

The establishment of a GEO would require more political will than has been present to date. Support for a GEO from both the developed and developing countries is required. For a GEO to function effectively, the new paradigm would not only have to reform how international institutions relate to each other. A change in fundamental political thinking would be required. National political decision-makers would need to recognize and embrace the reality that environmental problems require collective cooperative action amongst countries. This reality has yet to be transformed into national decision-making, and it is apparent that the international community is having great difficulty addressing environmental problems. Implicit to the idea of a GEO is the understanding that countries would need to agree to a somewhat broader sense of "sovereignty" over environmental issues and national environmental policies, as well as other areas of policy that have an environmental impact. As in the trade area, the sovereignty of each country to do as it sees fit as best it can would be partially transferred into a shared international form, based on participation in international rule-making and shared responsibility for implementation and enforcement.

There is also the question of how to approach and promote sustainable development. What would be the scope and nature of a GEO framework? In practical terms and as a starting point where some international consensus already exists, a GEO's promotion of sustainable development could take up three documents approved at UNCED; the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (a collection of twenty-seven nonbinding principles); a nonbinding statement on fifteen principles for sustainable forest management; and Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan for sustainable development. The guiding principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development could give a GEO some initial direction on the nature of the organization. For example, Principle 19: "States shall provide prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States on activities that may have a significant adverse transboundary environmental effect and shall consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith", could form the basis for a formal transparency obligation such as those found in several WTO-related agreements and for a mechanism similar to the Trade Policy Review Mechanism of the WTO.

A GEO would be an institutional mechanism for advancing, refining and formalizing in a binding manner the policy agenda that came out of UNCED. Agenda 21 is articulated in forty chapters that cover a wide range of development and environmental issues. It includes chapters on changing consumption patterns, demographic dynamics, managing fragile ecosystems and protection of the atmosphere. Yet no priorities are attached to the vast range of issues set out in