

chemical threats to this planetary sunscreen. In delicate international negotiations, officials from Canada have acted as brokers between various nations. They helped countries reach a consensus that the threat was real and had to be tackled with cut-backs in the use of harmful chemicals, principally chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

At a meeting in Canada in 1987, a major group of nations hammered out the Montreal Protocol, which pledged them to cut production of ozone-depleting substances in half by 1999. It was a difficult decision because CFCs are the chemicals that run the world's refrigerators and air conditioners, and it will be costly and difficult to find safe replacements.

News continues to come in of holes in the ozone layer over the Antarctic and the Arctic, and pressure is growing for even tougher controls.

Last February, Environment Minister Lucien Bouchard said that all nations should work for at least an 85-per-cent reduction in ozone-eating chemicals. Mr. Bouchard said Canada would seek to eliminate all uses of these dangerous substances within a decade.

The Greenhouse Effect

The other big global environmental threat is that of climate warming caused by the greenhouse effect. Canada held one of the major meetings on this problem last year. A conference called The Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security brought world environment and policy experts together in Toronto in June 1988 to suggest how atmospheric damage such as climate change can be prevented.

The conference called for policies to reduce greenhouse gases. The experts said that global carbon dioxide emissions should be cut in half in order to stop climate change and suggested a 20-per-cent cut by 2005 as an interim step.

They said that nations should promote energy-efficiency programs in order to reduce the need for carbon-based fuels. And the group proposed, among other things, a World Atmosphere Fund, based partly on a levy on fossil-fuel consumption by industrialized nations, to help developing nations to build clean industries and to protect their forests.

International Action

The conference also called for an international action plan to save the atmosphere, in effect a global law for its protection. This led to a February 1989 meeting of international legal and policy experts in Ottawa. That meeting drafted a set of international legal principles for use in preparing both a convention to slow climate change and an umbrella agreement to protect the atmosphere in general.

In March, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney joined a number of other leaders at The Hague for the world's first environmental summit meeting. The summit issued a declaration saying that the right to live, the most fundamental of all rights, is being jeopardized by assaults on the earth's atmosphere.

This declaration called for the development, within the framework of the United Nations, of a new institutional authority, either by strengthening existing institutions or by creating a new institution, to combat any further global warming of the atmosphere.



Frozen strawberries in Florida are the result of climatic disorders.

One of the great tasks facing the world is to agree on ways that all nations, particularly poor countries, can develop and maintain healthy economies without accelerating environmental degradation. Finance Minister Michael Wilson has said that the world must help poor countries protect their natural resources as they build their economies.

In a speech to a meeting of the World Bank in September 1988, Mr. Wilson said that "environmentally sound development is no contradiction in terms. Indeed, in the long run, it may be the only sure foundation of better lives for everyone in the world."

Environmentally Sound Development

This country's main way of providing development assistance is through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). When the Brundtland report was released in 1987, CIDA issued its own policy on environment and development.

It warned that "the world's poorest countries are facing an environmental crisis of unprecedented dimensions. In many regions soils are being washed away, forests are disappearing, deserts are spreading, genetic and wildlife resources are in jeopardy and water resources are threatened. Most of the resources under stress today are vital to the long-term economic growth of these countries."

CIDA has endorsed the Brundtland recommendations. The agency is redirecting its spending and now puts 20 to 25 per cent of its bilateral assistance into projects designed to improve the management of renewable and non-renewable resources.

CIDA is also shifting its emphasis from large-scale capital projects toward programs such as basic education and skills training. This is aimed at helping people around the world develop the ability to build their own futures.