



FORWARD

Since the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987, the concept of sustainable development has become widely accepted by the intellectual and policy-making community. However, the operationalization of ecological practices has given rise to an active debate. In other respects, in response to the radical changes which affect the international community and threaten the living conditions of states and their populations, Canadians have asked the government for an enlargement of the concept of security in order to include non-military factors. There is growing belief that for too long, those factors have been left aside in the analysis and resolution of conflicts. This, in a nutshell, represents the context in which the issue of "environmental security" has arisen.

There is no consensus to date on the elements of definition of environmental security. Without clarification of the sense and scope of this notion, choosing the best policies and instruments becomes difficult. Operational definitions on the issues of the security and protection of the environment and on sustainable development already exist. It is therefore legitimate to ask ourselves whether the term "environmental security" adds any value to our understanding of the problem and our ability to act.

The seminar on environmental security allowed us to address those issues. As you may note from the agenda attached, the first workshop set the basis for further discussion by concentrating on a global overview of the threatening ecological factors and situations and how these are linked to the development of conflicts. The elements of definition of the concept of environmental security were then considered during the second workshop. Finally, the third workshop was designed in a way that allowed the results of our discussions to be translated in policy ideas.

As the assistant deputy minister for the Global Issues bureau, I am pleased to have hosted this seminar, as there is no more global and complex issue as environment. In the bureau, environmental matters affect the work of all the divisions and environmental security is only one of the aspects of environmental concerns which deserves attention.

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