

resources, limiting greenhouse gas emissions and developing alternative pest management strategies. Issues of regional concern — including soil and water conservation, wildlife habitat preservation, and pollution and waste management — are addressed under bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories.

Canada is a major exporter of fish: it ranks fifth in the world in the value of fish exports. However, in the early 1990s, a number of groundfish stocks on Canada's Atlantic coast drastically declined, including the northern cod stock, the single most important groundfish stock on Canada's Atlantic coast. In response, Canada declared a moratorium on fishing for northern cod in 1992, and on certain other groundfish stocks in 1993.

The causes for these declines could include harsh environmental conditions, overfishing and, possibly, increased predation by seals. Overfishing by foreign vessels outside the Canadian 200-mile fishing zone has been identified as a key factor for the decline of "straddling" stocks of flatfish, those that are both inside Canada's 200-mile fishing zone and outside on the high seas.

At the Earth Summit, Canada successfully called for a United Nations conference to recommend measures to control high-seas fishing. At the first session of the conference in 1993, Canada and other coastal states tabled a draft convention designed to promote enhanced rights for coastal states over stocks straddling their 200-mile fishing zones.

### **Special Spaces and Species**

Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments are publicly committed to completing by the year 2000 the networks of protected areas representative of the country's terrestrial regions. They are also committed to accelerating the protection of the country's marine regions and its wildlife habitat

considered critical to the survival of wildlife species. The achievement of these goals should result in the setting aside of at least 12 percent of Canada as protected space. The national parks system, begun by the federal government in 1885, is now approximately 60 percent complete, requiring the representation of the remaining 16 terrestrial regions by the end of this century.

In support of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Significance, the Canadian government adopted the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation in 1992. As well, Canada has protected 32 Ramsar sites whose combined area is the largest of all signatories to the Ramsar Convention. Others are currently being considered. The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, agreed to by Canada and the United States in 1986, is bringing together government and non-government partners in the conservation of habitat for migrating waterfowl. A new federal act protects threatened and endangered species of wild animals and plants, and regulates trade in wild fauna and flora. Canada was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity adopted at the Earth Summit.

### **The Arctic**

Canada's northland accounts for 40 percent of the country's land mass, two thirds of its marine coastline, and 30 percent of its freshwater resources. This is a highly fragile environment, and despite its remoteness, it is increasingly exposed to threats such as airborne pollutants originating hundreds or thousands of kilometres away.

To preserve the integrity of the North, the federal government launched an Arctic Environmental Strategy, developed in partnership with the territorial governments, native organizations and northern residents. The Strategy focusses on four areas: contaminants, waste, water, and

environment-economy integration. Canada is also working with its Arctic neighbours to protect the region, through the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy.

### **The Global Environment**

The increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the thinning of the ozone layer and acid rain are issues of great international concern. Canada seeks to ensure a place for the environment on the agenda of international trade negotiations. Environmental factors were given close attention in the negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada, and an environmental side agreement, the North American Agreement on Environmental Co-operation, was developed and signed by the three countries. In fact, the North American Commission for Environmental Co-operation, established under the Agreement, will be based in Montreal.

Following the Earth Summit in Rio, the Commission on Sustainable Development was established by the United Nations to monitor progress toward achieving the goals of sustainable development. Along with other member nations of the Commission, Canada will provide information on activities undertaken to implement Agenda 21 — a global plan of action on environment and development achieved in Rio. These reports, which are to be submitted periodically over the next four years, will help prepare members of the Commission for the 1997 General Review of Agenda 21.

### **Conclusion**

In environmental matters, Canada is committed to protecting the long-term health and diversity of species, promoting energy efficiency and clean technologies to wisely manage and conserve its renewable resources for the benefit of future generations. 

