

SUMMARY

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 resulted in the global community committing itself to the goal of sustainable development. Among UNCED's major outcomes was Agenda 21, an ambitious plan of action on some thirty-nine environment and development issues. The United Nations General Assembly subsequently created the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to monitor global progress in achieving the goals laid out in Agenda 21 and UNCED's other outcomes. Each annual session of the CSD includes a review of selected chapters of Agenda 21. A full review of Agenda 21 and UNCED's other outcomes will be held in 1997.

The CSD encourages countries to report on the progress made in achieving Agenda 21 goals, the challenges that exist in attaining sustainable development, and future directions for action. These reports permit each country to share with other CSD participants lessons learned since UNCED and future steps it intends to take.

General Trends in the Implementation of Agenda 21

Canada is a country of diversity, and its sustainable development agenda belongs to all Canadians. Our political and economic structures provide a place for all to contribute to solutions. That sense of shared commitment is true of both our domestic progress and our support of international initiatives.

The years since UNCED have seen much greater use of information technology in support of sustainable development. The Internet and similar innovations link people and communities, allowing access to education and information that was once almost impossible. These technologies allow people and organizations to share valuable perspectives coming from sources such as the traditional environmental knowledge of Aboriginal people and new processes to measure sustainability. New approaches to community action emphasize communication of successes and the revitalization of communities. New forms of support from government and the private sector are furthering these processes.

Strengthening the Role of Major Groups

The involvement of major groups in society in defining and achieving sustainable development goals has a long tradition in Canada and has become a standard part of Canadian public policy making. There have been two important trends in major group activity since UNCED.