

THE CHANGING ATMOSPHERE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL SECURITY

CONFERENCE STATEMENT

SUMMARY

Humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war. The Earth's atmosphere is being changed at an unprecedented rate by pollutants resulting from human activities, inefficient and wasteful fossil fuel use and the effects of rapid population growth in many regions. These changes represent a major threat to international security and are already having harmful consequences over many parts of the globe.

Far-reaching impacts will be caused by global warming and sea-level rise, which are becoming increasingly evident as a result of the continued growth in atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Other major impacts are occurring from ozone-layer depletion resulting in increased damage from ultra-violet radiation. The best predictions available indicate potentially severe economic and social dislocation for present and future generations, which will worsen international tensions and increase risk of conflicts between and within nations. It is imperative to act now.

These were the major conclusions of the World Conference on The Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security, held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 27-30, 1988. More than 300 scientists and policy makers from 46 countries, United Nations organizations, other international bodies and non-governmental organizations participated in the sessions.

The Conference called upon governments, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, industry, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and individuals to take specific actions to reduce the impending crisis caused by pollution of the atmosphere. No country can tackle this problem in isolation. International cooperation in the management and monitoring of, and research on, this shared resource is essential.

The Conference called upon governments to work urgently towards an *Action Plan for the Protection of the Atmosphere*. This should include an international framework convention, while encouraging other standard-setting agreements along the way, as well as national legislation to provide for protection of the global atmosphere. The Conference also called upon governments to establish a *World Atmosphere Fund* financed in part by a levy on the fossil fuel consumption of industrialized countries to mobilize a substantial part of the resources needed for these measures.