II THE INTERFACE OF SCIENCE AND POLICY

Peter Gleick of the Pacific Institute pointed out that to deal with climate change, and particularly with the interface of science and policy, a new language must be appropriated and applied. While acknowledging the geophysical effects of climate change, he identified his concerns as the range of political, social, ecological, and economic impacts that climate change brings. The nuances of the science-policy interface were further examined by Jim MacNeill of the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Drawing on his considerable experience in issues of environment and development, he described how the world has moved beyond economic interdependence to ecological interdependence; and even beyond that to a complete intermeshing of the two. He called global warming a form of feedback from the earth's ecological system to the world's economic system. To ignore one system today, he warned, is to jeopardize the other, since the world's economy and the world's ecology are now "totally interlocked." This interrelationship raises fundamental questions about how economic and political decisions are taken and their implications for ecological sustainability. While the horizons of possible policy options may grow with technological opportunity, it was very clear to Mr. MacNeill and many others that the obstacles to sustainability are not technical or economic; they are social, institutional, and political.

The Economics of Energy

The costs of responding to climate change were addressed throughout the conference. Discussion was at times animated when the underlying assumptions of cost estimates were examined. Injecting a note of caution into the discussion, Bert Metz of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Washington warned that formal cost models may be dangerous: "What you put in is what you get out."