

UN General Assembly Resolutions setting up the CSD were endorsed in December 1992. The Commission's Secretariat is to be located in New York in the new Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. The Department will be headed by Nitin Desai (India), who served as Deputy to Maurice Strong when he was the Secretary-General of UNCED. The Commission will be made up of high-level representatives of 53 UN Member States. The issue of NGO involvement in the CSD, which is of concern to the members of this Committee, has not yet been resolved. The UN Secretary-General will submit guidelines in 1993, but indications are, and it is the hope of this Committee, that NGOs and other interested parties will continue the active role they had in UNCED. The Commission's first substantive session is expected to occur in May or June 1993.

4. The Rio Declaration

The Rio Declaration was the outcome of the negotiations for what had been envisioned by the Brundtland Commission as a global charter by which the countries of the world would commit themselves to sustainable development. Agreements reached in UN fora demand consensus, which can have the unfortunate result that the lowest common denominator prevails, as was the case with the Rio Declaration. The Rio Declaration on environment and development lists 27 major principles with the purpose of establishing "a new and equitable global partnership" to manage the resources of the earth in a sustainable fashion. This declaration enshrines the rights of individual nations to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and development policies. However, nations have the responsibility to ensure that their activities do not cause damage beyond their national jurisdictions. Further, the declaration states that development must proceed so as to meet the needs of today without compromising future generations, and states that development should never proceed without consideration for environmental protection.

Canada settled for The Rio Declaration but had negotiated for an "Earth Charter", a succinct global doctrine that enshrined the concept of sustainable development, and of environmental rights and responsibilities. At the Earth Summit, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said "the idea of an Earth Charter which slipped beyond our grasp at Rio should be revived". As a target date for concluding the negotiation of an Earth Charter, the Prime Minister proposed 1995, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. This suggestion met with widespread support at Rio. The creation of a negotiated Earth Charter should continue to receive Canadian support and be recognized as a priority item on Canada's post-Rio agenda.

Recommendation No. 1

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada maintain its objective of establishing an Earth Charter by 1995, and work toward this goal by pressing the newly-formed United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to initiate and direct new international negotiations for the development of a visionary Earth Charter.

5. Convention on Biodiversity

The convention contains provisions that are intended to ensure effective national action to curb the destruction of biological species, habitats and ecosystems. Significant provisions include:

- the requirement that countries adopt regulations to conserve their biological resources;