



Environment Canada

We acknowledge responsibility for some of the acid rain that falls in the United States, and by the time our program reaches projected targets, our export of acid rain to the United States will have been cut by an amount in excess of 50 percent. We ask nothing more than this, in return, from you.

**Prime Minister Mulroney — Address to Congress
April 17, 1988**

The Trail smelter decision of 1941 established the principle that neither country should pollute the atmosphere to the injury of the other. This was a historic turning point in the development of international environmental law and a giant step forward in the recognition by Canada and the United States of their international environmental obligations. Under the terms of the decision, Canada agreed to control sulphur-dioxide (SO₂)

emissions from a smelter in Trail, British Columbia, which the United States claimed were causing damage to Washington State. Canada also paid compensation for damages caused by emissions from the smelter.

Principle 21 of the UN Conference on the Human Environment, reflecting the Trail smelter decision, holds, in part, that all nations have “the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to

the environment of other states.” Many nations, including Canada and the United States, have endorsed this principle. It is a basic element of the 1986 United States/Mexico agreement on transboundary air pollution.

The UN Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution of 1979, which both Canada and the United States have signed, expressed a determination to reduce and prevent long-range transboundary air pollution.

The Helsinki Protocol of 1985, which was signed by 23 European countries and Canada under the UN Convention, committed the signatories to reduce their SO₂ emissions by at least 30 percent by 1993.

The Sofia Protocol of 1988, which was signed by Canada, the United States and 23 European countries, requires countries to freeze their nitrogen-oxide emissions, or their transboundary flows, at 1987 levels and subsequently to reduce them to levels that will not damage the environment.