

*Focus on the Children of the Arctic in Launching the Council's sustainable development programme.* Sustainable development, the agreed priority concern of the Arctic Council in close conjunction with environmental protection, is sufficiently amorphous and contradictory to yield an unmanageable profusion of proposals for understanding and action. We badly need a way of getting to the heart of the problem that imparts clear meaning and symbolic appeal to the Council's work. Since sustainable development is widely understood to mean decision-making today that takes full account of its effects on future generations, the Arctic Council can do no better than to begin by focusing its sustainable development programme on the next generation, the children of the Arctic today.

Environment, resource use, health, education including distance education, culture, communications, employment, human rights, local self-government, community development -- everything we might wish to consider under the heading of sustainable development comes vividly into focus when we address the condition of the Arctic's children and the need to improve their well-being. The same applies to the communities in which they live and to all the things that eat out the heart of communities and the prospects of the child. The status and welfare of children is now an increasingly prominent global theme of Canadian foreign policy and a personal priority of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. As well, the Nordic countries are heavily committed in this area domestically.

Canada should move boldly to commit the Arctic Council to focus its sustainable development programme on the children of the Arctic. Senator Landon Pearson, the Minister's Advisor on Children's Rights, has been consulted and could be asked to assist in the elaboration of a proposal. If the proposal is accepted by the Minister, Canada should key the forthcoming Whitehorse conference to sustainable development as it relates to the children of the region.

*Role of the Arctic in global climate change.* Madeleine Albright will seek advice from Tim Wirth. If we are to have more than a momentary respite from the lower-level bureaucratic naysaying and reluctance of the United States, the Arctic Council must be made of continuing relevance to Wirth. But Wirth is reported to have little interest in the Arctic as such. His primary concern is with global environmental issues, particularly climate change, biodiversity, and also sustainable development. To interest Wirth more actively in Arctic affairs and the work of the Council, we must make clear to him the Council's potential to assist in the understanding and where possible the mitigation of global environmental threats. The suggestion here is for the Arctic Council to address the role of the region in climate change (methane release from permafrost, effects of ozone depletion on Arctic ocean-atmosphere dynamics, the Odden effect, and so on). It could also be particularly valuable for the Council to sponsor an investigation of possible interconnections between climate change and the role of the Arctic as a sink for pollutants: findings here could readily be used to bolster the case for global action to abate the long-range transport of pollutants into the region.

On its own merits, therefore, and in order to sustain U.S. interest in the Arctic Council at the political level, Canada needs to make the case for a climate change priority in the Council's