

GLOBAL AGENDA

CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Department of External Affairs
Ministère des Affaires Étrangères
• SPRING 1993 •

NOV 3 1993

RETURN TO DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARY
RETOURNER À LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE DU MINISTÈRE

Environmental Issues in Canadian Foreign Policy

How Canadians view environmental issues continues to change — from primarily national and transboundary to distinctly international and global. Just as peace and security are necessary goals, the dangers of a deteriorating environment are now broadly recognized as a global priority.

The premise of Canada's environmental foreign policy is that global environmental problems are already affecting the well-being of Canadians. Canadian foreign policy, therefore, must build on domestic environmental policy and on progress made in our environmental relations with the United States — on acid rain and other issues — to deal with the global impact of environmental change.

Environmental issues influence virtually every aspect of foreign policy:

- Prosperity and competitiveness are directly affected by a variety of factors, including the depletion of marine resources and the establishment of international regimes to deal with greenhouse gas emissions.
- Development assistance is undermined if growth in developing countries is constrained by environmental deterioration.
- Mass migration and perhaps even conflict may result from a depleted resource base, or from severe natu-

ral events aggravated by environmental change.

- Issues, like nuclear safety and disposal of nuclear waste, show that the environment is already an integral component of global security.
- A new export market is emerging for environmentally sound products and environmental services and technologies.

In short, the environment is a major factor pervading foreign policy preoccupations, such as bilateral and multilateral relations, development, security, trade policy and international finance. What is new is the recognition that solutions to our environmental problems require broad international co-operation. The 1992 Earth Summit and the agreements adopted there were an important milestone in shaping the global agenda.

Canada is concentrating its environmental foreign policy on four basic priorities.

• **Strengthening international organizations**

Strong international organizations are an essential starting point for multilateral environmental initiatives, the development of international environmental law and environmental research.

• **Pursuing sectoral priorities**

Internationally agreed forest management practices and the protection

of marine resources, especially fisheries, will contribute significantly to global progress toward sustainable development.

• **Expanding bilateral environmental relations**

Beyond the United States, specific countries have a direct impact on Canada's environmental expertise, or are partners in the pursuit of common environmental objectives. Also, regional co-operation, such as that among Arctic countries, is increasingly important to the health of fragile ecosystems.

• **Implementing the Conventions**

Canada ratified the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change on December 4, 1992. Given the pace of ratification in other countries, we expect the Conventions to come into force in 1994. These are among the first legally binding instruments that will provide global environmental benefits if successfully implemented.

Perhaps the most important institutional follow-up to decisions taken at the Earth Summit will be the effective operation of the new UN Commission on Sustainable Development. As in Rio, Canada intends to take a leading role as a member of the Commission to help forge the shared solutions of the future. How we frame solutions today will be critical to the well-being of generations to come. 🍀



A Course for the Future

By Arthur H. Campeau, Q.C.

*Canada's Ambassador for Environment
and Sustainable Development*

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created by last fall's session of the UN General Assembly to ensure and review the implementation of *Agenda 21* and other agreements adopted at Rio's Earth Summit, and to enhance the role of the UN and all its bodies in the environmental and developmental sphere.

Its place in the UN system is as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, similar in structure and procedure to bodies such as the UN Commission on Human Rights. It is an intergovernmental body of 53 UN member states, elected for two-year terms. The Commission, headquartered in New York, will meet for the first time from June 14 to 25, 1993.

At the organizational meeting held in February 1993, Canada was elected to the CSD, and a Bureau for the CSD was also established. The Bureau is chaired by Ambassador Razali of Malaysia, who played an active role at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and at the last UN General Assembly. As a Vice-Chair of the Bureau over the next year, I will work closely with Ambassador Razali in moving forward the work of the Commission.

Developing a Blueprint

The CSD's priority for its first year of operation is to build a practical workplan for the future. To achieve this, it will be necessary for the CSD to set guidelines for the information required from governments, other UN organizations and groups outside of the UN; develop methods of opera-

tion for the future work of the Commission; explore ways and means of assisting countries in preparing national action plans; and determine how the review of *Agenda 21* is best handled. *Agenda 21* and the other Rio documents would be divided by theme into "clusters" of issues. Some clusters would be looked at every year, while others would come up for discussion at least once before 1997. A general review of all clusters is planned for 1997, the fifth anniversary of UNCED.

Proposed "Clusters"

- Critical elements of sustainability
- Financial resources and mechanisms
- Education, science, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and co-operation and capacity building
- Decision-making structures
- Role of major groups, including other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Health, human settlements and fresh water
- Land desertification, forests and biodiversity
- Atmosphere, oceans and all kinds of seas
- Toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes

Each annual session of the CSD will include a high-level meeting of Ministers to provide continuing and direct political involvement in setting the direction and priorities for the Commission and to consider emerging policy issues. It is hoped that the first such high-level meeting will take place June 23 and 24, 1993.

Canada's Priorities

As work progresses on the key issues identified by the CSD, Canada

will work to ensure that our priorities are considered and integrated into the Commission's recommendations and reports. Our goals build on the commitments that Canada made at the Earth Summit. They are:

- to encourage the development of national reports and plans;
- to ensure transparency in the Commission's work by involving indigenous, business and scientific groups;
- to provide impetus for the development of new international law;
- to build co-operation on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests; and
- to support the work of the UN Conference on High Seas Fishing.

Canada is working particularly hard to ensure that the voices and opinions of the broad range of NGOs will be distinctly heard by the CSD. Canada was very supportive of the involvement of NGOs in the UNCED process and continues to support the need for NGO involvement in the work of the Commission.

Framework for the Future

The Commission on Sustainable Development is charged with bringing to life the agreements adopted at UNCED. Its capacity to meet the goals set for it will hinge on how much we — international organizations, national governments, NGOs, indigenous groups, business and others — invest in it. First, we must identify its objectives and actions, as well as set firm guidelines and benchmarks to measure its performance. Second, we have to accept the obligations that these objectives and deadlines will mean for us, its constituents and members. This will build the foundation for a serious and credible international body able to give practical meaning to the important commitments made at UNCED. ♣

Sustainable Development

• Inspiring a New Global Partner

A strange thing happened on the way to the June 1992, UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED): governments, industry leaders and grassroots activists — more accustomed to polarized argument than constructive debate — took a few cautious steps away from their entrenched positions and discovered common ground in the idea of sustainable development.

In their quest to define and implement a sustainable form of development, UNCED participants began to explore a new way of working together, one built on openness, inclusion, a broad base of knowledge and greater public participation in decision making — a relationship that “launched a new process of planetary management.”¹

While Rio did not — could not — provide instant solutions to the planet's economic and environmental problems, the value of hearing all stakeholders' voices came to be realized. Thus, not only was sustainable development established as a global goal at UNCED, but the seeds for a partnership process, crucial to its realization, were also sown. A process, which in the words of Willy Brandt, recognizes that “the shaping of our future is much too important to be left to governments and experts alone.”²

It is that process, and the concept from which it arises, that will be explored here, for few terms have aroused as much interest, debate, misunderstanding and even scepticism as sustainable development.

What is sustainable development?

In 1987, The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), called for “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”³ The WCED submitted that such “sustainable development” was the means to resolve both the environmental and developmental threats being faced by all countries. In the ensuing years, sustainable development has not only entered into common parlance, it has been endorsed by UN agencies, national governments, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alike.

Popularity aside, the concept has not gone unchallenged. Sustainable development has been criticized as an oxymoron, unachievable, or a new way to justify the status quo.

All three arguments might hold true if we were to define “develop-

ment” purely as “growth” or the infinite quantitative expansion of the economy. International models of development have changed considerably over the last few years, and today most participants in this debate recognize that development must be both qualitative and quantitative. The term “sustainable development” embraces both concepts.

Sustainable development regards quantitative growth — measured by such indicators as gross national product and per capita income — as only one element in the economic health of a nation. Of equal importance are such qualitative factors as life expectancy, literacy, wealth distribution and environmental integrity.

An economy based on sustainable development seeks to maintain its natural resource base, pursuing economic progress through adaptation and improvements in knowledge, organization, technical efficiency and wisdom.⁴ When

“SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ... unites virtually all human concerns: for security, a nourishing environment, economic progress, democracy, international co-operation and a safe future for our children. Thus is created a powerful global partnership, which has never before been possible.”

From a statement by the World Commission on Environment and Development, London, April 24, 1992



development reflects these standards, it can be both sustainable and capable of solving our most pressing economic, ecological and social problems.

After decades of supporting the development-as-growth model, the major international financial institutions are now reaching this same conclusion. The World Bank stated, in its 1992 World Development Report:

“Development is about improving the well-being of people. Raising living standards and improving education, health and equality of opportunity are all essential components of economic development. Ensuring political and civil rights are broader development goals. Economic growth is an essential means for enabling development but in itself is a highly imperfect proxy for progress.”⁵

By favoring a process-led approach over those focused primarily on end products, sustainable development is ideally suited to the integration of economic and environmental goals. A more useful definition for sustainable development may be:

“Improving the quality of life while living within the capacity of supporting ecosystems.”⁶

What do we do differently?

As a process, sustainable development has several distinguishing characteristics: based on a long-term perspective, it tends to encourage diversity and pluralism; it promotes equity and justice within

countries (regardless of social class and gender) and among countries (North and South); and, taking a holistic approach to problems, it functions best in a participatory, partnership milieu.

A high degree of trust is also essential. The message from UNCED is that, where trust between participants is not always possible, trust in the process is. By focusing on values and common goals, the partnership process takes participants out of traditional spheres of interest and responsibility and into a search for solutions.

Bridges between government, industry, environment and development NGOs and a plethora of other interests can thus be built by concentrating not on the point of view that each stakeholder brings to the table but on their shared objectives, allowing all participants to become valued “partners.”

Attempts to build such a partnership process in Canada's preparations for UNCED were encouraging. By the time of the conference, environment and development NGOs, women's organizations, indigenous, labour and youth groups, and business and industry were not only represented on the official delegation but were helping to frame Canada's positions.

These partnerships by no means died away after Rio. In Canada, a national stakeholders' group, comprised of representatives from every major sector of society, agreed to respond to the commitments of UNCED. They have come together to develop national, sectoral and community plans for a sustainable future.

Similar Canadian efforts to promote non-governmental participation

in international fora, most notably at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, form part of the broader global trend characterized recently by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali as “a new, more participatory, people-centred way of conducting international affairs.”⁷

Designing the future

Resolution of contemporary global problems in virtually any sphere — economic, trade, social, development or political/security — now requires a greater degree of broad international agreement and commitment. Partnership and co-operation among states is now all the more important when dealing with problems that ultimately affect everyone. For example, climate change and biodiversity loss cannot be stemmed by one powerful nation, or even a bloc of nations.

In this new era of international diplomacy, the ability of active middle powers like Canada to shift the process from “the old game of concessions grudgingly extracted in an atmosphere of ill will”⁸ to one of global partnership, may well be the deciding factor in designing the future.

Sustainable development offers the prospect of protecting the environment, revitalizing global economies and opening up a new era of innovation and creativity. The benefits however, can only be fully realized when both the concept and the process are widely adopted. By committing to a foreign policy that promotes sustainable development and strengthens those international institutions in which these issues play out, Canada is working to ensure that the future we leave to the next generation is more prosperous, safer and healthier.

1. Roche, Douglas, *A Bargain for Humanity: Global Security by 2000*, Edmonton: 1993.

2. Brandt, Willy *North-South: A Programme for our Survival*, 1981.

3. The World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, 1987.

4. International Union for the Conservation of Nature/United Nations Environment Programme/World Wildlife Fund, *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, 1991.

5. The World Bank, *World Development Report 1992: Development and the Environment*, Washington, 1992.

6. IUCN/UNEP/WWF, op. cit.

7. UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, from his message “My message from the United Nations is one of Hope” inserted in *Life*, December 1992.

8. Roche, op. cit., p. 94.

Canada and Mexico

• Working Together on Environmental Projects •

Canada is working with Mexico to strengthen their environmental monitoring and enforcement practices. Through the *International Partnerships Program* under Canada's Green Plan, \$1 million has been pledged to Mexico for the second consecutive year.

The projects will continue to focus primarily on training in the areas of compliance monitoring, the enforcement of environmental regulations, the management of hazardous substances, the treatment of wastewater effluents, air pollution control and environmental impact assessment.

Canadian and Mexican officials are currently defining the scope of the projects for the second year, keeping in mind Mexico's environmental priorities, the need to strengthen their capabilities in the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, and Canada's desire to promote its own environmental expertise.

In 1992, 21 projects in Mexico received funding from Canada. These included a mobile laboratory for on-site measuring of industrial and municipal emissions polluting the air, ground or water (see sidebar), and the creation of regulations and environmental protection plans for companies involved in high-risk activities. The 1992 explosion in the city of Guadalajara has led Mexico to intensify its activities to prevent accidents of this nature from happening again. Canadian specialists have also met with senior staff of Mexico's Secretariat of Social Development and Ecology (SEDESOL) to assist them with the implementation of comprehensive environmental audits and to provide training for SEDESOL staff.

The International Partnerships Program was created in 1991 as part of the Green Plan and will run until 1997. Its aim is to advance Canada's environment and sustainable development interests in the international arena through multilateral, bilateral and commercial partnerships that fit with Canadian priorities. Its purpose is twofold: to assist developing nations to achieve their environmental objectives, and to expand market opportunities for Canadian companies offering services and products in these sectors.

In Mexico, Canadian environmental companies have expanded into a fast-growing market and have demonstrated impressive expertise. In fact, their successful efforts have led to further contracts with the Mexican government, some through funding provided to Mexico by the World Bank.

Canada and Mexico have a history of co-operation on environmental issues. In 1988, they joined with the United States to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Migratory Birds and their North American Habitats. In 1990, Canada's Prime Minister and Mexico's President signed the Canada-Mexico Environmental Co-operation Agreement to plan and co-ordinate joint projects, and provide environmental and commercial benefits to both countries.

The environmental projects that Canada and Mexico are working on today and in the future reflect shared priorities and open the door to future collaboration between the two countries, primarily in the private sector. The partnerships developed also contribute to Canada's commitment to building a strong environmental industry and assisting Canadian companies in foreign markets. 🍁

Canadian Mobile Labs Fight Pollution

To support Mexico in its fight against pollution, Canada has provided it with a mobile laboratory that can conduct on-the-spot inspections of gaseous and liquid effluents, analyze hydrocarbon, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide emissions, detect radiation and monitor air quality.

The mobile lab will aid the Mexican Attorney-General for the Environment in its routine inspection of industries, enabling it to measure emissions polluting the air, ground or water. The lab will also help to monitor minimum environmental standards, and the findings will assist in the development of corrective measures for industries not meeting these standards. The mobile lab is equipped to detect and analyze specific trace contaminants that result from industrial processes.

Built by Malley Industries of Moncton, New Brunswick, the lab is outfitted with specialized equipment supplied by Caledon Control Ltd. of Mississauga and R.A. Kirby Sales of North York, Ontario.

Canada

External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

GLOBAL AGENDA

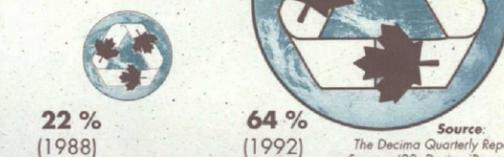
CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

• SPRING 1993 •

Over the last several years, the protection of the global environment has increased in importance for Canadians, as it has for citizens of virtually all countries. Canadians feel strongly about the international role that their country plays in helping to care for a fragile world environment, and they expect Canada to do its fair share.

Global Agenda is a quarterly bulletin that will discuss how Canadian foreign policy can most effectively deal with global environmental challenges. Each publication will focus on a priority issue for Canada in environmental foreign policy and will profile "policy in action" abroad. Canada's Ambassador for Environment and Sustainable Development will discuss issues on the global environment agenda and report on the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. Periodically, guest articles and book reviews will be included.

The percentage of Canadians citing the "Whole World" as the scope for environmental issues has nearly tripled from 1988 to 1992.



Source:
The Decima Quarterly Report,
Summer '92, Decima Research

GLOBAL AGENDA

CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT • SPRING 1993 •

External Affairs and International Trade Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G2
Canada

MAIL POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Bik

797

OTTAWA

Port payé

Nbre

In Canada, additional copies of **Global Agenda** can be ordered through External Affairs Canada at (613) 944-4000 or toll-free at 1-800-267-8376. Abroad, contact the nearest Canadian embassy.