 1979 *Geneva Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution*; the 1985 *Helsinki Agreement* (a 21-nation commitment to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions); the 1988 *Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer*; and the 1989 *Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes*.<sup>2</sup> In 1992, it was this kind of international cooperation that UNCED sought, but on a larger scale.

The world community proceeded along a parallel track through the 1970s and 1980s in the effort to promote the development of developing countries. Beginning in the 1960s, which was declared the United Nations Development Decade, broad policies for the improvement of the standard of living in the developing world were created, and these policies and programs were revised and expanded during the succeeding two decades, also declared Development Decades.

Several key events occurred during the 1960s. The World Food Programme (WFP) was established as a joint undertaking of the UN and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1963. The WFP provides food to support development activities and emergency food in times of crisis. The General Assembly convened the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964, which became one of the UN's permanent bodies. Its aim is to analyze the practices of international trade and to enhance economic development wherever possible. UNCTAD met five times between 1964 and 1983. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the world's largest multilateral technical grant assistance program and the central coordinating organization of the UN for development activities, was established in 1965. In 1967, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) was established to promote the industrialization of the developing countries.

In 1970 the General Assembly adopted the *International Development Strategy*, which called for joint action by developing and developed countries and set specific goals for progress in all sectors of economic activity. The target that was then set for transfers of funds from economically advantaged countries has never been met by more than a few countries: developed countries were to endeavour to transfer financial resources to developing countries of at least one percent of gross national product (GNP). By the mid 1970s, at least 0.7% of GNP was to be transferred in the form of official development assistance (ODA)—long-term, low-interest loans—to developing countries.

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<sup>2</sup> Environment Canada, "Canada and the Earth Summit: Green Plan Goes Global," 1991.