

The root problem facing the developing world is the rapid growth of population that strains the ability of natural resources to sustain economic development.⁶ More people demand more employment opportunities, and agriculture has been the traditional area where they have found work. Thus, the exploding population has created an increasing demand for agricultural land; with this expansion of the agricultural frontier, forests are receding at an alarming rate. As well, two-thirds of the people in the Third World rely on wood to supply their energy needs. With an ever-growing consumer population (the global population is expected to double to 10 billion over the next 50 years) and a declining resource base, fuelwood supplies are severely threatened.⁷ It is essential to the long-term survival both of one of the world's most bountiful and valuable natural ecosystems and its human inhabitants that environmentally sound and sustainable forms of forest development be found.

Second, despite the vast opportunities created by the technological revolutions of the twentieth century and despite progress over the past generation, more than 1 billion people, one-fifth of the world's population, live on less than one dollar a day - a standard of living that Western Europe and the United States attained two hundred years ago.⁸ As a consequence, they suffer grossly inadequate access to resources such as education, health services, infrastructure and credit; resources that are necessary for a better life. The essential task of development should therefore be to provide opportunities for people of developing countries, as well as for the hundreds of millions of people from other countries not much better off, to reach their potential.⁹

Third, although timber production is not the main cause of tropical deforestation - only a small proportion of tropical timber harvested is used for industrial purposes (17%), logging efforts have clearly contributed to the problem. For a large proportion of the world's population that lives in developing countries, the prospects for economic progress, growth, and development hinge on the production and export of primary commodities. Those commodities are of vital importance to these countries because they constitute their principal domestic economic activity, are the main source of their foreign exchange earnings and the material base of the initial stages

⁶ See appendix V, the average annual percentage change in a country's population (1980-1991).
Source: The World Bank, The World Bank Atlas-25th Anniversary Edition, Washington, D.C., 1992.

⁷ Source: FAO, Global Overview of Status and Trends of World's Forests, Rome, 1991.

⁸ See appendix VI, an indication of the standard of living in various countries (GNP per capita, 1991).
Source: The World Bank, The World Bank Atlas-25th Anniversary Edition, Washington, D.C., 1992.

⁹ See appendix VII, the illiteracy rate, 1990, showing the percentage of the population age 15 or older who cannot read and write a short simple statement about everyday life.

Source: The World Bank, The World Bank Atlas-25th Anniversary Edition, Washington, D.C., 1992.