habitat. Our economy has changed with global competition and knowledge-based workplaces that require different skills, greater adaptability, and higher productivity. We see a growing commitment to equity for all citizens and a renewed appreciation for the value of strong communities.

We have achieved a great deal. We have begun to understand the comprehensive nature of sustainable development. We are resolving conflicts between environmental, economic, and social objectives. We have achieved some success in responding to issues such as acid rain, endangered species, and the need for new governance frameworks. We appear to have broken the link that made rising pollution levels an automatic and equivalent outcome of rising economic growth.

The path from here is challenging. Many trends still give cause for concern. During the past twenty-five years, the world population rose by 2 billion. The world now adds the population of three Canadas to its total each year. If current trends continue, our current global population of 5.7 billion could rise to almost 8 billion twenty-five years from now. Combined with increasing economic development around the world and no significant change in consumption and production patterns, we can expect much more stress on the environment, both global and domestic. This would include more pressure on natural habitat, greater impacts on biodiversity, and continued growth in greenhouse gases and global warming, all of which will carry social and economic costs. A sound economy will be needed to meet these challenges and the aspirations of a growing population.

A first step in developing permanent solutions may be in rethinking how we see the world and our place in it. The growing interest in moving beyond short-term perspectives toward those that integrate the environment, the economy, and social cohesion for long-term progress is a positive sign. Concepts such as natural and social capital, eco-efficiency, the ecological footprint, and traditional Aboriginal knowledge broaden the information we use to understand the world. They can help us improve decision making at the personal, community, corporate, government, and international level.

Innovative approaches, both domestically and globally, can help us find ways to bridge the gap between the carrying capacity of the environment and the growing stresses we place on it. Scientific and technological responses can address this gap to a certain extent. However, individuals must look at their own actions. Societies need to find innovative ways to integrate environmental, economic, and social concerns, build partnerships, and improve governance in support of sustainability.

These types of initiatives emphasize the importance of sharing information and building our knowledge base. They may provide the basis for breakthroughs that are necessary to meet the challenges in our environment, economy, and society. They improve the ability of individuals, communities, and nations to make the informed choices that are ultimately at the heart of sustainable development.