

It was precisely those kinds of concerns that led successive federal governments to create national parks, to negotiate treaties with the United States on joint management of the great lakes and migratory waterfowl.

More recently, those concerns led to an agreement which this government signed with the U.S., to control transboundary air pollution, and thus reduce acid rain.

In short, environmental issues have always had an importance for Canadians. And Canadians and their governments have understood that actions in one country can have devastating consequences in another. Now we recognize just how widespread those consequences can become. That is why we are committed to the UNCED process.

Communicating is not solely a job for government. NGOs have the capacity to move community opinion and raise awareness of issues and options. And that is why I can see your role as a critical part of UNCED.

Since the original decision to hold the conference, the government's approach to UNCED preparations has been to work with a broad range of Canadians, including NGOs.

From the beginning, we have worked in a co-operative fashion with the Canadian Participatory Committee (CPCU) on UNCED because it represented a good way of involving groups that wanted to make a constructive contribution to the UNCED process. We also determined early on that Canada was not the only country that could benefit from that kind of involvement.

We took a strong stand during the early UNCED discussions that governments were not enough. We believed that NGOs had a contribution to offer that had to be accepted including the right to be involved in discussions. Many other countries, perhaps reflecting their own beliefs about democratic decision-making, objected. However, in the end, the NGO role in UNCED was accepted.

To support this agreement, we have committed funds to assist NGOs from less developed states to participate in UNCED activities. We have supported the work of indigenous people from other states to ensure that their legitimate role in these discussions is played.

Through involvement in the development of Canadian negotiating positions and priorities, CPCU members have had a significant role in helping shape the direction of our efforts at Prepcoms and for that, all Canadians thank you.

I think that this process has also been useful for NGOs. I suspect that it has been challenging for NGOs to hear each