

combining international environmental data. The situation improved at the global level during the 1980s, especially through the pioneering Earthwatch programs of UNEP. Yet today in most developing countries and regions there is still little or no technical capacity for monitoring environmental conditions and trends. A recent study on the effectiveness of international environmental conventions revealed that many developing countries lack the ability to collect and assess the data needed to meet their treaty reporting obligations. Capacity building in developing countries on this and in many other areas of environmental management must be supported as a priority.

- ***Establish independent scientific panels.*** On key international environmental issues during the 1980s (e.g. acid rain, climate warming), scientists from different countries were often set against each other and scientific uncertainty contributed to postpone further action. Building on the example of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNCED should put global scientific cooperation at the centre of the Agenda 21 program and budget. Follow-up mechanisms should include greater use of independent international scientific panels and commissions of inquiry for establishing an authoritative basis for decision-making and dispute settlement.
- ***Breach the barricades between regional groups.*** At many international conferences since the Stockholm Conference, regional caucuses increasingly displaced the scheduled multilateral discussions, leaving little room or time for inter-regional negotiations. At the eleventh hour the situation was often only salvaged by dodging the issues with compromises on language in order to get a face-saving but artificial consensus. As we move away from the era of zero-sum games to confront new global threats to national and common interests, the political habits and barriers dividing countries and regions must be breached. Before and at the Rio Conference, Canada should join or form groups of likeminded countries which transcend the boundaries of the conventional regional groups. These new "coalitions for Agenda 21" should lead the way towards a higher common denominator rather than, as too often happens now, the lowest common denominator.
- ***Aim for consensus but not at any price.*** At the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee and at the Rio Conference itself, when there is near consensus but little or no chance of complete consensus because of objections by one or a few countries, that reality should be respected and recorded by voting on the issue.
- ***Ensure secure funding for implementing Agenda 21.*** The 1972 Stockholm Action Plan and UNEP relied almost entirely on voluntary contributions. Being voluntary, the annual contributions were unpredictable and unreliable as a basis for effective planning and management of international environmental programs requiring