

Developing countries today face environment and development challenges on a scale that the human community has never before confronted. They face these daunting challenges in a world in which their already serious handicaps and disadvantages are in most cases increasing.

As our industrialized societies move toward more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, there will be a relative decline in the need for some of the key raw materials and commodities on which developing countries' economies depend so heavily.

The transition to sustainable development will not be without its costs and its difficulties, and, again, the developing countries are the most vulnerable to this. In a world economy in which knowledge applied through technology, marketing, design and sophisticated management systems has become the principal source of added value and competitive advantage, developing countries face the prospect that existing disadvantages could well deepen.

They are not the only ones who need our help. The countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe, in which the failures of centrally planned economies were accompanied by some of the worst environmental devastation anywhere, must now face the mammoth task of rebuilding their economies. It is important to them and to us that they do this on an environmentally sound and sustainable basis, in the course of effecting their transition to market economies.

We cannot divorce ourselves from the gathering crisis of the developing world or from the degeneration of the countries of the east, from the point of view of our own economic and security interests, as well as our moral responsibilities. Industrialized countries have an obligation to reduce the environmental impacts of their own economic activities and to leave space for developing countries to fulfil their development needs and aspirations.

What, then, are the prospects that some of these issues will be addressed effectively through implementation of the principles