

- In 1972 world industry either ignored the Stockholm Conference or watched sceptically from the sidelines. Today, industry is a major and well organized contributor to national and international negotiations, especially in OECD countries where some industries and large corporations are ahead of their own governments.
- At and after the 1972 Stockholm Conference a chief obstacle to better UN coordination and cooperation on environment was the relative independence of the main UN agencies and the corresponding lack of coordination and cooperation among the counterpart sectoral departments at the national level. Today, the constructive participation of the UN organizations and agencies in the process of preparations for UNCED has worked extremely well and offers a promising new model for such cooperation in the post-Rio period.
- The initiative to convene the Stockholm Conference in 1972 was driven initially by concerns about pollution. The topics of "Environment and Development" was only one of the six main agenda items, and the nexus between the two emerged from the debate. For Rio "Environment and Development" is the overall theme of the Conference. At the same time, the perception of environment and development as competing interests has not been resolved. The 1970's view that environment is the enemy of development and vice versa still prevails.
- UNCED's prospects for success are significantly lower in the face of these two views of development: the first is a view of development based on unlimited potential for resource exploitation and unimpeded substitutability among capital, labour and resources, in which environmental protection is a cost; the second is a view of development as economic and social change adapted to natural processes, with environmental protection as a benefit and capital, labour and resources managed in concert but not interchangeable. The outlines of this latter view emerged in 1972 but were not articulated effectively until the Brundtland Commission.
- Unfortunately, UNGA Resolution 44/228 that established UNCED was framed by delegates who had not, for the most part, read or understood the Brundtland Commission's report. As a result, we have been lumbered with two agendas - one Northern and one Southern. In spite of the failure of the UN General Assembly to mould Rio around a fully integrated sustainable development agenda as recommended by the Brundtland Commission, the UNCED Secretariat is gradually incorporating major but neglected issues such as population and international trade into the Rio agenda.