

The 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment recommended that a conference be called to adopt an international trade agreement for endangered species. At a conference held in Washington in 1973 the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was produced. Although it has been signed by 43 nations (including Canada) the Convention will not come into effect until it has been ratified by ten nations. The convention establishes a system of import and export controls which is designed to protect endangered plants and animals from depletion through illicit trade. A species may be listed in one of three convention appendices, depending on the degree to which it is considered endangered. Appendix I includes species near extinction. Trade in these will be permitted only under exceptional circumstances and will require both an export permit from the originating country and an import permit from the receiving country. Animals and plants listed in Appendix II are considered as threatened and unless special care is exercised could become endangered. Species described in Appendix II may only be imported if they are covered by export permits from the originating state. Species in Appendix III may not be endangered on a world-wide scale, but are considered rare or subject to control within a participating state.

In November an agreement for the conservation of polar bears was adopted at a conference of Arctic nations in Oslo. The agreement prohibits the hunting of polar bears in areas not under the management authority of any of the participating countries and also provides for closer collaboration among Arctic nations in the management and study of polar bears.

During 1973-74 the legal dimension of environmental problems along the Canadian-American border became increasingly important. One commentator described Canada's growing concern over U.S. border dam projects as being "the most tangled and potentially explosive subject of all the issues awaiting negotiation between Ottawa and Washington".