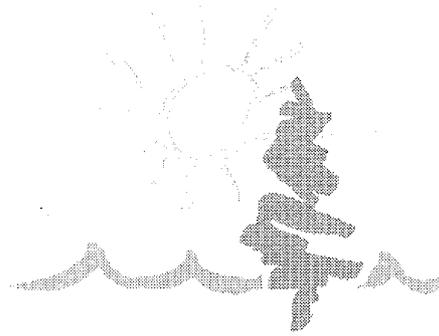


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CANADA'S GREEN PLAN

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# CANADA'S GREEN PLAN AND THE EARTH SUMMIT

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Canada  
and The Earth  
Summit

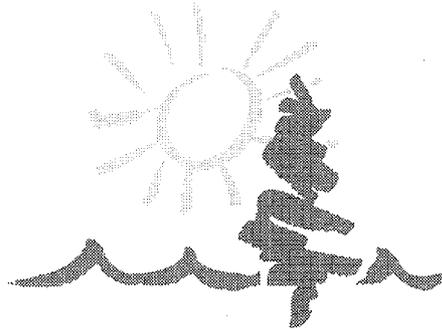
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CANADA'S GREEN PLAN

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## **CANADIAN CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA**

Main entry under title:

Canada's Green Plan and the Earth Summit

Issued also in French under title: Le Plan  
vert du Canada et le Sommet Planète Terre.

ISBN 0-662-20236-8

DSS cat. no. En21-120/1992E

1. Economic development -- Environmental aspects -- Congresses. 2. Environmental policy -- Canada -- Congresses.
3. Environmental protection -- Canada -- Congresses. 4. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992 : Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). I. Canada. Environment Canada

HD75.6C32 1992 337.7'2'0971 C93-099406-X

Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1992.

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**INTRODUCTION** In June 1992 one of the largest international conferences ever held took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was attended by the heads of state of more than 100 countries. The ambitious aim of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) -- the Earth Summit -- was to try to reconcile the need for global environmental protection with the need for continuing economic development.

The leaders of the world met in Rio with a sense of urgency. The economic development required to meet the legitimate aspirations of much of the world's population could overwhelm the ecological carrying capacity of the planet. Only by fundamentally changing the way economic development proceeds can the world hope to meet the needs of the present generation while ensuring that the needs of future generations will also be met. This is the challenge of sustainable development.

To achieve sustainable development on a global basis requires countries of the world to tackle a vast range of complex economic, environmental and social issues. These range from poverty and population to trade and technology. Because Canada takes its responsibilities as part of the global community seriously, and because these issues are of fundamental importance to Canadians, Canada took an active leadership role at the Earth Summit.

Canada has much to contribute to global progress on sustainable development. It has adopted the concept of sustainable development and is working to make it a practical reality. In 1990 the Government of Canada launched *Canada's Green Plan*, our national blueprint for implementing sustainable development. Other sectors of Canadian society are also taking action which reflects their

commitment to sustainable development. Provincial, regional and local governments are developing and implementing their own sustainable development plans. Industry is incorporating environmental factors into its decision-making processes through reformed accounting practices, environmental audits, environmental codes of practice and by adopting environmentally benign technologies. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to contribute to the discussion of environmental issues through the release of agendas and plans which reveal their vision of sustainable development. Canada has gained valuable experience through these actions, which it wanted to share with the global community.

At the same time, Canada went to Rio eager to learn. While Canada is among the leading nations of the world in taking steps to make its economy and environment mutually reinforcing, other governments and organizations have valuable knowledge and experience to share. At UNCED, Canada hoped to gain new information, to learn from the experience of others and to add vitality and new directions to its drive to implement sustainable development in Canada.

Now that the Earth Summit is over, and the vital process of turning the commitments made at Rio into action has begun, it is clear that the environment and economic development can no longer be considered separately. The one outstanding hallmark of the results of the Earth Summit is that they are squarely based on the need to bring economic development and environmental protection together in sustainable development.

This process will require the commitment of all levels of society. No single person, group or level of government has all the answers on how to change the way the economy and the

environment interact. Our national response to the challenge of Rio must be based on a collective commitment to action.

**C**anada and other countries recognized this key success factor early in the UNCED process. They took steps to ensure the full participation of people representing many elements of society. This was reflected in the make-up of Canada's own delegation, which included representatives of government, industry, development and environmental groups, and Canada's aboriginal peoples. All helped shape the decisions made at Rio and demonstrated to the world the importance of Canadians being involved in decision-making processes that affect them.

**T**he Government of Canada's agenda for action on sustainable development is the Green Plan. It is based on certain assumptions about the world and, like any plan, was developed knowing that new information, priorities, and experiences would emerge which would have to be considered. In the two years since the Green Plan was launched, it is unlikely that anything has brought more new ideas, new information and more commitments on to the public agenda than UNCED. In keeping with the government's commitment to Canadians to review the Green Plan on the basis of changing conditions, the government will bring the Green Plan into line with the standards set by UNCED.

**T**he purpose of this document is to provide a brief account of the results of Rio and the way Canadians participated. In addition, this document outlines the immediate priorities of the Government of Canada and the actions under way. It is not meant to be a comprehensive response to the entire Rio agenda. Rather, it is intended to report to Canadians on the steps the government has taken so far

and, where possible, the direction in which it is headed. On a number of important issues, the government's plans are well advanced. For example, action is well under way on the Convention on Climate Change, as highlighted in the Green Plan's National Action Strategy on Global Warming. On a number of other issues, it is clear that there is work to be done. The government is committed to completing the task through continuing action and leadership.

## **WHY WAS THE EARTH SUMMIT IMPORTANT TO CANADA?**

The Earth Summit set out to fundamentally change the way the world deals with the global environment and the global economy. Canada is a large country, whose economy and prosperity are tightly linked to the world economy, particularly through trade. Canada is also endowed with a wealth of natural resources and has the world's longest coastline, facing three oceans. Accordingly, our environment depends to a large extent on the actions of other countries. Given the impact that the international community has on Canada's environment and economy and the potential implications of the decisions made at Rio, Canada's active participation at UNCED was a priority.

Furthermore, Canada has traditionally been a significant player in the international arena, through its involvement in the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialized countries, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Commonwealth, and La Francophonie. In addition, Canada was an active participant in key international environmental conferences and events, including the Stockholm Conference of 1972 and the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development -- the Brundtland Commission. Canada has also been an active participant at major environmental conventions and agreements under negotiation in recent years. These include the Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (the Basel Convention), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Canada-U.S. Air Quality Accord and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the

### **Environment-Economy Linkages**

Sustainable development is key to Canada's future prosperity. The essence of sustainable development is that a high level of environmental quality and economic prosperity are complementary and reinforcing -- a clean environment and productive resource base are necessary for a prosperous economy, and a strong economy is necessary to support high social and environmental standards.

A high level of environmental quality itself is a source of prosperity in a number of ways. Much of Canada's economic prosperity, particularly in our resource sectors such as fisheries, forestry and agriculture, depends on a healthy environment. Moreover, a high level of environmental quality can contribute to the economic growth of our services and manufacturing sectors. There is a rapidly growing market worldwide for environmental services and equipment -- high environmental standards in our own country will help stimulate and foster the growth of these sectors in Canada. In addition, environmentally conscious firms in all sectors of the Canadian economy will increasingly have a competitive advantage in Canadian and international markets. This occurs not only because consumers around the world are demanding products that are sensitive to environmental factors, but also because, as experience has shown, such firms tend to be better run, with more innovative and more efficient operations.

Ozone Layer (the Montreal Protocol). Canada was among the first countries to sign the protocol.

In keeping with this tradition, Canada went to UNCED with a view to shaping the results in a way larger, perhaps, than either its economy or population would suggest possible.

## WHAT HAPPENED AT THE EARTH SUMMIT

UNCED demonstrated an unprecedented willingness on the part of countries around the world to make sustainable development a global reality. Building on the progress made at Stockholm and the renewed call for action by the Brundtland Commission, Rio was intended to take decisions and obtain commitments.

### Key Global and Domestic Sustainable Development Milestones

- 1972 The concept of economy-environment integration first receives international attention at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm.
- 1980 The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Wildlife Fund release the *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resources for Sustainable Development*, which reaffirms the idea that the convergence of conservation and development is essential for a sustainable future.
- 1987 The World Commission on Environment and Development releases *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland Report), which identifies sustainable development as the appropriate course of action for integrating the environment and development.
- 1987 The *Report of Canada's National Task Force on Environment and Economy*, which brings together for the first time environment ministers, business executives, environmentalists and academics, is released, making specific recommendations on actions to move Canada towards sustainable development.
- 1990 The Government of Canada releases its response to the Brundtland challenge: *Canada's Green Plan*, a policy framework and action plan for implementing sustainable development in Canada.
- 1992 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development is held in Rio de Janeiro.

In so doing, UNCED highlighted the global challenges of sustainable development and demonstrated a global commitment to its achievement. In the course of preparing for the conference, a divergence of views emerged between developed and developing countries regarding the primary purpose of UNCED. The developing world saw its environmental problems closely linked to poverty, and in turn related to lack of development. In contrast, developed countries focused their efforts on promoting action on global environmental issues. The challenge of Rio was to reconcile these needs and concerns.

Perhaps the single most important accomplishment was the extent to which different concerns did converge around a common agenda and countries rallied behind a global commitment to sustainable development. Industrialized countries did come around to speak of development; developing countries in turn came around to speak of the need to tackle both global and national environmental issues in addition to development issues. For the first time, nations everywhere acknowledged that the problems are real and agreed on a common course of action to combat them. A collective enterprise emerged, precedents were set and important networks and partnerships were formed. A global consensus was reached that solutions are possible -- not quick fixes, but progressive steps in the right direction.

UNCED created a new benchmark for the thousands of people involved, and the millions of people who heard about it, to judge what needs to be done to make sustainable development a reality. This sense of generational change was captured in the final words of Prime Minister Mulroney's speech at the Earth Summit: "What remains to be done is for governments to provide the leadership the world so desperately needs. Let us find

### What Was Rio All About?

UNCED was the culmination of years of effort by the United Nations and marked the 20th anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm Conference. From June 3 to 14, 1992, over 100 heads of state and representatives of over 150 countries came together in Rio de Janeiro to work towards making sustainable development a reality.

An official UNCED Preparatory Committee was established to co-ordinate the input from the UN system, governments and the NGOs, and to identify common objectives and concrete actions for endorsement by the heads of government. Four meetings of the Preparatory Committee were held, a process which began with the first meeting in Nairobi in August and September 1990.

Canada's own UNCED preparatory process strongly promoted recognition of different stakeholders, including: non-governmental organizations, through the Canadian Participatory Committee for UNCED (CPCU); the provinces and territories, through the Canadian Council for Ministers of the Environment (CCME); and a multi-stakeholder steering committee, which helped develop *Canada's National Report for UNCED*.

Canada was among the first to respond to the request from the conference organizers that governments submit a national report which focused on the relationship between environment and development in their respective countries.

Rio was not only a conference of countries but a conference of peoples. Running parallel to the official conference, in the nearby Flamengo Park, the '92 Global Forum took place. This "Ecological Woodstock" included some 10,000 participants representing over 9,000 organizations, and drew approximately 20,000 visitors. The Global Forum featured a number of events organized by NGOs and associations. These included the International Forum of NGOs and Social Movements; the open Speakers Forum, which featured speakers such as Jacques Cousteau and U.S. Senator (now Vice-President-elect) Albert Gore; and a gathering of religious groups of many denominations for an all-night ecumenical peace vigil which attracted thousands of visitors, including the Dalai Lama.

that will and marshal that leadership to the task at hand on behalf of the five billion people we represent. Our children, the 'Rio Generation', will be our judges and beneficiaries."

At UNCED, countries reached consensus on a number of key areas. Specific outcomes include the following documents and agreements:

- The Rio Declaration, outlining 27 fundamental principles of environment and development. The declaration is a first step towards an Earth Charter envisaged by Canada and others to integrate environmental and economic goals.
- A statement of Guiding Principles on Forests, the first international consensus ever negotiated outlining governments' responsibilities for the sustainable development of all types of forests.
- Agenda 21, a first-ever, comprehensive global blueprint for sustainable development, covering 39 different economic, social and environmental issues, and representing input from all the nations of the world. It outlines an agenda for action on cross-cutting issues such as technology transfer, trade and aid, as well as more specific issues such as marine pollution and biodiversity.
- The Framework Convention on Climate Change, in which developed nations agree to limit emissions of greenhouse gases and to report publicly on the progress they are making. Developed countries also agree to provide developing countries with resources and technology to assist them in meeting their obligations under the Convention.
- The Convention on Biological Diversity, which provides a foundation for international co-operation to conserve species and habitats.
- A Fisheries Conference, to be held in 1993, to address the urgent problem of overfishing on the high seas.

## **CANADA'S AGENDA FOR ACTION**

In no uncertain terms, the UNCED process was challenging for countries. Never before had so many countries, with so many different points of view, tried to come to grips with such a wide range of issues. It was a constant challenge to understand and work within this complex, dynamic situation, to

make progress on global sustainable development and at the same time represent the best interests of citizens.

Canada's participation in the UNCED process was aided by the Green Plan because there is a key similarity between UNCED and the Green Plan -- they both have sustainable development as a fundamental starting point.

### **Canada's Green Plan**

*Canada's Green Plan* is the Government of Canada's framework "to secure for current and future generations a safe and healthy environment, and a sound and prosperous economy". Released on December 11, 1990, the Green Plan represents a significant shift in the way the federal government views economic development and environmental protection. It recognizes the essential economy-environment relationship and that the well-being of Canadians is dependent on the health of both the environment and the economy.

The Green Plan is based on an extensive national consultation process. Over 10,000 Canadians, representing all segments of Canadian society, participated directly by attending public sessions, or through written submissions, question-response forms, or individual correspondence. Over 80 per cent of the recommendations were incorporated into the Green Plan.

The Green Plan sets out seven basic principles for sustainable development: respect for nature; economy and environment integration; efficient use of resources; shared responsibility for the environment; governments as trustees of the environment; informed decision-making; and ecosystem approach.

The Green Plan framework sets out a two-pronged approach to sustainable development consisting of:

- a) action directed to environmental conservation, protection and remedial measures on specific priority issues; and
- b) measures that focus on making fundamental changes to decision-making so that environmental considerations become an integral part of the daily lives of Canadians as individuals, businesses and governments.

### **Priority Issues**

The Green Plan highlights action in six major areas: clean air, water and land; sustaining our renewable resources; protected spaces and species; the Arctic; global environmental security; and environmental emergencies.

### **Better Decision-Making**

*Canada's Green Plan* is based on the view that the underlying cause of environmental problems is poor decision-making at all levels of society. The focus of the Plan is on incorporating environmental considerations into decision-making in a more systematic, coherent and focused manner than in the past.

The Green Plan recognizes the important role of innovative and flexible institutions, policies and technology in bringing about sustainable development. It addresses seven key areas of decision-making: science; environmental information; environmental education; legislation and regulation; economic instruments; decision-making processes and institutions; and partnerships.

The Green Plan establishes milestones against which we can gauge our progress in reaching sustainable development. It sets out broad goals, each of which is supported by targets and schedules. These targets will continue to evolve as our understanding improves and we learn from experience.

Both respond to the Brundtland Report's call to re-orient our economies and our institutions towards sustainable development.

**P**utting together the Green Plan forced the government to set priorities and determine what was important for Canada, both domestically and internationally. Having already undergone a challenging process of sorting out our domestic environmental priorities allowed us to evaluate the recommendations and issues which emerged at UNCED, assess with a large degree of certainty their relationship to Canadian policy, and decide which should constitute priorities for Canada. Although a number of priorities for UNCED were already established in the Green Plan -- including action on climate change, biodiversity and forests -- several high-priority issues for Canada became clear as the preparatory process advanced. These included action on the high-seas fisheries and the development of an Earth Charter.

**D**uring the process of developing the Green Plan, the government became aware of the value of involving stakeholders in environmental decision-making. This became a key feature of Canada's participation at Rio. Ensuring that Canada's positions on the issues addressed at Rio had the support of Canadians was instrumental in allowing Canada to negotiate from a position of strength.

**F**inally, Rio demonstrated that effective action on issues of importance to Canada must consist of a combination of domestic action in concert with co-ordinated global action. For example, to try to resolve the crisis in the northern cod fishery off the Atlantic coast, Canada took the difficult but critical step of closing the domestic fishery and now needs the co-operation of foreign nations who also fish for cod in order to rebuild the stocks. In the future, Canada's actions to implement

sustainable development will need to be more outward-looking. *Canada's Green Plan* will need to better reflect the growing international dimension of sustainable development.

**B**efore Rio, Canada's Five-Point Plan was announced by the Prime Minister. It sets out the following agenda for global action.

- All countries need to develop their own "green plans".
- The climate change and biodiversity conventions require urgent and constructive follow-up.
- Rich countries must help poor countries make progress.
- The UN and its agencies must be part of the solution.
- The idea of an Earth Charter should be pursued.

**C**anada's commitments on these and on other important Canadian priorities, such as forests and overfishing on the high seas, were more clearly outlined by the Prime Minister in his address to the Earth Summit.

### **Promoting National Planning for Sustainable Development**

**A**n important idea recognized at UNCED was the link between global commitment and the responsibility of each country to take action. UNCED reaffirmed the notion expressed by the Brundtland Commission as 'think globally; act locally', and challenged each country to develop national sustainable development plans. This is a critical feature of making global progress on sustainable development, because it is unlikely that nations will do more in the international arena than they are prepared to do at home. Rio also confirmed that the root of many

environmental problems is the way decisions are made, and that national plans should contain measures to change decision-making.

The process of developing national plans provides countries with a framework for:

- assessing their environmental and developmental situations and identifying areas for action;
- promoting a participatory process to define their needs and priorities in implementing Agenda 21; and
- changing decision-making processes throughout society -- including ordinary citizens, multinationals and governments.

Canada adopted its national strategy for sustainable development two years ago. The Green Plan has generated interest in the international community and has been suggested as a model for other countries. In Rio, the Prime Minister accepted an invitation from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to share with other nations Canada's experience in this area. Canada is participating in "Capacity 21", a three-year UNDP pilot project to assist developing countries in preparing their own national sustainable development plans.

### **The Conventions On Climate Change and Biological Diversity**

Climate change and, more recently, the loss of biological diversity (biodiversity) have risen to the top of the international agenda, joining issues such as the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer. In the Green Plan, Canada made commitments to work towards international agreements on climate change and biodiversity, both of which were tabled for signature at the Earth Summit. The Prime Minister signed both conventions for Canada and urged the world to begin immediate and

constructive follow-up, indicating that Canada would undertake to ratify both agreements before the end of 1992. On behalf of Canada, the Prime Minister signed the ratification documents for both conventions on December 4, 1992.

### **The Convention on Climate Change**

The Framework Convention on Climate Change, which Prime Minister Mulroney and representatives from over 150 other countries and the European Community signed in Rio, is a blueprint for a concerted international response to global warming.

#### **Canada and the Convention on Climate Change**

Dec. 1990	The UN General Assembly passes a resolution forming the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a Convention on Climate Change, of which Canada is a member.
Feb. 1991- May 1992	Five INC negotiating sessions are held in Washington, Geneva (twice), Nairobi and New York.
May 9, 1992	Agreed text of the Convention is adopted by the INC.
June 1992	Canada signs the Convention at UNCED, along with over 150 other nations.
Sept. - Nov. 1992	Canada's federal, provincial and territorial energy and environment ministers support ratification of the Convention and the quick-start agenda.
Dec. 4, 1992	Canada signs ratification documents.

### The National Action Strategy on Global Warming

The Green Plan outlined Canada's position on global warming and set out the actions the federal government is taking to help Canada and Canadians meet the challenge of global warming. Canada's goal is to stabilize national emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases not controlled under the Montreal Protocol at 1990 levels by the year 2000. The National Action Strategy on Global Warming is the framework to achieve that goal.

The Strategy has three main components:

- limiting greenhouse gas emissions;
- anticipating and preparing for potential climatic change which Canada may experience as a result of global warming; and
- improving scientific understanding and predictive capabilities with respect to climate change.

In support of the National Action Strategy, the federal government has launched a number of key Green Plan initiatives. For example:

- Under Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR) Canada's Efficiency and Alternative Energy Program, minimum energy efficiency standards for energy-using products are being set, and Energuide labelling of appliances and products is being enhanced.
- Through EMR's Alternative Energy initiatives, the performance, availability and use of alternative transportation fuel technologies are being improved and expanded.
- Forestry Canada's Tree Plan Canada initiatives are encouraging and fostering tree-planting projects in rural and urban communities over the next six years by the corporate and public sectors, community groups and individual Canadians.
- The Global Warming Science Program will reduce the uncertainties surrounding global warming in Canada.
- Environment Canada's Environmental Citizenship initiative, through its Atmospheric Change Learning Campaign, will give Canadians a better understanding of the global warming issue. It will provide information about the important role individuals and organizations can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The initial measures that are being implemented to limit emissions are those that make economic sense in their own right. However, further steps may be needed to achieve the emissions target on time. To that end, the federal government released a discussion paper on the use of economic instruments for environmental protection, including the possible use of taxes and emission-trading systems to attain reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Consultations on economic instruments will begin early in 1993.

**T**he objective of the Convention is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous human-induced interference with the climate.

**D**eveloped countries party to the Convention are required to:

- adopt national policies and measures on climate change;
- limit emissions of greenhouse gases with the aim of stabilization; and
- report regularly on progress towards returning emissions of greenhouse gases to earlier levels by the end of the decade, with the aim of returning to 1990 levels:

In order to help developing countries meet their commitments, which include developing greenhouse gas inventories and national programs, the Convention makes provision for the transfer of financial resources and technology to these countries.

At Rio, Canada outlined its quick-start agenda and challenged other countries to take immediate action. Canada agreed to the following actions:

- Ratify the Convention by the end of 1992. The ratification documents were signed for Canada on December 4, 1992.
- Issue its national report on plans and policies in pursuit of the Convention's objectives by June 1993, well in advance of the date required under the Convention. Canada is on track to meet this date.
- Promote a work plan for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to meet the scientific needs of the Convention, including a new comprehensive scientific assessment by 1995. The work plan was accepted in November 1992.
- Sponsor a meeting of officials of the Global Environment Facility and negotiators from the Convention to discuss their respective roles and linkages and to help mobilize interim funding for country studies. The meeting took place in late October 1992.
- Host an international meeting on the application of the comprehensive approach (i.e., a variety of actions on all greenhouse gases) to limiting greenhouse gas emissions to ensure that the most cost-effective and environmentally effective methods are implemented under the Convention. This meeting will take place in mid-1993.
- Help build developing countries' capabilities by contributing to a World Meteorological Organization (WMO) trust fund to

enhance climate-observing systems in developing countries, assisting at least two developing countries to build their capacity to meet the reporting requirements of the Convention, and sponsoring a seminar for developing countries on climate-change education and training. Canada has contributed \$1 million to the WMO trust fund, and is working with Mexico, China (Beijing province), Tanzania and Zimbabwe to develop emission inventories and possible emission-limitation options.

### **The Convention on Biological Diversity**

At Rio, international momentum began to swing in favour of approving the Convention on Biological Diversity when the Prime Minister, on behalf of Canada, was the first to sign the Convention and announced that Canada would ratify it by the end of 1992. He also urged other countries to do the same. By the time Rio had ended, 157 countries had signed the Convention.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers on the Parks Ministerial Council, the Wildlife Ministerial Council of Canada, and the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment gave the Convention their support at an unprecedented Tri-Council meeting held on November 25, 1992. With this support, Canada signed the documents to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity on December 4, 1992.

The objectives of the Convention are the conservation of the variability among living organisms, their sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits flowing from the utilization of genetic resources.

### Canada and the Convention on Biological Diversity

May 1991	The Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) establishes the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), of which Canada is a member, for a Convention on Biological Diversity.
June 1991 - May 1992	Five INC sessions are held in Madrid, Nairobi (three times), and Geneva.
May 22, 1992	Agreed text of the Convention is adopted by the INC.
June 1992	Canada is first to sign the Convention at UNCED, and is joined by over 150 other nations.
Nov. 25, 1992	Ratification of the convention is supported by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial parks, environment and wildlife ministers at their Tri-Council Meeting.
Dec. 4, 1992	Canada signs ratification documents.

The Convention calls on signatories to take substantive action, including:

- developing national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;
- inventorying and monitoring components of biodiversity and of processes adversely affecting it;
- developing and strengthening mechanisms for biodiversity conservation;
- restoring degraded ecosystems and recovering endangered species; and
- integrating biodiversity concerns into national decision-making.

At the November Tri-Council meeting, Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments also adopted a follow-up plan for the Convention. One of the key highlights of the plan is development of Canada's National Biodiversity Strategy.

### The Green Plan and the National Biodiversity Strategy

The Green Plan supports actions which represent a solid starting point from which to develop Canada's National Biodiversity Strategy.

For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity urges parties to establish a system of protected areas. The Green Plan commits the federal government to completing the national parks system by the year 2000, with each of the country's 39 natural regions represented by a national park, and states, "Canada's long-term goal is to set aside as protected space 12 per cent of the country."

So far in 1992, two important steps have been taken to expand Canada's national parks system. In April, 22,000 square kilometres of land were set aside on northern Baffin Island and Bylot Island for a new national park. In August, an agreement was signed to create a second new national park, this one in the Western Arctic. The 12,275-square-kilometre park, called "Aulavik", is located in the wildlife-rich Thomson River area on northern Banks Island.

Canada is acting on many other fronts to protect special spaces and species. For example, in November 1991, the federal government announced the Green Plan's National Wildlife Strategy consisting of wildlife diversity protection, wildlife habitat conservation, and safeguarding healthy ecosystems. Highlights of the National Wildlife Strategy include: a funding arrangement with the World Wildlife Fund to protect and recover Canadian wildlife species at risk, the Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation (adopted in March 1992), the creation of new National Wildlife Areas and Migratory Bird Sanctuaries, and a proposed Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act.

**U**nder this Strategy, each jurisdiction in Canada will meet its responsibilities under the convention. To develop the Strategy, the federal government is working with the provinces and territories, NGOs, indigenous peoples, business and other interests to consolidate all existing and planned activities throughout the country so as to identify any gaps that need to be filled. For the Government of Canada, the Green Plan supports numerous actions which will provide a major contribution to the Strategy. These actions are highlighted in the box on page 12 entitled "The Green Plan and the National Biodiversity Strategy".

Canada plans to complete its interim report on the National Biodiversity Strategy by November 1993, with a completed action plan by November 1994.

### **Aid, Trade and Debt**

**C**anada's Prime Minister called on developed countries to act on aid, trade and debt. UNCED made clear that action is needed on issues related to poverty and developing-world debt in order to help developing nations make the transition to sustainable development. Canada's immediate priorities on these issues, as outlined below, represent the beginning of new directions in Canada's approach to tackling environment and development issues. The Government of Canada will build on these in the renewal of the Green Plan.

#### **Aid**

**C**ountries around the world recognize that environmental problems have no respect for national boundaries. Canada emphasized in the Green Plan that this is the basis for global action on the environment. This transboundary aspect of the problems of climate change and the loss of biodiversity compelled Canada and its international partners

to complete conventions to orchestrate global action against them. The other universal reality reflected in these conventions is that many developing countries simply cannot afford to address global environmental problems without substantial technical and financial assistance. Many of these same countries are unable to take action to deal with environmental problems of even a local nature, either because they lack resources or technical or institutional capacity.

**T**he consensus achieved at Rio represents an opportunity to go beyond a traditional approach to development, and toward fully integrating sustainable development. This is consistent with the direction in which Canada has been moving in recent years to meet environment and development objectives and with the policies governing our Official Development Assistance to developing countries.

**U**NCED demonstrated that poverty and underdevelopment are closely linked with global environmental issues. Poverty is often deepened, if not caused, by ecological destruction. Poverty can often lead to further degradation of the environment, as survival overtakes other less immediate considerations. Indeed, alleviation of poverty, social development and economic growth were overriding priorities for many developing countries at UNCED.

**F**or Canada, promoting sustainable development in developing countries means the evolution of development assistance toward development co-operation. This new relationship recognizes North-South interdependence and, among other things, the need to attempt to reconcile the pursuit of economic development with environmental sustainability.

**T**he Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the multilateral funding mechanism of choice for addressing global environmental problems. The GEF, established in November 1990 and implemented jointly by the World Bank, UNEP and UNDP, will end its pilot phase in 1993. In addition to climate change and biodiversity, the GEF concerns itself with the global environmental issues of stratospheric ozone and international waters. Canada is contributing \$25 million to the pilot phase of the GEF and will pay its fair share for the replenishment of the GEF. In early December 1992, the fourth meeting of GEF Participants was held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to discuss the restructuring of the GEF.

**A**genda 21 confirms the developed countries' commitment to Official Development Assistance (ODA) in a way which supports the prompt implementation of sustainable development in developing countries. Through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada has established sustainable development as a priority for international aid. Since 1986, CIDA has invested \$1.3 billion in projects that meet the objectives of Agenda 21, such as promoting environmentally sustainable population growth and arresting the spread of deserts into formerly productive land. Earlier this year, CIDA developed a Policy for Environmental Sustainability, which is reinforcing the long-term perspective in sustainable development co-operation and -- in a move which is fully consistent with the goals of Agenda 21 -- is encouraging grassroots participation in sustainable development planning.

**C**anada is also providing aid to developing countries for local initiatives through multilateral lending institutions. The most important of these is the World Bank. Canada's contribution to the current International

Development Association (IDA) fund is almost \$830 million. At UNCED, Canada announced that it will join other major donor countries in providing funds to promote environmental and developmental objectives in the world's poorest countries. To this end, Canada intends to take part in IDA's 10th replenishment, which is currently under negotiation.

**C**anada benefits from helping developing countries take action on sustainable development projects on a local scale. Projects designed to improve their people's health and access to clean water and family planning, as recommended in the chapters of Agenda 21, help to accelerate the demographic transition to sustainable population growth. These projects help to begin reversing the fierce spiral of poverty, ecological damage and political instability now ravaging a number of developing countries.

### **Trade**

**G**ood economic policy, including trade policy, and good environmental policy are essentially two sides of the same coin. This was a fundamental theme at UNCED and is one of the basic principles underlying *Canada's Green Plan*.

**T**he relationship between trade and the environment is a particularly important one for Canada. Firstly, Canada is a trading nation -- the value of our trade amounts to 40 per cent of our GDP and one out of every three Canadian jobs is linked to exports. Canada has benefited enormously from the stable system of world trade rules established under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Since the creation of GATT in 1948, world trade has expanded about 10 times, while Canada's per-capita income has roughly tripled in real terms.

**S**econd, Canadians demand a clean environment and want their governments and the world community to have the ability to introduce the programs which are necessary to protect the environment. The increased economic activity resulting from expanded world trade provides countries with the financial resources to take action on protecting the environment. For many developing nations, trade is the most secure route to economic self-sufficiency and sustainable development. Third, the Canadian economy is heavily resource-based and trade-oriented economic activity in Canada accordingly has the potential for important impacts on the en-

vironment. Canada needs a healthy natural resource base in order to prosper and must therefore take action to manage our resources wisely.

**C**anada is actively working with its North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) trading partners as well as its partners within the OECD and the GATT to promote the integration of trade and environment policies. The OECD early last year established a group of trade and environment experts whose mandate is to develop guidelines to increase the mutual sensitivity of environmental and trade policies.

### **The North American Free Trade Agreement**

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with its commitment to sustainable development and environmental protection and enforcement, represents an important step forward in integrating trade and the environment. In Canada this integration has been achieved through the following comprehensive, four-pronged approach:

- Trade-related environmental issues were dealt with in the NAFTA negotiations themselves.
- Environmental interests were included in the government's consultation process for the negotiations, along with business, industry, labour and other interests.
- In keeping with the Green Plan pledge to integrate environmental considerations into all aspects of decision-making, an environmental review of the NAFTA was carried out and released to the public on November 3, 1992.
- Environmental co-operation between Canada, Mexico and the United States is being intensified.

The environmental provisions of the NAFTA go well beyond those of any previous trade agreement. Notably, the NAFTA:

- protects the right of each NAFTA country to maintain environmental standards according to its own priorities and circumstances, even if these standards are higher than those recommended by international organizations;
- recognizes that the NAFTA countries should not lower health, safety or environmental standards to maintain or attract investment; and
- ensures that the NAFTA will not diminish a country's right to take action under specified international environmental and conservation agreements -- CITES, the Montreal Protocol, and the Basel Convention.

Recognizing the growing links between their economies and mutual reliance on a shared continental ecosystem, environment ministers from the three NAFTA countries met in September 1992. They agreed that there was a need for formal trilateral environmental co-operation and, in particular, for the creation of a North American Commission on the Environment. The Commission will ensure sustained and effective North American environmental co-operation, and will play a vital role in supporting the environmental goals and provisions of the NAFTA.

**T**he NAFTA provides for precedent-setting environmental safeguards, and establishes a new benchmark for environmentally sensitive trade policies. Details on how the environment is integrated into the NAFTA can be found in the box on page 15 entitled "The North American Free Trade Agreement".

**T**he GATT recently reactivated a working group on environment and trade. The group is examining the extent to which the GATT rules allow countries sufficient flexibility to implement effective environmental policies while ensuring the integrity of the multilateral trading system, and while guarding against the abuse of environmental rationales for protectionist purposes.

**A**genda 21 proposes actions that aim to liberalize trade and open markets, highlighting these as important objectives that can make economic growth and environmental protection mutually supportive for all countries. In further pursuit of the Agenda 21 recommendation that the role of GATT in promoting sustainable development be clarified, the Prime Minister announced in Rio that once the current Uruguay Round of global trade negotiations is completed, Canada will support a further round of negotiations in which the environment will be a focal point.

### **Debt**

**A**ccording to the World Bank, the total debt of developing countries at the end of 1991 was estimated at close to US\$ 1,281 billion, unchanged from the previous year. While aggregate net transfers of financial resources for developing countries were positive in 1991 and for the two preceding years, they had been negative for several years in the 1980s. In addition, for countries with substantial commercial bank debt, particularly in Latin America, net transfers remain negative. Agenda 21 urges richer countries to

relieve the burden of debt owed to them by poorer countries to accelerate their transition to sustainable development.

**A**t the Earth Summit, Canada proposed a new initiative to convert as much as \$145 million of ODA debt held by 10 Latin American countries into local currency funds to help finance environment and other sustainable development projects. For those countries wishing to take advantage of this proposal, debt conversions will be negotiated and implemented on a case-by-case basis. They will be subject to specific conditions, and related to the promotion of human rights and democratic conditions as well as to larger economic and financial considerations.

**C**anada has played a leading role in helping to shape the international debt strategy. Canada's approach has been to distinguish between the debt problems of countries at different levels of development and to develop different mechanisms to address the problems of debt-distressed countries, especially the poorest of them. Since 1988, Canada, as a member of the Paris Club of official creditors and the G-7, has approved various terms of debt rescheduling and reduction for lower-income countries. For example, in September 1992, Canada and other developed countries agreed that additional resource flows to sub-Saharan Africa must be substantially larger and on highly concessionary terms. Earlier Canadian ODA debt initiatives for this region, and for other regions including the Least Developed Countries and Commonwealth Caribbean countries, have resulted in the forgiving of \$1.1 billion in development-assistance loans owed to Canada.

**C**IDA has gained some experience in debt-conversion programs in Jamaica and Costa Rica. It contributed funds to help these countries retire a portion of their commercial bank debt in exchange for the provision of local resources by the beneficiary government for the financing of mutually agreed sustainable development projects. For example, CIDA is currently supporting the "Debt for Development Initiative" set up by the Canadian NGO Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) to promote the debt-for-development conversion mechanism among the Canadian NGO community.

### **Renewed Commitment to the United Nations and other International Institutions**

Institutions that have a global perspective have a pivotal role to play in developing and implementing solutions to sustainable development issues. The actions that Canada is taking in this regard reflect its continuing commitment to the Green Plan goal of supporting international institutions in order to promote global sustainable development.

### **The Commission on Sustainable Development**

The nations gathered at UNCED agreed to establish a Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) within the United Nations system which, as initiator and sponsor of the Earth Summit, retains the lead on intergovernmental follow-up to the Conference. The CSD will be a high level, limited-membership body that will report to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In Rio, Canada recognized that the CSD must rapidly establish itself as a principal focal point and international mechanism for monitoring the

implementation of Agenda 21 and other UNCED decisions, and for fostering further commitments to action by governments.

The CSD's organizational arrangements are currently being discussed by UNGA along with other UNCED follow-up issues. Canada supports the need for the CSD to be an effective and influential body, with participation at the highest possible level. Canada also supports maintaining the enhanced involvement of NGOs and other major groups on the basis of procedures adopted for the UNCED process, as well as increased co-ordination among UN agencies. The CSD should be formally established in February 1993.

### **The International Development Research Centre**

As a complement to the support extended to the creation of a Commission on Sustainable Development, Canada announced in Rio that it would broaden the mandate of its International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to emphasize sustainable development issues.

The IDRC will dedicate itself to building research and technological capacity in developing countries, an important recommendation of Agenda 21. The international community's greater access to the direct hands-on expertise of the IDRC will help to ensure a quick start in implementing the UNCED agenda.

### **United Nations Environment Programme**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the principal environmental agency within the United Nations. Agenda 21 calls for a strengthening of UNEP so that it can adequately act on and promote its priority issues, which currently include global environmental conventions, environmental economics, environmental impact

assessments and information exchange. At Rio, Canada indicated that it would help the agency play a more effective role in promoting international environmental conventions and global environmental monitoring over the next five years.

### **Pursuing an Earth Charter**

In the lead-up to UNCED, Canada pressed for a short, concise Earth Charter embodying principles on which could be grounded the international pursuit of sustainable development. However, the result of the negotiations at Rio was the Rio Declaration, a document containing 27 fundamental principles of environment and development. The Rio Declaration, which is not legally binding, includes references to the importance of international co-operation, improving scientific understanding, the participation of all concerned citizens, the precautionary approach, the polluter-pays principle, and environmental impact assessments. Canada maintains that, in spite of this achievement, the international community should continue to work towards an Earth Charter which is shorter, more focused and better integrates environment and development.

Canada proposed at Rio that the idea of an Earth Charter be revived and that it be completed for 1995, the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. This position was echoed in subsequent summit statements by several other nations and by the Secretary Generals of both UNCED and the UN.

### **Action on the High-Seas Fishery**

One of Canada's Green Plan priorities is the long-term sustainability of Canada's fisheries resource. For the people of Newfoundland whose economic livelihoods have been devastated by the collapse of the northern cod

stocks, the need to manage our environmental resources in a way that ensures long-term sustainability has become acute.

A key element in Canada's strategy to resolve this critical issue was to strongly advance Canada's position at UNCED, particularly with respect to foreign overfishing in international waters off Atlantic Canada. In 1990 Canada launched an international initiative aimed at developing an effective legal regime governing straddling stocks on the high seas. Specific principles and measures, consistent with the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, included full implementation of the provisions concerning high-seas fishing, strengthening regional organizations, and ensuring the recognition of the special interest of coastal states with respect to the high-seas portions of straddling stocks.

Canada pressed hard to achieve two main objectives: the incorporation into Agenda 21 of all the principles and measures on high-seas fishing developed by international legal experts and supported by 40 countries; and the call by UNCED for a follow-up diplomatic conference as soon as possible to develop internationally agreed rules on high-seas fishing in accordance with sustainable development principles.

By the end of UNCED, Canada had achieved both of its objectives. First, the international community, including members of the European Community, reached consensus on the content of Agenda 21 dealing with living marine resources, which contains important commitments by countries to address the overfishing problem. The principle of sustainable development of fisheries resources was solidly endorsed by UNCED and is enunciated in Agenda 21. Second, the international community agreed to hold a diplomatic conference in 1993 to recommend measures to

end high-seas overfishing. In January 1993, Canada will host a meeting of like-minded states at St. John's, Newfoundland, to consolidate objectives and plan a collective strategy.

## Action On Forests

The Government of Canada believes that it is important that the sustainable development and conservation of forests be pursued on a global basis. As forests emerged as one of the key issues to be dealt with at UNCED, discussions and decisions on forests became one of Canada's top priorities for the Earth Summit.

Canada's principal goal on this issue when the Rio process began over two years ago was to achieve a legally binding instrument, such as an international convention, to guide the way the world manages its forests.

### Canada's Model Forest Network

In order to help the forest community put the concept of managing forests for both timber and other forest values into practice, the federal government, with support from Canada's forest community, has launched the Model Forest Network. The principal objective of this program, which is the centrepiece of Forestry Canada's \$100-million Sustainable Forestry initiative and a key element of *Canada's Green Plan*, is to find ways to put these commitments into action and to show others that it can be done. The program involves establishing 10 Model Forests encompassing close to six million hectares, and will demonstrate how scientifically and ecologically sound forest-management practices can be applied economically to actual working forests. The program aims to illustrate how forest values such as wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and the protection of watersheds can co-exist with economically viable forestry operations. Once new forest-management techniques and decision-making processes are developed and proven in the field, there is a broad-based commitment by all members of Canada's forest community to incorporate them into everyday forest management.

Important progress was made on a number of forest issues at Rio, despite the fact that an international convention on forests was out of reach. For the first time, the international community negotiated a comprehensive document spelling out the economic and environmental obligations of governments in dealing with all types of forests. In particular, the statement of principles clearly states that forests are ecosystems which provide multiple values. The consensus reached on this document is an important step in raising the profile of forests as an issue for continuing action.

Canada strongly believes that more needs to be done to put the development of the world's forests on a sustainable footing. In particular, Canada will continue to build on the forest principles agreed upon at Rio to develop scientifically based and internationally agreed criteria for forest management, and ultimately to launch a forest convention. Canada will press to have this issue raised during this year's UN General Assembly session, and will work towards giving the Commission on Sustainable Development a clear mandate to follow up on the statement of forest principles.

Canada is taking concrete action on forestry issues. Over the last few years Canada has launched a number of initiatives to implement sustainable forest development, both in Canada and internationally. In March 1992, the federal Forestry Minister, his provincial colleagues on the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, and representatives of industry, labour and environmental groups signed the Canada Forest Accord and endorsed a new national forest strategy. This accord commits the federal and provincial governments and the forest industry to managing Canada's forests for both environmental and economic sustainability. In practice this means

managing Canada's forests for multiple objectives including jobs and income, and non-timber values such as wildlife habitat, biodiversity and the protection of watersheds. Both the accord and the strategy were strongly supported by a wide range of business interests, forestry professionals, and labour, environmental and aboriginal interests from across Canada.

**A**t Rio the Government of Canada announced that it would provide funds from the Green Plan to assist in establishing model forests in three developing countries in order to demonstrate effective and sustainable forest-management practices. The program will be similar to the domestic Model Forest Network (see the box on page 19 entitled "Canada's Model Forest Network"), and will require the active participation and contribution of a wide range of partners.

**C**IDA has sponsored two additional international forest projects. Canada has committed funds to the rain forest pilot project initiated by the G-7 countries and Brazil. This project is designed to promote conservation of the Brazilian Amazon rain forest. Canada will also continue to support the work of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Institute of Forest Management, located in Malaysia, which has become a centre of excellence in tropical forest management.

## **Agenda 21**

**A**genda 21 is a comprehensive action plan for global sustainable development. On a fundamental level, it offers a very modern solution to the significant problems facing our globe. Agenda 21 confirms that no nation on its own can achieve improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous

future -- but together, in a global partnership for sustainable development, all this is possible.

**A**genda 21 maintains that the successful implementation of sustainable development is dependent on the creation of national strategies and plans, like the Green Plan. At UNCED, the world community chose co-operative and co-ordinated national action in pursuit of sustainable development over an imposed, supranational plan.

**I**n 40 chapters and over 500 pages, Agenda 21 methodically lays out program areas and the basis for action, objectives, activities and means of implementation for each.

**L**ike the Green Plan, Agenda 21 emphasizes improving decision-making to prevent future problems and to prepare us for the challenges of the next century. It calls on nations to provide an effective legal and regulatory framework, make effective use of economic instruments and market incentives, and establish systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting. Agenda 21 stresses the role of "major groups" in the implementation of sustainable development. It suggests that all sectors of society, from women and youth to farmers and indigenous peoples, must be able to participate in and contribute to its advancement. Agenda 21 also highlights science, improved education and awareness, and better and more readily available information as key requirements for sustainable development.

**A**genda 21 embraces the detailed actions called for on individual sustainable development issues. These concerns include the protection of the atmosphere, combatting deforestation, the conservation of biological diversity, the protection of oceans and freshwater resources, the management of toxic

chemicals, and many more. Many of Agenda 21's recommendations on these issues have in fact already been acted on through the Green Plan and other government initiatives. However, gaps that exist will need to be identified and considered in the ongoing evaluation and updating of government policies, including *Canada's Green Plan*.

**A**genda 21 addresses the need to promote the transition of the developing world to sustainable development. Agenda 21 deals with the needs of developing countries and related underlying issues. It includes measures aimed at poverty, overpopulation and poor health conditions. Financial assistance, technology transfer and international institutions are also considered. Many of these objectives

## Highlights of the Green Plan and Agenda 21

### Action on Decision-Making

To establish a more effective legal framework (as called for in Agenda 21), the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) was proclaimed in 1988. CEPA includes a structure of fines and penalties that reflects the seriousness with which Canadians and their governments view environmental offences.

To balance the use of legal mechanisms with market-based approaches, in May 1992 the government released a discussion paper on the use of economic instruments for environmental protection. Economic instruments, such as environmental charges or tradeable emission permits, have certain advantages over a regulatory approach for some environmental problems. For example, they can achieve a specified level of environmental protection at lower cost, provide a continuing economic incentive for firms to cut pollution and, in some cases, allow for a faster achievement of environmental goals.

To provide Canadians with good environmental information for decision-making, the government released the second State of the Environment Report in April 1992. To help Canadians use environmental information in their day-to-day decisions, the Environmental Citizenship initiative was launched in June 1992. It includes initiatives such as the Environmental Partners Fund and the Environmental Choice labelling program.

### Action on Issues

Agenda 21 promotes sustainable agriculture. In early 1992, a Green Plan initiative was launched by Agriculture Canada, addressing a wide range of issues related to agriculture and the environment. These include soil conservation, surface and groundwater quality, wildlife habitat, air quality and climate change, energy use, pollution and waste management, and genetic resources.

Agenda 21 suggests that governments should establish or strengthen regional agreements for transboundary air pollution control. In March 1991 Canada and the United States did so by signing the Air Quality Accord, one of whose objectives is to control acid-rain precursors -- sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>).

Agenda 21 calls for integrated coastal management. The Green Plan's Atlantic Coastal Action Program is helping 13 Atlantic communities to develop "blueprints" for managing the coastal resources in the region. These projects are organized and run at the local level and several are already fully engaged.

Project Eagle is another example of how Canada is implementing elements of Agenda 21 which focus on improving health. Project Eagle, part of the Green Plan's Action Plan on Health and the Environment, is a study involving 63 aboriginal communities living around the Great Lakes. It blends scientific research with traditional ecological knowledge to address the effect of contaminants in the Great Lakes on the fish and wildlife that are central to the traditional aboriginal way of life.

are addressed in the specific activities of Canada's Agenda for Action, especially the Aid, Trade and Debt section, which is described earlier in this report.

**C**anadians can use Agenda 21 to track progress made on sustainable development by the members of the Canadian delegation, including the Government of Canada. Agenda 21 sets out recommendations on who should do what to continue work on implementing sustainable development, and serves to promote accountability. While it is not a legally binding document, Agenda 21 represents a significant moral commitment, and Canadians can use it to check on whether the participants are living up to what was agreed upon.

The Government of Canada is committed to the spirit and direction of Agenda 21 and to a comprehensive response to its recommendations. Agenda 21 will play an influential role in establishing priorities during the process of updating *Canada's Green Plan*.

### **Canada's Commitment to the Rio Way**

**A**t Rio the Minister of the Environment emphasized that environmental decision-making in Canada is changing. He highlighted Canada's commitment to improving the way we conduct our business and the increasing recognition of the need for transparency, accountability and inclusion in the way we make decisions relating to the environment.

**A**n essential element of UNCED was the extent to which the various sectors became involved in the preparatory process and helped shape the decisions that were made. Public involvement also played an important part in Canada's own preparatory process. Mechanisms were set in place to co-ordinate the

input of different stakeholders, many of whom eventually became part of Canada's delegation.

**W**hat do the concepts of transparency, accountability and inclusion really mean? Transparency implies that decision-making and goal-setting processes are visible and understood. Accountability refers to the concept that responsibilities for finding solutions and achieving goals are clearly defined. Inclusion is related to the principle that sustainable development includes everyone, and calls for fundamental change in behaviour by all sectors of society. This will only be possible if the co-operation of all sectors is obtained, and the interests of all the partners are respected.

**I**n the past, the federal government has involved Canadians in the design of its environmental policies and programs. In the future, the government will build on these efforts to ensure that the "Rio Way" -- which focuses on increased transparency, inclusiveness and accountability of our environmental decision-making -- continues to be an important part of the way it does business.

**T**his process has already begun. On November 5 and 6, 1992, a meeting was convened by the Minister of the Environment and chaired by the National Round Table on Environment and Economy. The purpose of the meeting was to further the process of engaging all sectors of Canadian society in working to meet the commitments made at Rio and to set a common course of action. Representatives from every major sector of Canadian society, including governments, business associations, community groups, indigenous peoples and labour, met and agreed to work together to respond to the commitments of Rio and the challenge of sustainable development. Participants agreed that the

solutions to environmental problems will require a new level of co-operation among all sectors of Canadian society.

**T**he next step in this process is that a multi-stakeholder working group will develop a framework for preparing an action plan for a sustainable future for Canada. This will include developing a document that sets out Canada's commitments at Rio and who is responsible for ensuring these commitments are met, and organizing a process to identify gaps. All of this will be referred back to a second National Stakeholders Meeting in May 1993. The National Round Table on Environment and Economy has offered to chair the process and provide the secretariat.

**F**or the federal government, this process will be an integral step in its plans to update the Green Plan. In particular, it will serve as a critical element in the need to ensure that the new standards set in Rio are fully reflected in the Green Plan.

**T**he federal government is also committed to ongoing action with its provincial and territorial partners in the context of UNCED follow-up. The Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment (CCME) met on November 26, 1992, and adopted a three-point plan for UNCED follow-up. The three points are:

- support by CCME ministers for Canada's early ratification and implementation of the Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity;
- immediate follow-up action on six Agenda 21 areas identified as priorities, including sustainable human settlements, freshwater, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, partnerships with indigenous peoples, and human health and environment; and

- integration of the environment and economy in decision-making, including preparing a framework document to contribute to harmonization of federal, provincial and territorial sustainable development initiatives, and adopting a monitoring role with respect to foreign overfishing off the Atlantic coast.

## **CONCLUSION AND FUTURE**

**DIRECTIONS** The Earth Summit is over but the process of turning the results of Rio into action has just begun. As countries around the world look ahead to chart their future courses, all nations, including Canada, can now do so with a new sense of confidence that sustainable development is the right direction. There was a broad consensus at Rio that sustainable development is the best approach to merging the need for global environmental protection with the demand for continued economic development in both developed and developing countries.

The major products which emerged from the UNCED process -- Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Climate Change, the Rio Declaration, the Forest Principles, and the agreement on the high-seas fishery -- all have sustainable development as their starting point. All represent remarkable achievements in bringing together countries of the world with vastly different circumstances to forge common solutions to common problems.

At the same time, Rio reminded us that both global and national problems remain and that countries cannot be complacent. Rather, the Rio experience repeatedly reminded nations that successful implementation of sustainable development is a long-term goal that will require ongoing commitment and care at both national and global levels, as well as a willingness to make mid-course corrections. Without a doubt, UNCED has challenged our assumptions about the world, and has provided us with new ideas and new information.

UNCED confirmed a number of key elements of the Green Plan and pointed to new directions for its further development. For example, the work that went into the

formulation of Agenda 21 confirmed that changing decision-making is the key to integrating the economy with the environment. This is also the principal concept underlying the Green Plan, and further development of this principle is one area which the government believes should be emphasized in the course of updating *Canada's Green Plan*.

In this context, the government believes that it should focus on those aspects of the Green Plan that are intended to promote the fundamentals of environmentally sound decision-making, the key to sustainable development. These include:

- balancing the use of strong and effective environmental laws with market-based approaches;
- providing timely, accurate and accessible information to enable Canadians to make environmentally sensitive decisions;
- strengthening existing environmental partnerships within Canada while building new ones;
- developing an environmentally literate society where Canadians are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for action;
- strengthening Canada's environmental science and technology with a special emphasis on understanding regional ecosystems; and
- encouraging environmentally responsible decision-making within the federal government.

Progress on issues such as biodiversity, the forest principles, the high-seas fishery, aid, trade and debt, and global warming, which are all so important to the environment and prosperity of Canada and its global partners, requires a commitment to ongoing co-operative action by the international community.

Other global issues which are at the heart of implementing sustainable development in developing countries are also high on Canada's agenda for the years ahead. These include an international convention on combating desertification, the upcoming UN conference on population in Cairo in 1994, and the UN conference on women in Beijing in 1995. *Canada's Green Plan* should reflect the growing importance of these issues.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the government firmly believes that the "Rio Way" was the right way to participate in UNCED. As a result, openness, transparency and inclusion of Canadians will be important elements of the future development and implementation of sustainable development in Canada, and will be a hallmark of the evolution of the Green Plan. After all, the Green Plan belongs to the Canadian people, and to ensure their lasting commitment to the vision and values of the Green Plan, Canadians must be involved.



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