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## THE ENVIRONMENT

In just 20 years, environmental issues have become top priorities on the international agenda. Once perceived as primarily local, environmental problems are now recognized as having global impact. Climate change, ozone depletion, transboundary air pollution, deforestation, desertification, mismanagement of marine resources and other global environment issues have forced the international community to respond.

The 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment placed environmental concerns firmly on the international agenda for the first time. The United Nations Environment Program was established as a result of the conference, to promote and co-ordinate action on environmental issues within the United Nations system.

In April 1987, the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), a watershed in international environmental discussions, introduced the term "sustainable development" to the international lexicon. The report emphasized that the environment and economic growth are not only compatible but interdependent.

Recent economic summits have increasingly addressed environmental concerns. At the 1988 Toronto Summit, a substantive discussion on the environment led to an endorsement of sustainable development.

The 1989 Paris Summit communiqué called for action in such areas as climate change, the integration of economic and environmental policies, sustainable forestry and sound management of the world's oceans. Leaders agreed that economic incentives, including ODA debt forgiveness and debt-for-nature swaps, could encourage developing countries to adopt environmentally sound policies.

Leaders at the 1990 Houston Summit urged that negotiations on climate change and forestry be

completed, and that a strategy on land-based sources of marine pollution be developed. They underlined the need to conserve and protect living marine resources, respect conservation regimes and strengthen regional fisheries organizations. The importance of preserving biodiversity (the wealth and variety of genetic material, species and ecosystems) was also noted.

The Houston Summit endorsed the continuing work of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development on environment-economy links, market-oriented approaches and environmental indicators. When OECD environment ministers met in January 1991, they developed an environmental strategy for the 1990s which included four Canadian initiatives: reviews of countries' environmental policy; good environment practices for governments; an examination of the relationship between trade and the environment; and the continuation of OECD work on environmental indicators. Ministers also encouraged the OECD to intensify its work on economic instruments, including "green taxes" and realistic resource pricing.

Further support for environmental co-operation was provided during the London Summit in 1991, where emphasis was placed on the role of market economies and democratic systems in mobilizing adequate resources and ensuring accountability. Protection of living marine resources, a Canadian priority, received particular attention.

The high priority attached to environmental issues by summit leaders, the groundwork provided by the Stockholm Conference and the Brundtland Commission, and the efforts of many other international bodies culminated in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Hosted by the UN and attended by leaders from more than 120 countries, UNCED's aim was to develop an international environmental agenda