

Suddenly, this tree has gone from being virtually worthless to being extremely valuable in economic terms in a matter of months.

Some environmentalists blanch at the thought of using economic tools to encourage the maintenance of biological diversity. In ignoring self-interest, they ignore one of the most powerful tools for good. Their belief in the power of altruism is not misplaced, but most ecosystems will not be saved by altruism alone.

Through finding means of ensuring that people, communities and states have reasonable and legitimate means of owning and benefiting from the economic potential of their ecosystems, we can do a great deal to save biological diversity. Recognition of that fact is a major strong point of the Convention.

We believe that, if biodiversity is to be maintained, people must recognize their stake in it. If that stake is the expectation of ongoing economic benefit, then we may find even more success than through well-meant international commitments.

We need tools that underscore an important fact. Maintenance of biological diversity is critical to the economic health of human beings. We cannot replace all that nature provides for free. We cannot understand the complex web of species relationships that we count on for our daily bread. We cannot assume that people will do what is necessary to preserve diversity, unless we show them how they too will gain.

I recognize that economics is not the only tool available in achieving our goal of maintained biological diversity, but the most significant result of UNCED was the linkage between our environmental needs and our economic ones.

People genuinely understand that they are part of a much larger web of species. The essence of sustainable development is no different in Montreal than it is in a rain forest village. We need to see our ecosystems and their resources in a way that permits long-term use, as appropriate, and long-term stability.

We must encourage people to understand their long-term stake in biodiversity, and we must encourage them to maintain that diversity.

I wish you all the best in your discussions over the next few days. I am pleased that Canada continues to play such a leading role in this process, and we extend our commitment to continue to do so.

Thank you.