

Mr. President, Dr. Tolba, Ministers, and Delegates,

It is indeed an honour and a privilege to represent the Government of Canada at the Fifteenth Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The unprecedented ministerial presence at this current session underlines the importance which countries attach to the environment. It is a tribute to the dedication and commitment of UNEP and its Executive Director, Dr. Tolba. It is also an indication that global environmental issues are high on the international political agenda.

I will concentrate my remarks on the need to achieve consensus, cooperation and commitment in order to resolve environmental problems. This presupposes a multi-disciplinary approach. In this respect, I would like to focus on the role and mandate of UNEP, and on the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development.

Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Environmental degradation affects all nations of the world and respects no boundaries. Whether we like it or not, the world is at a turning point. The environment cannot be allowed to deteriorate. We need global solutions.

In some respects, the international community is making progress. We are indeed fortunate that almost twenty years ago, we had the foresight to establish the United Nations Environment Programme. Canada fully recognizes the pivotal role UNEP has played, and must continue to play, in catalyzing and coordinating international cooperation in environmental matters, and in implementing sustainable development.

We appreciate the clear direction given by UNEP in identifying the major environmental issues facing the world today. As Dr. Tolba has said numerous times, these are: global climate change; depletion of the ozone layer; fresh water problems; marine pollution; desertification; deforestation; biological diversity; and, hazardous waste. It must be realized that certain global problems affect particular regions of the world differently -- for example, the severity of the desertification problem in Africa, and the contamination of the food chain in the Canadian Arctic. However, to find lasting solutions to such problems, the assistance and