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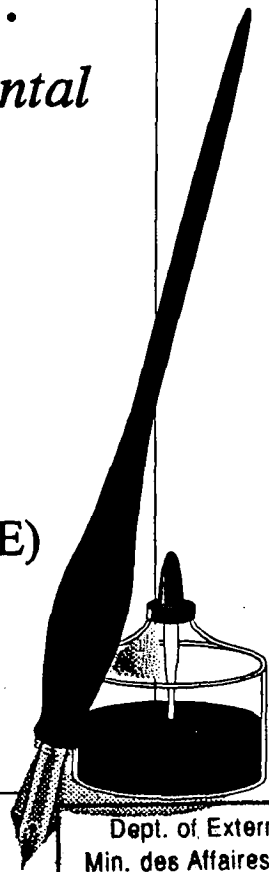


Unfinished Business: Toward a Global Environmental Organization

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Unfinished Business: Toward a Global Environmental Organization

"The world is not now and may never be ready for world government, but it cannot resolve mankind's planetary predicament through the existing order of sovereign national states. Have we then a problem without a solution?" Lynton Keith Caldwell¹

This paper is a response to the above statement and the question that follows it. The purpose of this Commentary is to raise the idea of a Global Environmental Organization (GEO) and to set out some key issues that arise in considering the establishment of such an organization. The establishment of a GEO, a multilateral institution for managing global environmental relations, poses many challenges. Assuming the political will could be garnered to establish a GEO, likely an unrealistic assumption in the current international political climate, these deeper challenges stem from the inherently all-inclusive nature of environmental concerns. The institutional challenge is to develop a structure that focuses on environmental issues, but simultaneously effectively addresses environmental links with other issues, such as economic development, financial assistance and trade. Therefore, implicit to the idea of establishing a GEO is the acknowledgement that some changes may be needed in existing institutions that directly or indirectly participate in activities that influence the environment, such as sustainable development aspects of international financial institutions. This linkage aspect, with ample room for bureaucratic "turf wars", will undoubtedly make it even more difficult to generate the political will to establish a new organization.

The Environmental Agenda and the Existing System

The international environmental agenda and the current institutional mechanisms for addressing it are diffuse and inherently complex. Environmental issues may be categorized into three types; global commons, transboundary or regional, and local. Environmental degradation of the global commons refers to environmental damage that has global effects. Regional environmental issues, while international in scope, are not global. These would include sulphur dioxide emissions ("acid rain") effects on neighbouring states. Local environmental degradation includes

¹Lynton Keith Caldwell, Between Two Worlds: Science, the Environmental Movement, and Policy Choice, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 152.

wildlife management, land use and local industrial pollution and waste management in urban areas. This is not to say that local environmental degradation has no transborder or global effects, but that the principal direct impact is on local conditions and the solutions are primarily local in nature. On the other hand, the global and transboundary nature of some of the most pressing environmental problems dictates that countries individually cannot develop effective solutions. Recognizing that ecological interdependence requires collective action, a range of environmental issues, such as on ozone layer depletion, global warming and climate change, biodiversity, long distance airborne pollution, forestry management, hazardous waste management, and marine resource management, have been addressed in international forums.

The existing "system" that addresses this broad set of issues is fractured. The use of the term system seriously overstates the coherence of international environmental management. The ad hoc structure of international environmental policy-making does not provide an integrated system for the development or implementation of policy. Efforts to date on generating global cooperation on environmental issues as a single undertaking and reducing environmental stress in general have had only moderate success. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) cannot claim great success in terms of concrete results, although it was a start and raised political and public awareness.² The comprehensive program to guide national and international action, Agenda 21, agreed to by governments, for example, lacks the force of law. The implementation of Agenda 21 is dependent upon "best endeavours" and not contractual obligations. UNCED laid the basis for action, but did not translate this groundwork into a commitment to action. Nor did the conference bridge the North-South gap, where the South placed relatively greater emphasis on economic development and poverty alleviation. Much remains to be done by countries unilaterally or collectively to make firm commitments and take action toward reducing environmental stress.

An important achievement of UNCED was agreement to institutionalize a process to monitor progress on environmental and sustainable development issues, leading subsequently to the establishment of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The CSD was formally established by the United

² "... the sad bottom line is that governments did not agree to implement any measures that would alter the dismal trends that brought them to Rio...Our leaders left almost nothing unsaid and almost everything undone." Jim MacNeil, the former Secretary General of the Brundtland Commission, statement before the Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on the Environment. Quoted in Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Environmental and Demographic Threats to Canadian Security", Canadian Foreign Policy, Vol. 2, No.2, Fall 1994, p. 28.

Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and through ECOSOC makes recommendations to the General Assembly. It has fifty-three seats distributed on a regional basis, and is a forum for discussing and reviewing sustainable development activities. Yet its role must not be overstated. The CSD has no legal or budgetary authority over the activities and programs it reviews. The CSD is largely an institution for information sharing and the development of political will. It is not a proactive, autonomous decision-making or rule-making organization. Limitations of the CSD appeared at its first substantive meeting in June 1993. At this meeting, governments could only agree to a voluntary reporting scheme on implementation of Agenda 21 where individual governments decide whether to report and the degree of detail in a report. CSD Chair Ismail Razali, the ambassador of Malaysia, called this decision on reporting schemes a "confidence building phase to overcome fears of some developing countries that the Commission might become a watchdog body."³ This Paper takes the view that an international environmental watchdog is exactly what is needed.

The United Nations system has a number of institutions aside from the CSD that address various aspects of environmental issues and sustainable development. Foremost are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also has an ad hoc working group that conducts analysis on trade, environment and development. Specialized agencies also are a part of the system. For example, the World Bank and the regional development banks consider environmental criteria in their lending practices. The Global Environment Facility, a financial mechanism to promote sustainable development, is managed by the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP. In addition, there are a large number of International Environmental Agreements (IEAs) connected with the UN system that address specific environmental issues. Examples of such international cooperation are the well-known Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the International Convention For the Prevention of Pollution From Ships, and the International Convention For the Regulation of Whaling. Parties to IEAs meet separately; and often have separate secretariats and budgets. This current state of the management of environmental issues has led to the observation that:

"The difficulty with existing international institutions that address environmental issues, such as the UN Environment Programme and the recently created UN Commission on Sustainable Development, is that

³Quoted in Jared Blumenfeld, "The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development," Environment, Volume 36, Number 10., December 1994, p.3.

they have been given narrow mandates, small budgets, and limited support. No organization has the authority or political strength to serve as a central clearinghouse or coordinator, nor does any organization have the mission of establishing broad GATT-like principles as the basis for norms in international environmental relations."⁴

The World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) put it somewhat more starkly:

"The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; the policies and institutions concerned must."⁵

The current international chaos in the environmental area undermines the prospects for making sustained progress in international rule-making, both with regards to improved standards and their effective enforcement. The multiplicity of forums and the relatively weak mandates stand in sharp contrast to the Big Three specialized international agencies: the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. Environmental policy is very much an institutional orphan in comparison.

The GEO Mandate

A comprehensive international environmental institution, a GEO, would serve to coordinate global environmental efforts and to focus political interest and public policy debates on the environmental agenda. This would include both multilateral efforts directed at global commons problems, as well as encouraging good environmental stewardship in national programs where the environmental effects are principally local in nature. More specific key functions for a GEO would be: a central role for environmental input into international development projects; an authoritative body on environmental agreement formulation, surveillance and dispute settlement; a central scientific role in strengthening scientific investigation and global understanding of environmental threats; and a mechanism to ensure broadly based participation in environmental decision-making. Through focused rule-making and joint action, a GEO would contribute to international harmony on environmental issues.

⁴Daniel C. Esty, Greening the GATT: Trade, Environment, and the Future, Institute for International Economics, Washington, D.C., July 1994, p.78.

⁵World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), Our Common Future, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 310.

In practical terms, the role of the GEO would be to promote sustainable development. This raises some potential institutional complexities that are not readily apparent. In 1987 the Brundtland Commission defined the concept of sustainable development as: "Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future."⁶ This definition is often drawn upon. What, however, is not so often raised is the previous paragraph from which this definition appears in the Brundtland Commission report. The earlier paragraph sets out that the term "development" is being used in its broadest sense, and encompasses economic and social change as well ecological issues. It is a global concept that takes into account the interdependence of nations. From an institutional view, a GEO immediately faces a challenge of defining a role in promoting sustainable development that balances a focus on environmental issues while simultaneously taking into account economic and social issues, at both the national and international levels.

A New Paradigm and Institutional Reform

A GEO is about interdependence in an economic, social and ecological sense. Institutionally, this makes it difficult to demarcate various international institutions' areas of competence. Coordination amongst institutions may not be enough. A new paradigm of cooperation, collaboration and joint decision making may well be needed. Operationalizing such a paradigm would no doubt be difficult, but the nature of the interdependent linkages is such that segmented or even overlapping areas of competency is unlikely to result in the full coherence of policy-making. A GEO based on sound scientific and analytical work on environmental issues would not be effective without some direct input into funding for development projects. Consideration, for example, could be given to making major development projects sponsored by the World Bank and other international financial institutions conditional on an independent GEO project review. A GEO could also formulate guidelines for bilateral aid programs. While a GEO review of every planned bilateral aid project (however ideal) would be cumbersome, the development of generic guidelines would facilitate appropriate review and transparency by national and local authorities and nongovernmental organizations. It might even be feasible for the GEO to initiate a periodic review of a country's overall bilateral programs from an environmental perspective, along the lines of the WTO's trade policy review mechanism. Such GEO activities could go along way to integrating development and the environment.

⁶Ibid. p.40.

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

Agenda 21. A GEO should set priorities and work toward making some of Agenda 21's nonbinding commitments, with some modifications, binding obligations for parties to the new organization. Negotiation of environmental conventions is a multi-year effort, as Canada's pursuit for internationally agreed rules on sustainable forest management - a Global Forests Convention - has demonstrated. A GEO, by institutionalizing an active and formal negotiating forum, could facilitate negotiations.

Existing environmental and development institutions would need to be reformed and possibly consolidated to accommodate a GEO. Consolidation would also bring existing IEAs under one roof. Precisely which institutions and how their current functions would be undertaken in a GEO would require detailed discussion, and form part of a wider agenda of reforming the entire UN system. The most likely candidates for forming the substantive body of a GEO are; the United Nations Environmental Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the Commission for Sustainable Development. Besides this core group, a number of other international bodies, such as the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and some scientific and environmental-related activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization, appear to be good "fits" for inclusion in a GEO.

Dispute Settlement

Part of the new paradigm and a critical element of a GEO would be monitoring adherence to an agreement. To be fully effective, this role would require a dispute settlement mechanism to encourage compliance with a country's obligations. To date, environmental agreements have had weak monitoring and enforcement provisions.⁷ Countries have been reluctant to give up national sovereignty on environmental issues and to grant strong enforcement powers to environmental agreements. Negotiating a GEO dispute settlement mechanism could prove to be one of the more contentious elements of the organization. For an effective dispute settlement mechanism, countries' rhetoric on facing the challenges of global environmental degradation would need to be translated into countries' willingness to accept international obligations related to the environmental agenda and a willingness to be held accountable for falling short of their GEO obligations.

⁷See, inter alia, Lawrence E. Susskind, Environmental Diplomacy: Negotiating More Effective Global Agreements, 1994; United States General Accounting Office, "International Environment: International Agreements Are Not Well Monitored," Washington, D.C., 1992; and Keith H. Christie, "Stacking the Deck: Compliance and Dispute Settlement in International Environmental Agreements," Policy Staff Paper No.93/15, December 1993, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Two important issues arise in this regard. First, a GEO would need to resolve the question of what degree of international support for an environmental agreement is required for the agreement to qualify as a GEO-sanctioned international agreement. While a consensus would be desirable, in practice a rule of majority (qualified majority?) may be required. Second, countries would need to resolve the question of whether all GEO environmental agreements would apply to all parties of the GEO, or only to the signatories of each specific agreement. The answer to both of these questions is dependent upon the degree of power countries are willing to concede to a multilateral mechanism for resolving environmental problems. The principle of the "single undertaking" developed in the Uruguay Round trade negotiations is relevant here. Pursuant to this concept, all WTO member countries had to accept almost all Uruguay Round agreements and understandings, although with selected, time-limited phase-in provisions for developing countries.

In a larger sense, the underlying emphasis on dispute settlement in a GEO would be on avoidance. This could come about through three channels. First, clear rules not open to widely different interpretation are desirable. If there are differences in view on the intensity of global environmental problems and the solutions to the problems, this can result in environmental and trade tensions.⁸ For example, while climate change is universally considered a global commons issue, there is nothing close to a consensus on the degree of global warming that may occur over a given time period, or what economic and social effects such climate change may have. A GEO would contribute to building a consensus of countries' views on what the environmental problems are, and policies to mitigate the environmental stress. By so doing, legitimate differences in national environmental interests and conditions would be identified. This would leave less room for countries to maintain intentionally lower than appropriate environmental policies to promote the competitiveness of certain products, or to be accused of doing so by other countries. Less stringent obligations for developing countries, at least for some initial period, could also be accommodated.

Second, through understandings that GEO scientific work could help to develop, countries would more fully understand that by abiding by GEO rules a country would be acting in its long-term self-interest. Such self-interest applies not only in the direct environmental sense of good national environmental policy, but also in an indirect sense, as an effective GEO would help to reduce the temptation in other countries to

⁸The introduction to a recent climate change article in the Economist, April 1 1995, captured nicely some of the inherent problems with the nature of environmental stress issues: "The evidence that greenhouse gases are changing the climate is getting stronger. The details of what it means, though, remain blurred."

ignore their GEO obligations to the detriment of the collective environmental interest.

Third, funding and technical assistance could be conditional on compliance. A revised GEF or a new funding mechanism linked to the GEO could act as a financial incentive for some countries to comply with certain agreements.

A GEO would, nonetheless, also require a formal government-to-government dispute settlement mechanism. Having one dispute settlement mechanism that would apply to all environmental agreements under GEO auspices would be desirable. A single mechanism is particularly appealing from an equity standpoint. It would restrain politically powerful actors, who may wish to tailor dispute settlement to their specific needs in various environmental agreements. Hypothetically, powerful actors could push for strong dispute settlement for areas they consider environmental priorities, and weak mechanisms in other areas. The WTO dispute settlement system could form a model for a GEO mechanism.⁹ The panel system provides independent assessment and recommendations, as well as administrative and procedural guidelines. A panel system of experts, with technical skills to understand fully the scientific aspects of environmental issues, would prevent the gridlock that could occur if all signatories to an agreement were to partake in all aspects of the dispute settlement process.

Friction between national and international environmental regimes and international trade rules should not be overstated. Contrary to public perception, environment-related trade disputes have not in practice been a problem. There has never been a challenge in the GATT or WTO relating to an International Environmental Agreement. With a GEO, a joint committee with the WTO could be formed to review environmental policies to determine if such policies have a protectionist element. WTO-GEO collaboration on environment-related trade disputes would be essential. One possibility would be to make an exception for GEO agreements from WTO rules. This would allow for the use of otherwise WTO inconsistent trade measures when obligations of an environmental agreement under GEO auspices were not fulfilled. The GEO with its technical competency on environmental issues would decide if the environmental obligations of the agreement were not being met. The key feature of any GEO dispute settlement mechanism is that environmental concerns would be addressed in an environmental organization. The multilateral trading system would

⁹WTO procedures are set out in the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes.

not be responsible for environmental judgements.¹⁰

The GEO dispute settlement mechanism would recognize that trade restrictions are not substitutes for sound environmental policies. Environmental objectives would be negotiated in the GEO. The modalities of how this would be done as well as determining the objectives themselves would clearly depend upon the willingness of national governments to give up decision-making powers on certain environment-related issues. A mechanism for formal WTO-GEO coordination would be desirable to determine specifics - such as the type and degree of a trade measure required as sanction, if required at all. Once a measure is imbedded in an IEA, however, WTO participation would not be to determine if trade measures were consistent with the WTO - as mentioned earlier, there would be a carve-out for any trade measure that might be included in a GEO-related IEA. Rather, WTO participation at this later stage would be to assist in determining if trade sanctions would make a positive contribution in a particular case to the environmental objective being compromised by a failure of a country to comply with its environmental obligations. Neither the GEO nor the WTO would be sanctioning unilateral extraterritorial trade measures.

A Role for Science

A fundamental aspect of a GEO, and one implicitly evident throughout this Commentary, is scientific information. Different types of environmental stress have varying "thresholds" when such stress can no longer be assimilated by ecosystems, or the magnitude of environmental degradation greatly increases when a critical threshold is reached. Environmental agreements would require built-in flexibility to respond to new scientific information as it became available. Agreements would need to be dynamic, rather than static. A GEO would need to develop a credible and sound scientific footing on such issues as fisheries, climate change and forestry. This would be of great use to less economically wealthy countries, as few countries have the resources to develop the technical and scientific expertise on every global environmental issue. A GEO structured in this manner would help to ensure that countries would be working from the same data set. A multilateral agency providing such data could reduce the likelihood that countries would resort to their own

¹⁰See K. Anne McCaskill, "Dangerous Liaisons: The World Trade Organization and the Environmental Agenda," Policy Staff Paper 94/14, June 1994, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, p. 5. McCaskill concludes that "... one thing is clear - the GATT/WTO should not become further entangled in environmental affairs. The international trading system cannot be used to arbitrate environmental policy decisions. Nor should it be called upon to enforce or police environmental standards or programmes that have not been accepted internationally."

potentially skewed studies to develop positions. It would also be politically more difficult for a country to allege that the GEO data are intentionally biased in another country's favour. Moreover, objective scientific research conducted or scrutinized by a GEO and that served to underpin multilateral agreements would work against domestic pressure or temptation to use environmental concerns as protectionist tools.

Public Participation

Another element of the paradigm is more direct public participation in the multilateral policy process. A GEO could not be of the post-World War II government-to-government relations framework. One lesson from UNCED, demonstrated by the participation of environmental and other nongovernmental organizations in the Global Forum that accompanied UNCED, is that a wide array of nonstate actors take great interest in, and have much to contribute to, understanding environmental issues. Indeed, Agenda 21 identifies nine major groups of stakeholders whose participation in the decision-making process is essential. These are: women, youth, environment/development nongovernmental organizations, indigenous people, workers and their trade unions, local government, business, the scientific community and farmers.¹¹

How to formalize and institutionalize participation and accommodate views from such interest groups would be a difficult task for a GEO. Care would need to be taken to prevent special interest groups from slowing or hindering negotiations, or participating in a manner that could give rise to accusations of favouritism to particular groups or views. Representativeness would be a major concern, requiring careful further consideration. The simplest method for including stakeholders in the process might be for the establishment of an nongovernmental advisory body with broad and diverse representation. Such a group would not have a vote in the treaty-making process. While such a group would not likely present consensual opinions, it would give nongovernmental bodies a multilateral forum to raise and discuss issues. This could be particularly useful for nongovernmental organizations that have little access to national mechanisms to make their views known or to influence national or international decision-making.¹²

¹¹Each group has an individual chapter in Agenda 21, Chapters 24 to 32.

¹²Note that Article 16 of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (the so-called NAFTA environmental side agreement) provides for the establishment of a Joint Public Advisory Committee.

A Call for Action

The creation of an effective and relevant GEO is, at best, a long shot and long-term prospect. There is a need to establish an international environmental institution with a strong mandate and dispute settlement mechanism, but it is an opium dream to think that such an institution could be created in the current or foreseeable political climate. UNCED provided an agenda for promoting sustainable development, but it did not establish an effective institutional structure to manage the agenda. The 1992 UNCED and the outcome of the UN Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 are fairly strong indicators that the commitment to the new paradigm proposed here is weak.

Until national decision-makers collectively realize that the traditional sovereignty of nation states and current mechanisms for ordering relations amongst nation states are inadequate for addressing the types of global issues now emerging, the prospects for a GEO remain poor. The GEO is not yet an idea whose time has come. Yet, the real world preconditions that underlie international institution-building clearly exist in this case in the form of increasing environmental stress on a number of fronts. The GEO is an idea that should be pursued.

One opportunity for drawing international attention to institutional issues will be the UN General Assembly's 1997 review of Agenda 21. This meeting could at least encourage serious consideration of the concept of a GEO, stimulating stakeholder and country support. A GEO would not be a definitive solution to mankind's planetary environmental predicament, but it would be a necessary step toward facilitating greater international cooperation and reform.

Nonetheless, for the foreseeable future the basic structure of the UN system is not about to change. Recognizing this, institutional reform options to promote international environmental management (and in the longer term to support the idea of a GEO) are constrained. In practical terms, any reform or change would need to be modest and thus require only marginal increases in the political will to address environmental issues through an international mechanism. A primary option for pursuing more effective international environmental management, but not necessarily requiring major institutional reform or increases in funding, is to strengthen UNEP, including its activities with other UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

UNEP is not an institution per se, but a programme designed to catalyse, coordinate and stimulate activities related to the environment. This role is primarily pursued within the UN system, but UNEP also works and seeks cooperation with non

UN organizations. Unlike specialized agencies of the UN, UNEP does not normally execute or finance projects. Arguably, this is a source of both strength and weakness: strength in that the catalyst and coordination roles represents a workable approach to the diverse range of activities that comprise sustainable development; and weakness in that direct or substantive control of projects, financing and policies that contribute to sustainable development are not fully within UNEP's mandate.

Two areas that would require only marginal commitments of political will, and would therefore be candidates for more-or-less immediate action within the UN system are (a) increasing transparency; and (b) broadening, deepening and making more accessible the information and analytical base available to decision-makers. Increased transparency could involve joint UNEP/UNDP assessments of a country's sustainable development practices; but, if even this is asking too much of the existing political climate, other avenues could be pursued. UNEP could work toward developing a model text to facilitate the negotiation of IEAs. This could bring some standardization to an area where there are presently no international rules or guidelines.¹³ UNEP could also work toward establishing procedural rules for the negotiation of international environmental agreements, including the role of nongovernmental organizations in the negotiating process.

The second point, increasing information and analysis, is an aspect of capacity building or developing a technically and politically informed understanding of sustainable development issues. While a broader issue than strengthening UNEP, there is a need to rationalize UN databases. A recent UN report noted that, while a great deal of information is submitted to UN bodies, "so far no system of interlinked databases is available that allows the useful exchange of data among the various organizations."¹⁴ For sustainable development, an interdisciplinary concern, such a state of affairs is clearly unsatisfactory. In respect to UNEP, there is a need for more UNEP ecological research to form the basis of future environmental treaty-making. There has also been some criticism of UNEP's Global Resource Information Database (GRID), where "the complexity of gathering all available environmental data from around the world has led GRID to become more preoccupied with data management than supporting analysis and assessment of environmental issues or situations."¹⁵ A

¹³Proposing that such a text include an effective enforcement mechanism as discussed in the Commentary would, however, require more than a marginal increase in political will.

¹⁴United Nations, E/CN.17/1995/21, 30 March 1995, p.4.

¹⁵United Nations, E/AC.51/1995/3, 8 March 1995, p.11.



useful capacity-building role for UNEP would be to place greater emphasis on interpreting the strategic implications of technical scientific data.

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