



WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Address by
Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland
Chairman
at the Closing Ceremony of the
Eighth and Final Meeting of the
World Commission on Environment and Development
27 February 1987
Tokyo, Japan

Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

The World Commission on Environment and Development is honoured and pleased that you have joined us here today at the close of the Eighth and Final Meeting of the Commission.

We are most grateful to the Government of Japan for being our host at this important meeting. We believe it is appropriate that Tokyo be the venue of our final meeting. In holding our meeting here, we pay tribute to Japan for its steadfast support of our work. It was on the initiative of Japan in 1982 at the Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council that our independent Commission was called for by the General Assembly in the fall of 1983.

Since then, your country has not only given us very generous financial backing. It has also contributed greatly to our political and intellectual deliberations by providing us with such a distinguished member, the world renowned economist, statesman and devoted environmentalist, Dr. Saburo Okita.

It gives me the greatest pleasure also to be able to confirm that our meeting in Tokyo has been a success and that we have finalized our report which we shall shortly be presenting to the United Nations organs and issuing to the public in April. We have been able to agree because

we were unanimous in our conviction that the prosperity and very survival of the planet depended on it.

Indeed, our Commission grew out of an awareness that over the course of this century, the relationship between the human world and the planet that sustains it has undergone a profound change.

When the century began, neither human numbers nor technology had the power radically to alter planetary systems. As the century closes, not only do vastly increased human numbers and their activities have that power, but major, unintended changes are occurring in the atmosphere, in soils, in waters, among plants and animals, and in the relationships among all of these. The rate of change is outstripping the ability of scientific disciplines to assess and advise. It is frustrating the attempts of political and economic institutions, which evolved in a different, more fragmented world, to adapt and cope. And it deeply worries many ordinary people who are seeking ways to place those concerns on political agendas.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Commission first wants to make absolutely clear that we did not begin our task with the aim of adding our voices to those who predict a gloomy future. In fact, there are certain very positive trends which have appeared over the last decades: Infant mortality is falling, human life expectancy is increasing, the proportion of the world's adults who can read and write is climbing and the proportion of children starting school is rising. Globally, food production is increasing faster than the population is growing.

Even so, since the Commission began its work, some 850 days ago, concern, even fear, has been growing among people in all walks of life about the state of our world and the quality of life of millions who inhabit it, and there is an increasing awareness that we face great problems.

Let me remind you of a few of the most dramatic occurrences in this context since we began our work, occurrences which have contributed to this spreading sense of alarm:

- The crisis in Africa peaked putting 35 million people at risk, killing perhaps a million.

- An estimated 60 million of the World's people died of diarrhoeal diseases from contaminated drinking water and malnutrition; most of the victims were children.

- The Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion sent nuclear fallout far across Europe, damaging food and water and increasing the threat of cancers in the future.

- A leak at the pesticide factory in Bhopal, India killed 2000 people and blinded or injured 200,000 thousand more.

- Agricultural chemicals, solvents and mercury flowed into the River Rhine during a warehouse fire in Basle, Switzerland, resulting in large scale destruction of fish and the poisoning of drinking water in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands.

During our three years of deliberations, we have also witnessed a pervasive spread of poverty, especially in developing countries as well as the life-threatening challenges of desertification and deforestation confronting them. We have watched with alarm as countries in Africa and Latin America have been compelled to use earnings from resources to service their debt and thereby impair their continued development. And we have witnessed the enormous pressures imposed on many countries by rapid population growth.

Coupled with these developments, we have recognized an increasing number of threats to the planet itself: the depletion of the ozone layer, the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and its accompanying "greenhouse effects", the death of forest from acidification and the loss of tropical forest and the species and ecosystems they harbour.

And we have been constantly faced with the irreparable damage that could be caused by nuclear war.

Our Commission's mandate, rightly called for us to develop "concrete and realistic" action proposals to deal with these alarming trends. We were asked to propose the changes needed. We were asked to see if the institutions we have created together were sufficient, and effective enough, to provide us with the tools that we need to manage the challenges imposed upon us by the pace and scale of these changes.

As a group, we have shared the conviction that it is possible to build a future that is more prosperous, more just and more secure for all. We share the conviction that it is possible to sustain and to expand the ecological basis for development. We have, from the outset, been acutely aware that we were not called upon to deal with the environment alone, but with development and the environment. The two are intimately interwoven in the real world.

This is true all over the world. "Development" can not be the narrow notion of "what poor nations should have so as to become richer". Just as the environment is where we all live, "development" is what we all do within that abode. Development takes place everywhere, in the Sahel, in the Arctic, in the industrial cities of the World, in the great farmlands, in the forests, wherever man is active.

And yet, the international mood surrounding our work has posed a dilemma. We obviously could not confine ourselves within the restraints of the political mood of the 1980s which is reflected in a retreat from multilateralism and international cooperation. That mood is not the answer to global issues. But what might seem difficult or even impossible today must be made possible for the future.

The Commission is convinced that the present disturbing trends and developments cannot continue. We believe that humanity has reached a crossroads in its relationship with nature. We are also cognizant that the choices we make today will determine the future of our planet and the prosperity and well-being of the people who will inhabit it.

But we also recognize that we do not have all the answers, that the problems are too complex, that they are too inter-related and the required solutions to them too diverse to permit us to issue a detailed blueprint for action to deal with them. What is important is that the twenty two members of this Commission, people from different regions and of different beliefs and experiences, have engaged in a common evaluation and analysis of the problems. Our endeavour has resulted in a common understanding of the alarming and unacceptable trends which face the globe and an urgent call for serious and drastic action to be taken.

But we are also convinced that our ability to deal with problems has never been greater. Advances in information systems, in health services, in forestry, in agriculture, in the efficient use of energy, and in monitoring global change provide us with reason to hope.

And we believe there are actions that can and must be taken now. That there are options for a sustainable future. These we will include in our report.

What we must do now is to direct our common endeavours towards our common future. We have witnessed, during our public hearings, that the will of the people to make the changes is there, in abundance. Now is the time for us to provide leadership.

We must learn not only to think, but to act upon, the knowledge that we are all responsible for this, our only earth. We can no more tolerate waste, misery and suffering on our shared globe than we can tolerate it in our own homes. We all have responsibility for one another, for our neighbors - that is what we are all - neighbours.

The concept of sustainable development is the overriding and global political concept that this commission will present and call for. What we have undertaken is to elaborate upon this concept, to analyse what it should mean and to draw conclusions as to how our behaviour must change so that development can be sustainable. The need for change is compelling. The will for change must be created.

Clearly the interventions needed to achieve sustainable development must be conceived and executed by processes that integrate environmental, social and economic considerations. The day when environmental management and economic development seemed to be in conflict has to be put far behind us.

The next few decades are crucial. The time has come to break away from the past. Attempts to maintain social and ecological stability through old approaches to development and environmental protection will increase instability. Security must be sought through change. The Commission has noted a number of actions that must be taken to reduce risks to survival and to put future development on paths that are sustainable. The Commission is aware that such a reorientation on a continuing basis is simply beyond the reach of present decision structures and institutional arrangements, both national and international.

Those structures must be remodelled so that development policies are policies for sustainable human progress far into the next century. Institutions whose policies and actions damage the resource base must be made responsible for that damage.

This Commission has been careful to base its recommendations on the realities of present institutions, on what can and must be accomplished today. We are not calling for action in the future by future generations. They will have their own tasks and needs, including perhaps the establishment of a world order whereby planetary considerations always take precedent over national considerations, and whereby an international, enforceable set of laws plays its part in creating a more equitable world. Those are among their options. But to keep options open for future generations, present generations must begin now, and begin together, their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Our report will not be a dismal prediction of ever increasing poverty, hunger and hardship. The concept of sustainable development implies human progress and improvement. Sustainable development is a goal not just for the developing nations, but for industrialized nations too. But the overriding priority should be given to the world's poor and to the needs of future generations.

Let me just touch upon a few of the problem areas we address in our report.

Human beings are a resource. But in many parts of the world population is growing at rates which cannot be sustained by available environmental resources, and therefore has to be addressed as an important part of broad social and economic policies. Access to education must be improved, in particular for girls, whose enrolment rates still lag behind those of boys. This gap must be closed as a matter of priority.

Agricultural policies in the developing nations tend to support export-oriented cash-crop farming and to neglect the small farmers - the food growers. Industrialized nations must alter present incentive systems to reduce surpluses and do away with unfair competition with nations which may have real comparative advantages. We should promote farming practices which make the best use of resources. To help in this, aid agencies should become ever more sensitive to agricultural needs in Third World countries.

Sustainable development recognizes that developing nations will require more, not less, total energy. Their industrialization and rapidly growing populations depend on this. But even the present global energy consumption creates serious environmental risks. Energy efficiency policies must therefore become the cutting edge of national energy strategies.

Energy efficiency is not the final solution, but will be an absolute must in the years to come, if the world is to develop a low energy future where renewable sources play a dominating role. This will require large scale research, and much strengthened international cooperation.

Sustainable development means nothing less than a new industrial era, where the energy and raw materials content of the end products must be way below present day levels. In the future, we expect that the best economists will also be the best ecologists. One measure of industrial development and competitiveness should be the level of waste output reduction. Toxic and poisonous products must receive the greatest attention. Under no circumstances should they be exported without the informed prior consent

of the receiving countries. Our international institutions at present are clearly not sufficient to manage the international trade in dangerous substances.

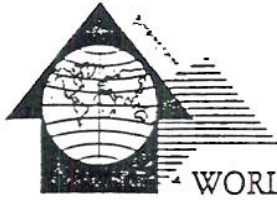
Finally, ladies and gentlemen, let me say that to achieve sustainable development will require the involvement of people in decision making at all levels. Indeed, the Commission's work has been first and foremost concerned with people, of all countries and all walks of life, and it is to people that we shall now be addressing ourselves.

The radical change in human attitudes foreseen by acceptance of the concept of sustainable development depends upon a vast campaign of public education and re-education, a worldwide debate around these life-and-death issues. Changing the attitudes of people, everywhere is a fundamental prerequisite if the priorities of human society and therefore of human government are to be rewritten.

This campaign of public information is therefore viewed by the Commission as the next great priority. This campaign requires the collaboration and cooperation of the mass media, of parents and teachers and of all informed people.

We believe that the Report of the Commission will contribute to the generation of a global awareness of the urgency of the challenges which face us and a renewed commitment to action. As a first step towards this goal, the Commission this day submits to the peoples and governments of the world the following declaration to be known as the Tokyo Declaration.

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Tokyo, Japan
27 February, 1987

TOKYO DECLARATION

The World Commission on Environment and Development was constituted in 1984 as an independent body by the United Nations General Assembly and set out to:

- a) re-examine the critical issues of environment and development, and formulate innovative, concrete, and realistic action proposals to deal with them;
- b) strengthen international cooperation on environment and development, and assess and propose new forms of cooperation that can break out of existing patterns and influence policies and events in the direction of needed change; and
- c) raise the level of understanding and commitment to action on the part of individuals, voluntary organizations, business, institutes and governments.

As we come in Tokyo to the end of our task, we remain convinced that it is possible to build a future that is prosperous, just and secure.

But realizing this possibility depends on all countries adopting the objective of sustainable development as the overriding goal and test of national policy and international cooperation. Such development can be defined simply as an approach to progress which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A successful transition to sustainable development through the year 2000 and beyond requires a massive shift in societal objectives. It also requires the concerted and vigorous pursuit of a number of strategic imperatives.

The World Commission on Environment and Development now calls upon all the nations of the World, both jointly and individually, to integrate sustainable development into their goals and to adopt the following principles to guide their policy actions.

1. Revive Growth

Poverty is a major source of environmental degradation which not only affects a large number of people in developing countries but also undermines the sustainable development of the entire community of nations - both developing and industrialized. Economic growth must be stimulated, particularly in developing countries, while enhancing the environmental resource base. The industrialized countries can and must contribute to reviving world economic growth. There must be urgent international action to resolve the debt crisis; a substantial increase in the flows of development finance; and stabilization of the foreign exchange earnings of low-income commodity exporters.

2. Change the Quality of Growth

Revived growth must be of a new kind in which sustainability, equity, social justice and security are firmly embedded as major social goals. A safe, environmentally sound energy pathway is an indispensable component of this. Education, communication, and international cooperation can all help to achieve those goals. Development planners should take account in their reckoning of national wealth not only of standard economic indicators, but also of the state of the stock of natural resources. Better income distribution, reduced vulnerability to natural disasters and technological risks, improved health, and preservation of cultural heritage - all contribute to raising the quality of that growth.

3. Conserve and Enhance the Resource Base

Sustainability requires the conservation of environmental resources such as clean air, water, forests and soils; maintaining genetic diversity; and using energy, water and raw materials efficiently. Improvements in the efficiency of production must be accelerated to reduce per capita consumption of natural resources and encourage a shift to non-polluting products and technologies. All countries are called upon to prevent environmental pollution by rigorously enforcing environmental

regulations, promoting low-waste technologies, and anticipating the impact of new products, technologies and wastes.

4. Ensure a Sustainable Level of Population

Population policies should be formulated and integrated with other economic and social development programmes - education, health care, and the expansion of the livelihood base of the poor. Increased access to family planning services is itself a form of social development that allows couples, and women in particular, the right to self-determination.

5. Reorient Technology and Manage Risks

Technology creates risks, but it offers the means to manage them. The capacity for technological innovation needs to be greatly enhanced in developing countries. The orientation of technology development in all countries must also be changed to pay greater regard to environmental factors. National and international institutional mechanisms are needed to assess potential impacts of new technologies before they are widely used. Similar arrangements are required for major interventions in natural systems, such as river diversion or forest clearance. Liability for damages from unintended consequences must be strengthened and enforced. Greater public participation and free access to relevant information should be promoted in decision-making processes touching on environment and development issues.

6. Integrate Environment and Economics in Decision-Making

Environmental and economic goals can and must be made mutually reinforcing. Sustainability requires the enforcement of wider responsibilities for the impacts of policy decisions. Those making such policy decisions must be responsible for the impact of those decisions upon the environmental resource capital of their nations. They must focus on the sources of environmental damage rather than the symptoms. The ability to anticipate and prevent environmental damage will require that the ecological dimensions of policy be considered at the same time as the economic, trade, energy, agricultural and other dimensions. They must be considered on the same agendas and in the same national and international institutions.

7. Reform International Economic Relations

Long term sustainable growth will require far-reaching changes to produce trade, capital, and technology flows that are more equitable and better synchronized to environmental imperatives. Fundamental improvements in market access, technology transfer, and international finance are necessary to help developing countries widen their opportunities by diversifying their economic and trade bases and building their self-reliance.

8. Strengthen International Cooperation

The introduction of an environmental dimension injects an additional element of urgency and mutual self-interest, since a failure to address the interaction between resource degradation and rising poverty will spill over and become a global ecological problem. Higher priorities must be assigned to environmental monitoring, assessment, research and development, and resource management in all fields of international development. This requires a high level of commitment by all countries to the satisfactory working of multilateral institutions; to the making and observance of international rules in fields such as trade and investment; and to constructive dialogue on the many issues where national interests do not immediately coincide but require negotiation to be reconciled. It requires also a recognition of the essential importance of international peace and security. New dimensions of multilateralism are essential to sustainable human progress.

The Commission is convinced that if we can make solid progress towards meeting these principles in the balance of this century, the next century can offer a more secure, more prosperous, more equitable and more hopeful future for the whole human family.