

Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and through ECOSOC makes recommendations to the General Assembly. It has fifty-three seats distributed on a regional basis, and is a forum for discussing and reviewing sustainable development activities. Yet its role must not be overstated. The CSD has no legal or budgetary authority over the activities and programs it reviews. The CSD is largely an institution for information sharing and the development of political will. It is not a proactive, autonomous decision-making or rule-making organization. Limitations of the CSD appeared at its first substantive meeting in June 1993. At this meeting, governments could only agree to a voluntary reporting scheme on implementation of Agenda 21 where individual governments decide whether to report and the degree of detail in a report. CSD Chair Ismail Razali, the ambassador of Malaysia, called this decision on reporting schemes a "confidence building phase to overcome fears of some developing countries that the Commission might become a watchdog body."³ This Paper takes the view that an international environmental watchdog is exactly what is needed.

The United Nations system has a number of institutions aside from the CSD that address various aspects of environmental issues and sustainable development. Foremost are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also has an ad hoc working group that conducts analysis on trade, environment and development. Specialized agencies also are a part of the system. For example, the World Bank and the regional development banks consider environmental criteria in their lending practices. The Global Environment Facility, a financial mechanism to promote sustainable development, is managed by the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP. In addition, there are a large number of International Environmental Agreements (IEAs) connected with the UN system that address specific environmental issues. Examples of such international cooperation are the well-known Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the International Convention For the Prevention of Pollution From Ships, and the International Convention For the Regulation of Whaling. Parties to IEAs meet separately; and often have separate secretariats and budgets. This current state of the management of environmental issues has led to the observation that:

"The difficulty with existing international institutions that address environmental issues, such as the UN Environment Programme and the recently created UN Commission on Sustainable Development, is that

³Quoted in Jared Blumenfeld, "The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development," Environment, Volume 36, Number 10., December 1994, p.3.