

“Again, take Nigeria. In 1984, the trade deficit in forest products was more than \$200 million—this, in a country where, for the last 30 years, great forests were being harvested and the export value of those products was used, in large measure, to build up the infrastructure of roads and bridges, schools and hospitals. There is something obscene about pine being imported [to] Nigeria from Chile, New Zealand, Finland and Canada, while the natural forests are approaching disappearance. We have a huge task ahead in Nigeria and many other countries.

“The 39 case studies in the report of the task force were carefully selected to demonstrate projects that have worked in the fields of fuelwood and agro-forestry, watershed management and the conservation of ecosystems and genetic resources, which I think is one of the most critical issues we face today. There are also examples of success in industrial wood plantations, and new approaches to education and training and research—and to recycling older foresters, for we have taken some of them back to the classroom and shown them how to make big shifts in their ways of analysis. It is these examples we want to talk about now with world leaders, to show them that it doesn't have to be all downhill to destruction....

“It is always the same thing with these success stories: finding the right combination of people. I use the phrase ‘packaging.’ You have to bring together the good will of the people, which you can count on unless they have been very seriously abused, together with local political support and support back in the capital; you have to get some external donors with their capital and technical assistance initially involved; and you have to have a few other people involved, maybe the local witch doctor. There is a whole group of people who have to come together. But if they are agreed in the interests of the project, there is no limit to the success you can have!

“The Task Force's report has been remarkably well received. The forestry advisers of all the development agencies endorsed it within a month of its publication and agreed on the target of doubling expenditure. They have since met three times in 12 months to assign priorities and to make sure that all forestry projects are better co-ordinated. One typical result is that 10 agencies recently combined in a single forestry sector mission to Kenya, to help the government prepare a plan over the next 15 to 20 years and to divide up amongst the agencies the responsibilities for providing the necessary technical and capital assistance for the various projects. We, in the agencies, were in serious need of getting our act together; how could we go 'round asking for a doubling of the funds to forestry, when we could not demonstrate that the money we were getting was being used responsibly?

“The meeting President Mitterrand called in February 1986 demonstrated unprecedented political support for this approach. Among the 62 countries represented, there were five heads of state: Chancellor Kohl, 4 prime ministers and 53 other ministers. They gave political endorsement to what the technicians had said, and President Mitterrand himself stood up and promised to double French assistance to forestry in the next five years.

“The Bellagio meeting in July 1987 will be asked how we are going to tackle what is surely now, short of nuclear contamination, the biggest single