

- A Forestry Strategy for Canada -

I ISSUE

To build support in favour of continuing the process of developing an international consensus on forests through negotiation of an International Convention on Forests (ICF).

II PURPOSE

A commitment by the international community to negotiate an ICF would be an important foreign policy achievement for Canada.

Our strategic objectives in pursuing an ICF are three-fold:

- 1) to protect and strengthen Canada's international trade in forest products, particularly in response to green consumerism;
- 2) to promote conservation and sustainable development of Canada's forests by developing internationally-accepted criteria for sustainable forest management;
- 3) to develop a comprehensive international policy and institutional framework for future Canadian cooperation in the forest sector.

III BACKGROUND

Canada's public commitment to a "global convention or agreement" on forests goes back to the 1990 Houston Economic Summit Declaration signed by the Prime Minister.¹ The fact that the United Nations was planning a major world conference on the environment and development (UNCED) provided a natural forum for pursuing the goal of such a convention. Leading up to the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 1-12, 1992, four Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings were held over a two-year period.

At PrepCom I, in August 1990, Canada drew attention to the G-7 Houston Declaration and proposed that UNCED study the conservation and sustainable development of forests rather than the much narrower topic of deforestation which was originally proposed.

At PrepCom II, in March-April 1991, two events of major importance occurred:

¹ See appendix I, an excerpt from the Houston Summit Declaration. The Houston Declaration expanded the initial focus on tropical forests to include temperate and boreal forests; thus, global forests emerged prominently on the international political agenda at that time.