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DECLARATION ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

A Statement on June 14, 1972, to the Plenary Session of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, concerning the Draft Declaration on the Human Environment, by Mr. J.A. Beesley, Legal Adviser to the Department of External Affairs.

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We regret that it has not been possible to reach agreement on every issue raised during the discussions on the Draft Declaration. We particularly regret that it was not possible to reach agreement on matters as important as the duty of states to inform one another concerning their activities or developments within their jurisdiction, and the overwhelming need to spare man and his environment from the potentially catastrophic effects of nuclear-weapons tests. Nevertheless it is our considered view that the Draft Declaration represents a major achievement. It reflects an interdisciplinary approach to the problems of the human environment and points the way in clear and unmistakable terms to the direction we must follow if man is to survive as a species.

When we spoke on this matter in plenary at the time we were debating -- the setting-up of a working group to consider the Draft Declaration, we pointed out that the document we were considering was more than a plea for co-operative action; it was more than an inspirational message; it was more than an educational vehicle. It was our view that the Draft Declaration then under consideration represented nothing less than the first essential step in developing international environmental law.

If the Draft Declaration reflected such considerations before its intensive study and debate in the working group, it does so even more now, for the Declaration has been broadened in many important respects and, equally important, now represents a wider consensus on a larger number of issues.

I shall now summarize briefly the view of the Canadian delegation concerning the conceptions embodied in the Draft Declaration.