

GLOBAL AGENDA

CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Environmental Issues in Canadian Foreign Policy

How Canadians view environmental issues continues to change — from primarily national and transboundary to distinctly international and global. Just as peace and security are necessary goals, the dangers of a deteriorating environment are now broadly recognized as a global priority.

The premise of Canada's environmental foreign policy is that global environmental problems are already affecting the well-being of Canadians. Canadian foreign policy, therefore, must build on domestic environmental policy and on progress made in our environmental relations with the United States — on acid rain and other issues — to deal with the global impact of environmental change.

Environmental issues influence virtually every aspect of foreign policy:

- Prosperity and competitiveness are directly affected by a variety of factors, including the depletion of marine resources and the establishment of international regimes to deal with greenhouse gas emissions.
- Development assistance is undermined if growth in developing countries is constrained by environmental deterioration.
- Mass migration and perhaps even conflict may result from a depleted resource base, or from severe natu-

ral events aggravated by environmental change.

- Issues, like nuclear safety and disposal of nuclear waste, show that the environment is already an integral component of global security.
- A new export market is emerging for environmentally sound products and environmental services and technologies.

In short, the environment is a major factor pervading foreign policy preoccupations, such as bilateral and multilateral relations, development, security, trade policy and international finance. What is new is the recognition that solutions to our environmental problems require broad international co-operation. The 1992 Earth Summit and the agreements adopted there were an important milestone in shaping the global agenda.

Canada is concentrating its environmental foreign policy on four basic priorities.

• Strengthening international organizations

Strong international organizations are an essential starting point for multilateral environmental initiatives, the development of international environmental law and environmental research.

• Pursuing sectoral priorities

Internationally agreed forest management practices and the protection

of marine resources, especially fisheries, will contribute significantly to global progress toward sustainable development.

• Expanding bilateral environmental relations

Beyond the United States, specific countries have a direct impact on Canada's environmental expertise, or are partners in the pursuit of common environmental objectives. Also, regional co-operation, such as that among Arctic countries, is increasingly important to the health of fragile ecosystems.

• Implementing the Conventions

Canada ratified the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change on December 4, 1992. Given the pace of ratification in other countries, we expect the Conventions to come into force in 1994. These are among the first legally binding instruments that will provide global environmental benefits if successfully implemented.

Perhaps the most important institutional follow-up to decisions taken at the Earth Summit will be the effective operation of the new UN Commission on Sustainable Development. As in Rio, Canada intends to take a leading role as a member of the Commission to help forge the shared solutions of the future. How we frame solutions today will be critical to the well-being of generations to come. 🍀

