

the planet in two centuries of industrialization, is in no position now to place limits on Asian growth?

That is just China, one example. And in questions of sustainable development the defining feature of Asia-Pacific is its diversity. The region contains very poor countries and rich ones too. Some are resource-rich and fuel-abundant, others resource-importers and energy-short. Several are densely populated; a few are only sparsely settled. All of these variables imply different interests, different values—different preferences in choosing trade-offs between economic growth, poverty relief, energy consumption, resource depletion, environmental degradation.

Then there are the intricate interconnections between sustainable-development issues and other regional policy issues. Achieving economic growth rates sufficient to sustain rising populations. The security threat of environmental scarcities leading to violence within or between states. The freedom of citizens in civil society to articulate their own interests in clean water, a stable fishery, or soil conservation—and to influence government policy. Or the presence of indigenous communities robust enough to share the benefits of economic growth while preserving the promise of sustainable forests and biodiversity.

Even so, one generalization is allowed: In virtually every Asia-Pacific country (as in Canada) there are habits and policies of growth that are simply unsustainable. For instance, in only 30 years fully half of Thailand's forest cover has been lost—and with it, an inestimable biodiversity, the precious capacity to store carbon dioxide, and protection against ruinous soil erosion. To cite another case, the Yellow Sea between China and South Korea is now listed among the "dying seas" of the world. Coastal industrialization,