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There are less than 400 weeks left of the twentieth century. Time is short for us to rectify the present unsustainable patterns of human development. We must eradicate poverty. We must achieve greater equality within and between nations. We must reconcile human activities and human numbers with the laws of nature.

In 1987, in "Our Common Future", we described the dangers arising from attempts by both industrialized and developing countries, to base progress on practices which are environmentally and economically unsustainable. We addressed the interlocking crises of environment and development. We outlined a process of change towards sustainable development.

We called upon the UN General Assembly to convene an international conference "to review progress made and promote follow up arrangements to set benchmarks and maintain human progress within the guidelines of human needs and natural laws". Today, five years later, we are opening that conference.

Six weeks ago, the World Commission, reinforced by five distinguished world leaders, met again in London, and issued its political statement on the vital issues before this conference.

Human history has now reached a watershed where fundamental policy changes become unavoidable. The more than one billion people who today cannot meet their own basic needs, our own children and grandchildren, and the Earth itself all cry out for a revolution. It is bound to come eventually. We know we have an opportunity to head off the danger, disorder and conflict which might otherwise be inevitable.

A sharp reduction in the arms race and the expected peace dividend can be used to finance today's most urgent form of collective security - environmental security.

We need a new form of "collective engagement", not only to stabilize the new East-West relations, but to establish a new

North-South relationship based on mutual enlightened self-interest.

We will all be held accountable for what we fail to agree in Rio. For the first time in human history - all over the world - people will be able to closely monitor their leaders at work at a major conference, through widespread television and other media coverage.

We cannot claim that we lack knowledge. A global partnership must start with a commitment by the industrial countries to reduce sharply the burden they impose on the carrying capacity of the Earth's ecosystems by their unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

We should not be surprised that developing nations are approaching the Rio summit with open economic demands. For them, it is essentially a conference about development and justice.

Poverty degrades not only those who suffer it, but also those who tolerate it. The time has come for a real attack on mass poverty. Poverty, environment and population can no longer be dealt with - or even thought of - as separate issues; they are interlinked in practice and cannot be delinked in the formulation of policies.

Unless poverty is alleviated, there is no chance that we will be able to stabilise the world population. It has grown by 500 million since the Commission last met five years ago. We must deal with population growth through an integrated human rights approach, including education and the enhancement of the status of women, improved public health, and family planning.

During preparations for UNCED, many developing countries declared themselves ready to make political commitments to curb population growth, but some delegations have resisted calls for the universal availability of modern family planning. We all have an obligation to overcome this resistance and rise to the real challenges of our time.

Sustainable development can be advanced only by an international trading system which enlarges freedom of market access, especially for developing countries, and which incorporates environmental values. The Commission regrets that the current GATT Round has neglected environment and sustainable development and calls for these issues to be addressed in future negotiations.

A decade after the debt crisis broke in Latin America, many developing countries are unable to escape the onerous burden of foreign debt. Developing country debt now exceeds \$1.3 thousand billion US dollars, and debt service exceeds net development assistance by a factor of four. It is imperative that further debt relief be given, in particular to the low income countries.

Access to environmentally-sound technologies is of critical importance in respect of every item of Agenda 21. There is an urgent need to devote substantially more resources to the development of new and viable environmentally friendly technologies. Moreover, there is a further need to create an improved climate for private investment and to develop innovative new partnerships between government and business.

The UNCED secretariat's estimation of the financial resources required for implementation of Agenda 21 in developing countries amount to 625 billion US dollars. Some 80 per cent - or \$500 billion - will have to be provided by developing countries themselves. The remaining 20 per cent, or an estimated \$125 billion required annually must come from concessional financing by the industrial countries.

While this may appear a very large sum, it is in fact equivalent to the amounts which would be raised if the industrial countries met their long-established ODA target of 0.7 per cent of GNP.

The Commission built on the conclusions of the Tokyo Declaration on Financing Global Environment and Development, - a timely initiative taken by former Prime Minister Takeshita. The 0.7 per cent is the minimum necessary, given the scale of the efforts needed. All donor nations should achieve this target by the year 2000.

Industrialized countries must make a significant start here in Rio towards full implementation of Agenda 21, steadily increasing additional amounts yearly. We believe that this start should not be less than \$10 billion in 1993.

Beyond concessional financing, the special needs of middle-income developing countries must be met. It is no less important that the international community facilitates financial flows to these countries on appropriate terms and through a variety of mechanisms.

At the Earth Summit our human society should rise to the challenge that confronts it. We believe that the momentum is now irreversible. We must also look beyond Rio to ways that will help to sustain and strengthen it.

Within the UN system, the General Assembly should act as the supreme policy-making forum for sustainable development. We support the proposal for a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development.

We need a growing coalition of reason which so clearly depends on uniting the forces of democracy.

The World Commission calls upon the world's leaders present at the Earth Summit to commit the world's people to securing human survival. Narrowly focused national priorities will only hamper progress and stand in the way.

We are compelled to manage the most important global transition since the agricultural and industrial revolutions - the transition to sustainable development.

We may temporarily immunize ourselves emotionally to the images of starvation, drought, floods, and people suffocating under the load of wastes we are piling on a nature so bountiful, but there is a time bomb ticking. And when the world population doubles, and the world economy increases five-fold or ten-fold, while leaving new hundreds of millions constantly hungry and in acute poverty it will have been too late.

We need nothing less than to build a global democracy based on common perceptions of common challenges. We need to educate people, not to arm them, we need moderation and modernization. We need radical decisions at this crisis meeting on humanities future.

We can not betray future generations. They will judge us harshly if we fail at this crucial moment. We have a moral duty. We have the means. We have many of the ways. We - each of us - are responsible. We will be held accountable.