

they have been given narrow mandates, small budgets, and limited support. No organization has the authority or political strength to serve as a central clearinghouse or coordinator, nor does any organization have the mission of establishing broad GATT-like principles as the basis for norms in international environmental relations."<sup>4</sup>

The World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) put it somewhat more starkly:

"The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; the policies and institutions concerned must."<sup>5</sup>

The current international chaos in the environmental area undermines the prospects for making sustained progress in international rule-making, both with regards to improved standards and their effective enforcement. The multiplicity of forums and the relatively weak mandates stand in sharp contrast to the Big Three specialized international agencies: the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. Environmental policy is very much an institutional orphan in comparison.

### The GEO Mandate

A comprehensive international environmental institution, a GEO, would serve to coordinate global environmental efforts and to focus political interest and public policy debates on the environmental agenda. This would include both multilateral efforts directed at global commons problems, as well as encouraging good environmental stewardship in national programs where the environmental effects are principally local in nature. More specific key functions for a GEO would be: a central role for environmental input into international development projects; an authoritative body on environmental agreement formulation, surveillance and dispute settlement; a central scientific role in strengthening scientific investigation and global understanding of environmental threats; and a mechanism to ensure broadly based participation in environmental decision-making. Through focused rule-making and joint action, a GEO would contribute to international harmony on environmental issues.

---

<sup>4</sup>Daniel C. Esty, Greening the GATT: Trade, Environment, and the Future, Institute for International Economics, Washington, D.C., July 1994, p.78.

<sup>5</sup>World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), Our Common Future, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 310.