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1. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development has been fairly instrumental in rallying global support for the concept of sustainable development. Among the fundamental reasons why the Commission was successful are the emphasis on equity and the positive belief that growth is possible, necessary and that it can be made sustainable. That it pointed at the predominant obligations of developed countries for reducing the burden they place on the global environment, - the joint but unequal responsibility of all countries and the special responsibility of the countries in the North to assist developing countries in achieving growth, equitable distribution of the benefits of growth, and redirection of public and private efforts towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

2. We noted in Our Common Future that the first prerequisite for sustainable development was "a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making". This means that democracy is a prerequisite for sustainable policies and that sustainable development cannot be achieved as long as poverty prevails, with high levels of unemployment or as long as women, ethnic groups and other vulnerable groups are denied equal rights to participate in democracy.

3. The impact of any community or nation upon the environment depends on three things: the numbers of people, the amount they consume, and the damage caused by the forms of production and consumption involved. More than 90 per cent of future population growth will be in developing countries, which rely most directly on environmental resources for survival and economic progress; and the 25 per cent of the world's population which live in the industrial nations consume about 75 per cent of the world's resources.

While countries are competing to maintain or strengthen their economic competitive situation, the absence of harmonized environmental requirements prevents further progress. It is illustrating how lack of taxation of fossil fuels in the US serves as a pretext for the counter forces in the European Community when it comes to adopting a carbon tax.

4. We have come a long way in defining what needs to be done, but we have been largely unsuccessful in agreeing on how to do it. Moving from principles to implementation requires

international cooperation of a new and more sophisticated nature.

5. The New Commission could usefully point to the need for harmonized incentives and disincentives that promote environmental improvement and reduce the use of finite resources. We should recommend lowering taxes on the "good" things, such as work and investment and raise taxes on the "bad" things such as pollution and depletion of natural resources.

6. More research is needed by countries acting jointly. Far too much of global R&D efforts take place in the industrialized countries and too much of it is of little relevance for environment and development.

The New Commission could amplify the call of the WCED for strengthened R&D efforts aimed at sustainable energy production and use on a scale comparable to the nuclear programmes of the past and emphasize the need to provide incentives for North-South R&D cooperation.

7. Aid is still insufficient, both in quantity and in quality. The Rio Decisions on aid, while too weak, must be followed up, and a renewed call is needed to raise aid to the levels agreed almost two decades ago.

8. Population is clearly a part of the equation. The texts on population which came out of Rio represented a setback. The World Commission was far more explicit on this issue, including on the need for universally available family planning services. The new commission needs to deal seriously with population, the content of policies, the external funding of policies and on the right of couples to choose the size of their families.

9. The lack of sufficient education opportunities is probably among the greatest hindrances for sustainable development. The World Commission underlined the need for informed choice, and the formal right to participate in choices will be undermined unless all people have equal right to education, regardless of family background or personal wealth.

10. Finally, there is a need for a fresh look at the international institutional framework. The present system is fragmented and weak. The World Commission did in the opinion of many not go far enough in its institutional recommendations. We made a deliberate choice. Had we gone further, there could have been a serious risk that counterforces would have found an excuse and speak of lack of realism. The new Commission has a new opportunity, now that the substantial issues have been brought on the international political agenda.

I would like to draw your attention to a declaration adopted

in the Hague in 1989. Some 25 Heads of State and Government adopted a declaration calling for strengthened decision-making mechanisms in international cooperation, which means more use of majority decisions if we are to avoid having to move forwards at the pace set by the most reluctant mover. A first step is already there in the text of the Montreal Protocol on the ozone layer.

The new Commission could usefully sound a call for more political responsibility at the highest level and effectiveness in international decision-making, better coordination among agencies and the imperative that decision will have to be made on a sound scientific basis, taking into account the precautionary principle.