

logical conclusions. Many such procedures have been perfected whereby binding agreements between states can be revised in the light of new insights; such as the concept of "framework" conventions and related protocols setting out more specific undertakings, and the use of annexes with simplified procedures for revision. But even non-binding agreements between states have been effective in mobilizing international action, especially on an evolving basis in the face of rapid change.

Emergencies. Dramatic incidents have highlighted the need for improved international capacity to assist countries to anticipate and deal with emergencies which may otherwise threaten irreversible impacts. These have ranged from industrial and power-generating incidents to oil spills and releases of toxic compounds that bore risks at an international scale and were of such a magnitude as to be beyond the capacity of most states to deal with unilaterally.

While contingency planning centers have been set up in a regional context, such as the Regional Oil Combatting Center in Malta established under the Mediterranean Action Plan, and a capability exists under international treaties to assist states in connection with nuclear accidents (under IAEA), the USSR has called for a new UN Center for Emergency Environmental Assistance to provide quick-response cooperative action in critical environmental situations and the Assembly has endorsed the Secretary General's proposed "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction" for the 1990s with an international board of trustees, an expert committee, a small secretariat, and a trust fund.²¹

2. Environment and Development. Almost twenty years ago, in December 1971, the General Assembly recorded its satisfaction with steps taken during the first year of preparations for the 1972 Stockholm Conference to address the concerns of developing countries, including the 1971 meeting in Founex, and recorded its views on a relationship that, judging by the tone of a resolution on "Development and Environment", was still strained:

"Conscious that the main objective of developing countries is integrated and rational development, including industrial development based on advanced and adequate technologies, and that such development represents at the present stage the best possible solution for most of the environmental problems in the developing countries;²²

Whereas the "Founex" Report laid the basis for a positive definition of this relationship, it was only the start of an ongoing process. Sixteen years