

INTRODUCTION

Rapid industrialization and population growth are causing damage to the eco-systems of the world. Essential to sustainable life on earth, the natural eco-systems are threatened by the ever-increasing pressures of population growth, ozone depletion, global climate change and pollution of the earth's water, soil and air.

The products of unsustainable development are prevalent and global in scope. All nations face challenges. Economic growth and development issues are often complicated by the effects of trade barriers and international indebtedness, and by social development concerns for humanitarian issues such as the use of child labour, the inability to meet basic human needs globally, and the protection of human rights.

It is widely understood and accepted that the solution to these global problems is a new approach to using resources, whether human, economic, or environmental in nature. Sustainable development, the integration of economic, social and environmental goals, offers such a solution. The World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Amendments to the *Auditor General Act* in December 1995 instructed that all Ministers table "Sustainable Development (SD) Strategies" for their departments in Parliament by December 1997. *Agenda 2000* is the first SD Strategy of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), and sets out the Department's action plan to achieve its

sustainable development objectives through to the year 2000.

The Strategy profiles the work of the Department, defines its SD objectives, identifies related issues, and presents a plan of action. It is the Department's first effort in an ongoing process of change. The Department recognizes that real progress will require not only changes in attitude, but ongoing efforts to learn and improve.

The Department works to influence and leverage arrangements with other sovereign nation-states on issues of common interest, on issues as diverse as negotiating rules on sustainable management of forests and marine management practices, and negotiating agreements to ensure a fair and open system of world trade.

We are a nation dependent upon exports, deriving in 1996 close to 40% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from the sale of goods and services outside Canada. We are also a nation dependent on the sustainable use of natural resources as it equates to the long-term viability of Canadian communities and the livelihoods supported by forestry, fishing, mining and agriculture.

The Department is committed to working for progress internationally on issues of concern to Canadians, including sustainable development, and to demonstrating excellence within the scope of its own operations. The Department will work, as well, to ensure that the international initiatives of other federal departments reflect Canada's commitment to sustainable development. To achieve global progress on sustainable development, Canada must speak with one voice to ensure greater dialogue and cooperation among the nation-states of the world community.

