

International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes. Yet UNCED cannot claim great success in terms of concrete results, although it was a start and raised awareness.⁵⁰ The comprehensive program for action, Agenda 21, agreed to by governments, for example, lacks the force of law and the implementation of Agenda 21 is dependent upon best endeavours and not contractual obligations. There remains ample scope for countries unilaterally or collectively to make firm commitments for reducing environmental stress.

With respect to reducing environmental stress, the maintenance of an open international trading system and investment climate is beneficial. Michael Hart and Sushma Gera have concluded that:

- economic prosperity is one of the most important determinants leading to a more sustainable environment;
- promoting economic development in developing countries through trade and investment is one of the most efficient ways to raise environmental conditions on a global basis;
- trade-restricting measures are often the least efficient way of ensuring that prices reflect environmental costs and thus rarely achieve environmental goals and may even retard them;
- achieving environmental objectives by means of trade measures lends itself to protectionist abuse; and
- there is no fundamental conflict between environmental objectives and the

⁵⁰ "The sad fact is that governments did not commit themselves, individually or collectively, to implement any concrete measures to reduce catastrophic rates of population growth, or to alter certain consumption patterns, say in fossil fuels. Nor did governments agree on any measures to roll back mass poverty, reduce the debt of poor countries - some voluntary announcements were made, but no collective agreement to increase poor-country access to rich country markets. There is nothing in the conventions on climate change and biodiversity that binds governments to concrete measures, with targets and timetables, to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases or to reduce high rates of deforestation or species loss...So, the sad bottom line is that governments did not agree to implement any measures that would alter the dismal trends that brought them to Rio...Our leaders left almost nothing unsaid and almost everything undone." Jim MacNeil, the former Secretary General of the Brundtland Commission, statement before the Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on the Environment. Quoted in Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Environmental and Demographic Threats to Canadian Security", Canadian Foreign Policy, Vol. 2, No.2, Fall 1994, pp. 27-8.