

mandate.¹³ Through UNCED and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNSCD) established to monitor and implement national progress on Agenda 21, sustainable development is now a globally recognized vision. The problem for NGOs, however, is that governments and business continue to distort the sustainable development idea through national self-interest, ecological and social compromises, and blatant commercial objectives especially with competition for high economic stakes. A chief flaw in UNCED, most relevant for Canadian foreign policy in the APEC process and other multilateral fora, was its inability to deal constructively with environmental impacts of trade. Governments strongly avoided the issue in the 1992 Rio Declaration by affirming that "trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade."¹⁴

Despite conceptual complexity, implementation challenges and NGO critiques the government of Canada's 1995 foreign policy statement glossed over obvious problems and challenges, particularly regarding trade issues, stressing that sustainable development was becoming a "central component of the Canadian value system." The government's response to stakeholder concerns was that it would ensure that Canadian foreign policy "promotes sustainable development globally through the careful and responsible balancing of trade, development and environmental considerations."¹⁵ To reinforce a sustainability agenda domestically it also launched a broader "Greening of Government" initiative to make all federal government departments adopt a sustainable development policy and plan. In 1996 the Liberal government passed legislation requiring all departments to report their progress on achieving sustainable development to Canada's new Commissioner for Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) working under the

¹³ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development A/CONF.156/26 (Vol 1.) 12 August 1992.

¹⁴ Principal 12, of Annex 1, "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development," Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development A/CONF.156/26 (Vol 1.) 12 August 1992.

¹⁵ Government of Canada, Canada in the World: Government Statement, (Ottawa: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 1995), pp. 36-37.