

This view ignores relative cost. Education and health care are labour intensive, as are many of the most effective medical services. These services cost much less in a cheap labour economy than they do in a wealthier country. So, although a poor country has less to spend on these services, it also needs to spend less on them.²³

Although circumstances will undoubtedly vary from country to country, it is apparent to this Committee that Canada can best assist Third World nations on the road to sustainable development by empowering people to help themselves. This can most effectively be achieved through the alleviation of debt, and the focusing of our ODA on countries that have national action plans that promote human development (health and education) and that assess and prioritize their national development goals within the concept of sustainable development.²⁴

C. Reform of the United Nations and the International Funding Agencies

Arthur Campeau noted that the United Nations has for too long been a model of "we the governments" as opposed to "we the peoples", as the United Nations Charter declares. Arthur Campeau told the Committee, the United Nations must adapt to the challenges of the 21st century, to respond to the legitimate and necessary participation of all sectors of our societies. In essence, new mechanisms must be developed to democratize the institution, and make it fully accountable to the peoples of both wealthy and poor nations. The "Rio Way" — transparency, inclusiveness and accountability — must become a doctrine of the United Nations.

Maurice Strong also noted that as the United Nations approaches its 50th anniversary it is very badly in need of strong refurbishing and revitalization, and of a recommitment by member states. Although Maurice Strong was hopeful about the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, he expressed concern that its establishment within the structure of the United Nations might cause it to be held captive to the bureaucracy of the United Nations and the traditional ways of the New York diplomatic community.

Jim MacNeill expressed reservations about conducting future international negotiations on the environment within a United Nations forum. The United Nations rule of consensus severely hinders the development of effective international agreements. It is essentially impossible to get 180 governments to agree to anything but the lowest common denominator. Jim MacNeill suggested that future negotiations be shifted into other fora, or in the case of an agreement on sustainable forestry, to limit the negotiating parties to the 25 forest states that are the custodians of 90% of the world's forests.

The traditional approaches and ways of thinking and doing things must be adjusted both within the United Nations and within the international funding institutions. Decision-making at all levels must now be assessed against the linkages between environment and development, and

²³ Sen (1993).

²⁴ The issue of international debt was studied by the Sub-Committee on International Debt of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade in 1990. In their report tabled 7 June 1990, the Sub-Committee emphasized that "[c]ountries crushed by debt cannot trade more with us or contribute to a healthy global environment. (...) Immediate action on the debt is imperative. But it must be part of an overall agenda for action on North-South issues — an agenda which aims to put an end to the unacceptable consequences of mass poverty on the threshold of the third millenium." House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade, *Securing Our Global Future: Canada's Stake in the Unfinished Business of Third World Debt*, 7 June 1990, p. 15 and 17.