

- ultraviolet radiation will be a serious threat to animal health and plant yields;
- species depletion and extinction could have wiped out much of the earth's genetic resources;
- and arable land could be barely adequate to feed a human population half again as large as today's.

The acceleration of environmental change resulting from our economic activities now means that every investment project with a life longer than 15-20 years must take into account how the world may have changed. Economists can no longer assume a predictable climate, free access to pure air and water, or negligible pollution control costs. They must begin to calculate the costs of modifying production processes now, as compared to the future costs of failing to modify them.

Phenomena that were previously local and small-scale are increasingly global in their effects. Each chimney belching carbon dioxide adds to the greenhouse effect, so does each hectare of tropical forest burned down. A pandemic like that of AIDs can spread from continent to continent in weeks; so can newly bio-engineered crop strains.

What, then, does the environmental crisis mean for the way economies are managed, and for our international relations? What we are facing is an adjustment challenge extending to all the industrialized and newly-industrializing countries of the world, and affecting the development plans of Third World countries. To carry conviction internationally, we must show ourselves ready to bear the very considerable costs, and, if necessary, to do so before everybody is signed on. The world can adjust to changes of this magnitude, if it knows it must.

The Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development, in its 1987 report Our Common Future, stated this conclusion in no uncertain terms: "It is impossible to separate economic development issues from environmental issues; many forms of development erode the environmental resources upon which they must be based, and environmental degradation can undermine economic development." The Report concludes that the environment and the development challenges really are but one challenge, which can only be resolved by a common pursuit.

In other words, sustainable development is about how to make hard choices in situations of scarcity; it is not, as some might think, a way of having our environmental cake and still enjoying the same level of economic development.