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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 19 October 1987, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)
later: Mr. MAHBUBANI (Singapore)
(Vice-President)

- Development and International Economic Co-operation [82]

(e) Environment: Note by the Secretary-General

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 82

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

(e) ENVIRONMENT: NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/42/427)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): As members will recall, at its 3rd plenary meeting the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the General Committee, that, prior to the consideration of this sub-item by the Second Committee, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, transmitted to the Assembly by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, should be introduced at a plenary meeting. Accordingly this meeting will be devoted to the introduction of the report.

I believe that this meeting is one of the outstanding events of the forty-second session. On this occasion the General Assembly is honoured to welcome speakers of the highest distinction. The Assembly and its relevant organs are called upon, as, indeed, is the entire international community, to address themselves in depth to one of the most important global problems: the preservation of every facet of our environment. In this spirit the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, to be introduced by the Chairman of the Commission, the Prime Minister of Norway Mrs. Brundtland, and the report of the Intergovernmental Committee of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) deserve our undivided attention.

I call on the Secretary-General.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is with a sense of deep gratitude and satisfaction that I welcome the Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the Honourable Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway,

(The Secretary-General)

and the report that she and the other Commissioners have laboured over so intensively during the last three years, holding numerous public hearings, in 10 countries on five continents.

This is a very significant report. In its pages one hears the voices of farmers, housewives, students, native tribes and slum dwellers, as well as Heads of Government, scientists and industrialists, from around the world sharing a common concern for our planet. In its travels the Commission found that the world holds no sanctuaries; that the effects of neither waste nor poverty can be quarantined. They found that too often decision-making on development and environment issues is determined by sectional interests and the traditional boundaries of geography, politics or ideology.

(The Secretary-General)

The Commission also confirmed and strengthened the new perception that is just gaining ground, namely, that economic growth and preservation of the environment are imperatives, not options to choose or reject, and that they are central and indivisibly linked elements in human well-being.

The report is a profound recognition of the legitimate claim of all people to a hospitable, life-sustaining environment. Its conclusions constitute a clarion call for strict and universal respect for basic human rights, without which sustainable development cannot be fully realized. Disregard of the rights of others and the claim of all to a standard of living consonant with human dignity has been a major factor in environmental and development problems. We must make the connection between the enormous inequities of poverty and wealth within and among nations, the degradation of the biosphere and the survival of future generations.

The Commission's views on sustainable development cast a piercing light on the acceleration of interdependence, with important implications for traditional concepts of national sovereignty and the collective custodianship of all nations of the health of our planet.

We have already made progress in some areas, particularly through the hard work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Its Governing Council has placed before the Assembly a very important report entitled "The Environmental perspective to the year 2000 and beyond", which has given a renewed sense of direction in respect of many environmental problems. To give a concrete instance, we must thank UNEP for spurring agreement on an international treaty on the ozone layer, which for the first time represents the combined efforts of Governments, scientists and industry to prevent a global issue from reaching crisis proportions.

(The Secretary-General)

Yet so much remains to be done. The challenge put before us by the Commission is monumental and urgent for it involves nothing less than a radical departure in the way we conduct development. The report states:

"The changes in human attitudes that we call for depend on a vast campaign of education, debate and public participation. This campaign must start now if sustainable human progress is to be achieved.

...

"We are unanimous in our conviction that the security, well-being and very survival of the planet depend on such changes, now." (A/42/427, p. 38)

Most of us in this chamber belong to a generation which has only belatedly realized the peril in which our environment has been placed and far too slowly appreciate the finite nature of resources. We have, in effect, been rapidly mortgaging the future of our children.

I would suggest that in the circumstances we should be well advised to bring greater wisdom to today's youth by undertaking for them a global educational effort on the substance of the World Commission's report. The report has for all youth a major relevance that transcends nationality, culture, ideology and race. Moreover, it clearly defines the important role of the United Nations in development, human rights, the preservation of ecosystems - or, in the broadest sense, the achievement of sustainable development. The report therefore affords a unique opportunity for the United Nations to forge a contract with the world's youth. The young themselves recognize that learning, together with a dynamic interchange of ideas on global problems, is the most important ingredient in their future and for their survival.

(The Secretary-General)

We could begin by bringing young people together through a series of regional seminars, sponsored perhaps by the five regional Commissions, to study the elements of sustainable development. Two or three years later we might envisage a culminating global conference that would bring the youth and educators together with a view to integrating sustainable development into local educational programmes around the world.

In suggesting the importance of educational programmes for young people I would not wish to imply that this report has less relevance for the present generation, which now bears responsibility for global leadership. On the contrary, the report imposes serious obligations on Governments, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, which have the urgent necessity of reclaiming opportunities all too frequently missed.

As your Secretary-General I am committed, in close co-operation with my colleagues, to integrating the recommendations of the report into the work of the United Nations system, should the General Assembly so decide.

To the extent that today's leaders and their successors learn the lessons of this report, humanity's common future can be assured.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I call on the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mrs. BRUNDTLAND (Norway): It is a great pleasure for me to present to the General Assembly the unanimous report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, "Our common future".

(Mrs. Brundtland, Norway)

The World Commission on Environment and Development was given a challenging mandate by the General Assembly. We were asked to take a fresh look at the interrelated issues of environment and development and to define shared perceptions on the long-term environmental issues and aspirational goals of the world community to the year 2000 and beyond. During the 1,000 days since our Commission's inception there has been an endless flow of information about increasing threats to the global environment and environmental disasters often caused or aggravated by our own policies and practices.

We early came to recognize that poverty is the main cause and effect of environmental degradation in many developing countries. Clearly it is totally unacceptable and incompatible with human decency and solidarity even to suggest that the poor must remain in poverty in order to protect the environment. What are needed are national and international strategies that offer real options, that secure and enhance incomes as well as the environment on the local, national and international levels.

The Commission became collectively convinced that present development patterns cannot be allowed to continue. While economic and social development suffer from severe national and global imbalances, threats to the environment are becoming global in scope and devastating in scale and effect. The survival of this planet requires that we act now.

The Commission came out equally convinced that the necessary changes are indeed possible. Our report is not a prophecy of doom but a positive vision of the future. Never before in human history have we had greater possibilities. The time and the opportunity have come to break out of the negative trends of the past.

(Mrs. Brundtland, Norway)

We need not only a new vision but political commitment and a broad mobilization of human ingenuity. We need intensified multilateral co-operation based on recognition of the growing interdependence of nations.

I believe that today's meeting conclusively demonstrates that the idea of sustainability and the interlinked issues of environment and development have now risen to the top of the international political agenda. Our common concerns for the future can create necessary the momentum for change.

The overriding political concept upon which our report is founded is that of sustainable development - a broad concept for social and economic progress. We define it as paths of human progress that meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It requires political reforms, fair access to knowledge and resources, and a more just and equitable distribution within and among nations.

Poor people cannot be condemned to remain in poverty. It is mass poverty which drives millions of people to overexploit thin soils, overgraze fragile grasslands and cut down yet more of the rapidly disappearing tropical forests - these great lungs vital for the global climate and thereby for food production itself.

I need not dwell here on the familiar catalogue of environmental deterioration. Global warming is expected to change agricultural and settlement patterns and to flood seaports. Acidification is moving into the developing world. Six million hectares of productive dryland turn into desert each year. Against this kind of grim backdrop, we welcome the recent achievements in Montreal on the protection of the ozone layer. For all nations will ultimately share the same destiny. Our environment and our economies have become so intertwined that we can no longer choose to remain apart. The environment respects no national boundaries and we cannot act as if it did.

(Mrs. Brundtland, Norway)

Sustainable development recognizes that there are thresholds imposed by nature - yes - but no limits to growth itself. In a world ridden by poverty, growth is absolutely necessary. Growth is the only answer to the problems of developing countries. But the contents of growth must be changed. Growth cannot be based on overexploitation of the resources of third-world countries. Growth must be managed to enhance the resource base on which they all depend. The environment and the natural resources of developing countries must cease to be the victims in a world economy troubled by serious imbalances. The victims must instead become allies in our struggle for survival.

Debilitating debts, soaring interest rates, interrupted financial flows and adverse terms of trade offer developing countries few options but to overuse their resource base while their capacity to address environmental issues remains low. These trends have too long been working against developing countries. New international economic conditions must be designed to enhance the resource base of developing countries.

The industrialized world must take a full share of responsibility to ensure that the international economy helps rather than hinders sustainable development. This is also, as we all know, in the industrial countries' own interest. Commodity markets must be strengthened. Restrictive trade practices should be abolished. Terms of trade must change to favour developing countries rather than to impoverish them.

Urgent action is now necessary to alleviate the debt crisis in ways that represent a fairer sharing between debtors and lenders. The massive drain of resources from developing countries must be reversed. What is needed is new loans on concessional terms, new investments and economic reform.

In many countries strongly increased assistance from external sources will be needed. Donors, lenders and investors must make a fundamental commitment to

(Mrs. Brundtland, Norway)

sustainable development. There is no alternative to substantial increases in financial flows. Additionality - both in quantity and in quality - must be based on equality and mutual self-interest. Internationally agreed targets are, we all know, far from being met. The concern for our environment and our common future should now help us to move forward, to the benefit of us all.

Sustainability objectives should be of serious concern to everyone. Our report aims at raising a global awareness among Governments, aid agencies and others concerned with development of the necessity of integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making and planning at all levels but the Commission was emphatic in coupling its demand for higher quality and environmental sensitivity in aid and in lending with substantially increased aid flows.

Some countries might be sceptical about the application of the sustainability criteria in aid and lending and perceive it as a new form of conditionality. It is clear, however - and I emphasize this point - that this kind of integrated process must be made operational by the Governments themselves as part of their own national strategies for development. External assistance will be needed to help many countries establish their professional and institutional capacity to conduct this integration in practice. Such assistance must come at the request of countries concerned and must be facilitated by the international community. Growth must promote a fair distribution of income. It must be firmly based on the stock of natural capital that sustains it.

To achieve that, the Commission advocates full integration of environment and economics into decision-making at all levels, nationally and internationally. We must attack the problems at their source. We must clearly recognize that the policies of sectoral ministries, such as ministries of finance, industry, energy and agriculture, are the ones that determine the state of the environment and

(Mrs. Brundtland, Norway)

consequently our options for the future. Sustainable development objectives must be integrated into the goals of all branches of public administration as well as the legislative bodies and municipal democratic institutions. We must break away from our sectoral ways of viewing economy and ecology. We must learn to accept the fact that environmental considerations and economic growth are parts of a unified management of our planet. The one is dependent upon the other.

In this connection, I believe that a very special role is to be played by our Secretary-General. In exercising his overriding and co-ordinating responsibilities for implementing sustainable development in the United Nations system, he needs our total support. We should all give the Secretary-General that precise support. It is indeed appropriate that our leading international civil servant assume a key role in pursuing the basic objectives for our survival: peace, development and environment.

(Mrs. Brundtland, Norway)

The United Nations system was brought into existence to provide multilateral solutions to shared problems. At this point in history, when we face the prospect of genuinely co-operative relations between the major Powers, should we not have the courage to use our global international Organization to provide political and intellectual leadership in saving this planet from degradation and collapse? Should we not adopt sustainable development as a central goal of the United Nations itself, assisted in that process by a strengthened United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which can then fully perform its catalytic role?

The Commission has proposed that "Our Common Future", upon due consideration, be translated into a United Nations action programme for sustainable development. We are heartened by the large number of countries that have spoken favourably about our call for action and for concrete suggestions to assist and secure the follow-up process and successful implementation.

The time has now come to move forward towards a true revival of multilateralism. The time has come to restore the authority of the United Nations.

A broad and genuine process of global change will entail a further evolution of open societies, based on more effective popular participation in decision-making. The status of women will have to be further enhanced. Political reforms and broad access to knowledge and resources are obviously required.

Disabled people, whose handicaps may come from hunger, war, or environmental decline or disasters, must participate on an equal basis. The non-governmental organizations play an essential part. Their access and influence are central to sustainable development. They play an active role in translating political programmes into action. Industry should be at the forefront and be encouraged to develop more sustainable techniques. Trade unions must be seriously engaged in this essential process. Most important of all is the interaction between all these key players based on exchange of information, creative dialogue and inspiration.

(Mrs. Brundtland, Norway)

The Commission's open method of work has generated great hopes and expectations in many parts of the globe. This General Assembly has the opportunity to respond to those expectations.

I cannot mention all the groups, organizations or Governments who have supported us and placed faith in us. We have received political, financial and intellectual support from a broad spectrum of sources. The Commission benefited from endless hours of sheer hard work by committed people. I offer thanks to all of them from this rostrum as a humble gesture of profound gratitude.

The Secretary-General himself has been a most ardent supporter. His role, and the close co-operation with UNEP and its Executive Director, Mr. Tølbå, gave us all an additional measure of mutual strength, conviction and dedication.

The Commission commends the report "Our Common Future" to the peoples of the United Nations.

Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I now call on the President of the Republic of Maldives, Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted to the rostrum.

President GAYOOM: It is indeed a great honour for me to participate in the United Nations special debate on issues of environment and development. I am here at this distinguished gathering not only to speak about environmental dangers and the struggle to save the Earth's environment, but also to share with the General Assembly our recent traumatic experiences of environmental disturbance and anomaly. As we are devoting our deliberations today solely to topics relating to

(President Gayoom)

environment and development, I will not speak about any international political issues; my Government's views on them have already been stated by my Foreign Minister, when he had the privilege of addressing the Assembly earlier this month.

Before I proceed, however, Mr. President, may I congratulate you on your election to preside over this forty-second session of the General Assembly. I have no doubt that you will discharge your important duties with efficiency and skill. I should also like to convey my compliments to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for the exemplary manner in which he has been working for the cause of world peace and international understanding.

It is my particular pleasure today to express my sincere appreciation of Prime Minister Gro Brundtland of Norway, Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, for her dedication to "the challenge of facing the future and of safeguarding the interests of coming generations", as she herself puts it in the Commission's exhaustive report, "Our Common Future". Indeed, I thank her for setting the noble example of a national leader who is motivated by an active concern for all the peoples of the world. I should also like to congratulate the United Nations Environment Programme, the Man and Biosphere Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United States Environmental Protection Agency for their commendable pioneering efforts in the fight to save the world's threatened environment.

(President Gayoom)

We are gathered here today at a time of potential crisis confronting our planet and its population - the crisis of environmental destruction which man has brought upon himself. Man's actions over many centuries have transmuted the natural order of his environment to the point where the whole world is ensnared in the consequences. As the scale of man's intervention in nature has increased, the scope of nature's repercussions has multiplied. Consequences of the actions of individual nations have reverberated globally, and all mankind's present and future generations may suffer the penalties for the errors of a few.

Today, the world is faced with risks of irreversible damage to the human environment that threaten the very life-support systems of the earth, the basis for man's survival and progress. According to studies conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 35 per cent of the earth's land surface, an area larger than the African continent and inhabited by more than 20 per cent of the world's population, is at risk from desertification. Up to a total of 20 million hectares of tropical forests, an area nearly the size of the United Kingdom, is estimated to be lost each year. And as much as from half a million to 1 million species of life on earth could be extinguished over the next two decades. This is all without precedent in human history. The words "environmental trends" have now come to embody a host of appalling global predicaments, such as desertifications, mass deforestation, loss of genetic resources, water pollution, toxic air emissions, hazardous wastes, acidification of the environment and world sea-level rise.

Scientists all over the world now accept the fact that concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases will continue to increase in coming decades, mainly as a result of human and industrial activities. They agree that these gases effectively enhance the greenhouse effects and deplete the stratospheric ozone layer and that these effects will, among several other critical

(President Gayoom)

implications that they have for life on earth, gradually raise the earth's temperature and change its climatic patterns. Such global warming would not only thermally expand the oceans but also melt the polar ice-caps. The world sea level will consequently rise significantly faster than during the past century. Scientific findings now predict a possible mean sea-level rise of about 1 metre within a century. Such a rise would have critical impacts on all coastal and island nations and prove physically, socially and economically disastrous.

The predicted effects of the change are unnevering. There will be significant shoreline movement and loss of land. A higher mean sea level would inevitably lead to increased frequency of inundation and exacerbate flood damage. It would swamp fertile deltas, causing loss of productive agricultural land and vegetation, and increase saline encroachment into aquifers, rivers and estuaries. The increased costs of the reconstruction, rehabilitation and strengthening of coastal defence systems could turn out to be crippling for most affected countries.

A number of scientists and organizations have independently carried out preliminary case studies on the possible effects of sea-level rise in different key coastal areas of the world, such as the Netherlands, the United States, Egypt, Bangladesh and the Maldives.

The study conducted in the Netherlands estimated that a 1 metre rise in sea level would make it 10 times more likely that the advanced coastal defence infrastructure at present protecting the country would be overtopped. Tidal wetlands, areas of high agricultural and horticultural importance, and densely populated urban industrialized zones, including the Rotterdam harbour area, would be threatened by erosion, salination or increased vulnerability to storm surges.

According to studies compiled by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, a sea-level rise of a few metres would in the United States inundate major

(President Gayoom)

portions of Louisiana and Florida, as well as beach resorts along the coasts. A rise of 1 or 2 metres by the year 2100 could destroy 50 per cent to 80 per cent of United States coastal wetlands. The studies revealed that in the case of Egypt, a 1 to 3 metre rise in sea level could erode up to 20 per cent of the nation's arable land, unsettling up to 21 per cent of the country's population, or over 10 million people. In Bangladesh this rise could swamp up to 27 per cent of the total land area, displacing up to 25 million people.

As for my own country, the Maldives, a mean sea-level rise of 2 metres would suffice virtually to submerge the entire country of 1,190 small islands, most of which barely rise over 2 metres above mean sea level. That would be the death of a nation. With a mere 1 metre rise, also, a storm surge would be catastrophic and possibly fatal to the nation.

We in the Maldives have seen and lived through grim experiences which could be indicators of the dire consequences of global environmental change provoked and exacerbated by man. Geographically, the Maldivian Islands lie in the equatorial calm of the northern Indian Ocean, away from cyclone paths. The brief annual monsoonal turbulences and the occasional high tidal swells have hardly ever endangered the 190,000 inhabitants of the islands until now. This year the frequency and magnitude of unusual tidal wave action have risen alarmingly. The period from 10 to 12 April recorded the highest sea level evidenced in the country, during which unusual high waves at high tide struck the islands with a ferocity that inflicted extensive and unprecedented damage throughout the country. Malé, the capital island, housing one quarter of the nation's population, suffered the worst of the ordeal. One fourth of the urban land was inundated by salt water and 30 per cent of the land reclaimed during the last seven years was completely washed away.

(President Gayoom)

The nation's only international airport sustained extensive damage to its physical infrastructure and installations. Along the full length of the archipelago large parts of several islands on the south and south-eastern atoll rims were extensively flooded or inundated. Breakwaters, harbours, boats, causeways, houses and property fell victim to the ocean's assault. Agricultural crops and vegetation succumbed to the salt-water encroachment above and below the ground surface. Throughout the country beaches were damaged, placing at risk one of the country's chief income-generating natural resources.

The incident was branded a freak occurrence at the time, but it recurred in the southern atolls, though to a lesser extent, during June and September, and we are now compelled to accept the traumatic reality that the worst may be yet to come.

It was the testimony of ordinary people, as Mrs. Brundtland has remarked, that convinced the World Commission on Environment and Development of the human costs of such environmental destruction. That being so, I have brought to this special debate the testimony of the people of the Maldives.

The rich and developed nations clearly have the wealth and the land to defend themselves from a rise in sea level, even if they wait for it to occur, yet they are already preparing. Because small States are more vulnerable, we have to prepare sooner. But the Maldives lacks the economic, technical and technological capability to deal with the formidable prospects of a significant rise in sea level. We did not contribute to the impending catastrophe to our nation; and, alone, we cannot save ourselves.

The profound dilemma of environmental transition is a global one and its implications are worldwide and long term. Though the Maldives and other low-lying archipelagic nations may have to suffer the most immediate and extreme effects of a global sea-level rise, there is a potential danger to a significant portion of the

(President Gayoom)

world's population in the near future. The costs of lethargy and complacency in investing in environmental protection and improvement are clearly spiralling. Measures cannot be taken in isolation. No one nation, or even group of nations, can alone combat the onset of a global change in the environment.

Given the trends of international involvement in the issue of environment, the Maldives can only offer the experiences of an endangered nation. The Maldivian Islands are not merely the home of a few thousand people; they are a unique natural phenomenon, such as is found nowhere else on this earth. It is the phenomenon that Thor Heyerdahl, the Norwegian explorer, describes in his book The Maldivian Mystery as "green jade necklaces and scattered emerald jewellery placed on blue velvet" with each islet a "separate gem set in a ring of golden beach sand".

The Maldives possesses delicately balanced fragile and transient environmental ecosystems in its atolls of coral islands and reefs. It is endowed with islands crowned with green palms and lush tropical vegetation, fringed with white sandy beaches and inset within stretches of clear turquoise lagoons and living reefs. A beauty canopied by blue skies and nurtured by pure fresh air and warm sunshine.

It is now a distressing probability that the environmental change caused by industrial progress in the developed world may slowly drown this unique paradise in its entirety. The country's ecosystems alone, by virtue of their uniqueness and vulnerability, deserve protection. Our authorities are monitoring the sea-level changes with two gauges recently installed as part of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission's Global sea-level network. Elementary monitoring and research activities on these ecosystems are being initiated in the country. We need to monitor the increases and understand the response of our coral reefs. We hope that this activity, if augmented by a concerted international effort, can evolve into a worthy scientific research programme which can ultimately help save

(President Gayoom)

millions of lives around the world. With such help the Maldives can be protected and preserved as a biosphere reserve for scientific study or an environmental sanctuary of aesthetic beauty and tranquillity which can benefit all the world.

It is in the interest of all the world that climatic changes are understood and the risk of irreversible damage to natural systems and the threats to the very survival of man evaluated and allayed with the greatest urgency. The world has already seen the first few steps in this new and much needed awakening. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Council of Scientific Unions are promoting the World Climate Research Programme. National and international organizations and movements are trying to make headway against the rising tide of environmental destruction; the list is too long to be cited here. All these efforts, and specifically UNEP's initiatives, as signified by the World Commission on Environment and Development, and the recent, historic Montreal protocol, an agreement to reduce the world-wide use of chlorofluorocarbons, bring rays of hope into the bleakness of the issue. But this is not enough. The hope must be sustained and realized. In the face of a global threat, anything less than an all-encompassing international commitment and effort can become futile in this colossal struggle.

The economic, technical and technological resources are available collectively. It is not too late to save the world. It is not too late to save the Maldives and other low-lying island nations. Only the vital collective commitment is missing. And I believe that we are gathered here today to initiate just such a commitment.

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted from the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I call on the Prime Minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Mr. Mugabe.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. MUGABE (Zimbabwe): Sir, the head of the Zimbabwe delegation to the General Assembly at the forty-second session has already congratulated you on your unanimous election to the presidency of this body. Allow me also to add my own personal felicitations to you. Your election is a recognition of your commitment to the cause of multilateralism and a fitting tribute to the role played by your country in international affairs.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, has proved to be a dedicated champion of the cause of peace. We admire his commitment to the service of humankind. We all owe him a debt of gratitude. Therefore, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, of which his country, Peru, is a valued member, I want to thank him most sincerely and ask him to persevere in his labours in the search for peace, justice, equality and progress throughout the world.

To my colleague Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway I wish to extend special thanks for a job well done. The task requested of her by the Secretary-General and the international community was not an easy one. It involved, inter alia, preparing strategies for sustainable global development and its impact on the environment to the year 2000 and beyond. This was a daunting task. It called for imagination, determination and above all a vision of a common future. It required a review and mastery of a vast range of complex technical and political concepts. The result is the Commission's report just presented to this Assembly, which, together with those of the Brandt Commission on North-South issues and the Palme Commission on security and disarmament issues, now forms the third

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

leg of this great triad on which peace, security and the well-being of all of us can be built. We are all much indebted to the members of the Brundtland Commission. Their report is like a breath of fresh air in a world polluted by poverty, hunger, disease, racism, industrial waste and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

It mercilessly exposes the errors of our ways and quite rightly castigates us for foolishly acting the part of the biblical prodigal son, when we know that we do not have a wealthy and magnanimous father to run to after the fun is over. The development path we have chosen, the report makes clear, is unsustainable. Our use of the earth and its bounty has been selfish, haphazard and extravagant. Present developmental trends threaten to radically alter the planet, threatening the lives of many of its species, including, ultimately, humankind itself. Each year 6 million hectares of productive dry land turns into worthless desert, 11 million hectares of forest are destroyed, and acid precipitation kills forests and lakes and acidifies vast tracts of soil beyond reasonable hope of repair. The burning of fossil fuels emits carbon dioxide into the air, causing a gradual warming of the globe - the so-called greenhouse effect. By early next century global temperatures may have been raised enough to cause a shift in agricultural production areas, raise sea levels to flood coastal cities, and disrupt national economies. Other industrial gases threaten to deplete the planet's protective ozone shield to such an extent that the number of human and animal cancers would rise sharply and the food chain of the oceans would be disrupted. Industry and agriculture place toxic substances into the human food chain and into underground water tables beyond reach of cleansing. We use resources such as land, trees and animal life at rates that deny those resources the time to regenerate themselves. As the report so eloquently states:

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

"Nature is bountiful, but it is also fragile and finely balanced. There are thresholds that cannot be crossed without endangering the basic integrity of the system. Today we are close to many of these thresholds; we must be ever mindful of the risk of endangering the survival of life on Earth."

(A/42/427, p. 44)

This is a sombre picture of our present misdeeds and possible future if we carry on as before. From this it is clear that we cannot go on as in the past. We must change our ways. There are compelling political, economic, social and moral imperatives for doing that. We inherited the earth from our forefathers and hold it in trust for our children. It is a debt of honour that we should pass it on in a livable state - at the very least the state in which it was passed on to us.

Therefore all nations have a duty to address the challenge facing us; for what happens in one part of the globe has consequences for all. The disappearance of rain forests in the tropics and the loss of plant and animal species and changes in rainfall patterns caused partly by desertification and deforestation in developing countries have their impact on the developed countries, while the release of carbon dioxide and of gases that react with the ozone layer, mainly by the industrialized countries, have their own implications for the developing countries. Many of the risks stemming from productive activity and the technologies we use cross national boundaries. Though the activities that give rise to these dangers tend to be concentrated in a few countries, the risks involved are shared by all, rich and poor - those who benefit from them and those who do not - and most who share in the risks have little influence on the decision-making processes that regulate these activities. Perhaps the most pertinent example in this connection is the existence of nuclear weapons and the possibility of nuclear war. The existence of nuclear weapons means that the fate of 5 billion people, the planet Earth itself and all the species upon it is in the hands of a handful of persons. Even without a

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

nuclear war, Chernobyl and Three Mile Island have happened. Radioactive wastes from the nuclear industry remain hazardous for centuries.

The report also cites preventable poverty as one of the major causes of environmental degradation today. It argues that poverty pollutes our environment. Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive. They will cut down their forests. Their livestock will overgraze the grasslands and in growing numbers will crowd into congested cities. They will overuse marginal land.

This explains why the greatest environmental damage is occurring in developing countries. These countries are poor. They are faced with falling commodity prices, a rise in protectionism, a crushing debt burden and dwindling or even reverse financial flows. If their commodities bring little money, they must produce more of them to bring in the same amount or at times even less. To do this, they cut down trees, bring under cultivation marginal land, overgraze their pastures and in the process make desert out of previously productive land.

But in these actions the poor have no choice. They cannot exercise the option to die today so as to live well tomorrow. Developing countries are caught in a vicious circle, which the Commissioners have acknowledged in their report.

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

I am reminded here of the story related by a former Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Comrade Marinkovitch, to the Commission for European Union in January 1931. In replying to criticism by industrialized States, he illustrated the dilemma in which his country found itself, thus:

"Last year, when I was in the Yugoslav mountains, I heard that the inhabitants of a small mountain village, having no maize or wheat on which to live, were simply cutting down a wood which belonged to them ... and were living on what they earned by selling the wood ... I went to the village, collected together some of the leading inhabitants and endeavoured to reason with them, just like the great industrial States reason with us. I said to them: 'You possess plenty of common sense. You see that your forest is becoming smaller and smaller. What will you do when you cut down the last tree?' They replied to me: 'Your Excellency, that is a point which worries us, but on the other hand, what should we do now if we stopped cutting down our trees?'

I can assure you that the agricultural countries are in exactly the same situation. You threaten them with future disasters; but they are already in the throes of disasters."

Developing countries today find themselves in a similar predicament. They know that cutting down trees and the destruction of tropical forests will lead to soil erosion and future disasters, but their problem is survival today. The answer to their predicament does not lie in demanding that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank or other institutions not give them assistance until they promise not to destroy the tropical forests. Such conditionality would be self-defeating. What is needed is the injection of more resources to enable the developing countries to formulate development programmes that have environmental

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

safeguards. To ask us to plan for our survival tomorrow when our survival today is in doubt is to demand too much of us, for it is only when we can survive today that we can talk of tomorrow.

The report before us must be commended for its clear articulation of the causes and impact of poverty on the developing countries and on our common environment. The developing countries have had, over the past few decades, to face life-threatening environmental concerns. They have operated in a world in which the resources gap between most developing and industrial nations is ever widening; in a world where the industrial nations not only dominate the rule-making of some key international bodies, but have already used much of the planet's ecological capital. This inequality, the report notes, is the planet's main environmental problem and also its main development problem.

In short, it is largely the current inequitable international economic system, which takes more out of the poor nations than it puts in, which is the major cause of environmental degradation in the developing world. The decline in commodity prices compels developing countries, many of which are heavily dependent on primary commodities, to overuse their fragile soils in the hope of raising enough money to enable them to purchase the ever more expensive manufactured goods from the industrialized world. Trade barriers in many industrialized countries make it hard for developing countries to sell their goods for reasonable returns, putting yet more pressure on the ecological system. External debt devours nearly all the export earnings of the developing poor nations, leaving them with little or no export earnings at all for domestic investment and development.

Recent figures of the United Nations indicate that about 70 per cent of the total debt of developing countries is owed by countries whose exports of primary commodities account for 50 per cent or more of their total exports. For

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

sub-Saharan Africa primary products account for over 90 per cent of total exports. The creation of stable markets and the establishment of just and fair prices for primary commodities in the international markets could be a significant starting-point on the road to sustainable development in the developing world. For that to happen, commodity markets need a thorough restructuring. Both producers and consumers should co-operate in bringing stability to the commodity markets and should share the benefits of trade equitably.

The current negative economic trends must be reversed. For this to happen, it is imperative that a solution to the crisis of external indebtedness be found. According to recent projections the total external debt of developing countries will be about \$US 1,020 billion by the end of 1987. Under present circumstances such a debt cannot be repaid. We in the Non-Aligned Movement view the debt crisis as a major symptom of the prevailing inequitable international economic relations. The crisis highlights the urgent need for the international community to adopt a coherent approach to the interrelated problems of money, finance, debt, trade and development that confront us today. That is why we believe that the early convening of an international conference on money and finance for development with universal participation is already overdue. We hope that the report before us will make those who previously resisted the call for such a conference realize that they too have a stake in the convening and success of such a conference.

This report offers us an opportunity to address some of these major problems. It is in part for that reason that I said earlier that the report before us is also like a breath of fresh air. In a world where in most fields, from the arms race to regional crises and the ailing international economy, humankind seems to have lost control over its destiny, this report makes clear that we are not condemned to keep

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

sliding down the precipice. Solutions are not only possible, but well within grasp, if only there is the requisite political will and international co-operation. What we need therefore are policies that can sustain and expand the environmental resources base. The report is to us an urgent notice, based on the latest and best scientific evidence, that the time has come to take the decisions needed to secure the resources to sustain this and coming generations.

That is the challenge to us and the message of this report. We can do it, but we cannot succeed except in a context of multilateralism. As the Chairman has put it so well in the foreword to the report:

"Perhaps our most urgent task today is to persuade nations of the need to return to multilateralism. ... The challenge of finding sustainable development paths ought to provide the impetus - indeed the imperative - for a renewed search for multilateral solutions and a restructured international economic system of co-operation. These challenges cut across the divides of national sovereignty, of limited strategies for economic gain, and of separated disciplines of science." (A/42/427, p. 12)

Here, I submit, is the heart of the matter. What is needed is greater democratization of international decision-making processes so as to enhance international co-operation for the management of economic and ecological interdependence. But what we have seen in the last decade and a half is a standstill in global co-operation and at times even a retreat from multilateralism. We need to reverse these trends if we are effectively to address our common future.

(Mr. Mugabe, Zimbabwe)

What is remarkable about this important conclusion is that, starting from a totally different perspective, the Brundtland Commission should have concluded by issuing the same clarion call championed by developing countries for decades. Indeed the whole perception of the debt crisis, the widening gap between developed and developing countries, the unacceptable diversion of resources from economic development to the arms race, and the dangers to the continued survival of mankind posed by nuclear weapons is in line with our own. Only a few months ago, during the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, the non-aligned nations spent a great deal of energy urging developed countries to give due importance to non-military threats to security such as poverty, illiteracy, hunger and under-development. That Conference constituted an important step on the road to a more rational reordering of priorities and to sustainable development. This report, via another route, has arrived at basically similar conclusions.

The case made by the report before us for sustainable development is not substantially different from the case made over the years by the developing countries. But its importance lies in the fact that its membership comprised commissioners from the South and the North. Their ability to agree on some of the key issues augurs well for the resuscitation of multilateralism.

In conclusion, I wish to say that what we need now is action. What is before us is a means to an end, and not the end itself. We should resist the tendency to quibble about this or that word or phrase in the report. Let us use the bricks in this report to build the house we want to live in.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I call on the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. GANDHI (India): The miracles of modern science and the towering achievements of technology have given us a measure of mastery over nature. Economic progress has, however, engendered a callous disregard of the harmony within the ecological system. Therefore, we have to consciously remind ourselves: we are a part of nature; we are not apart from nature. We are a strand in the single fabric whose warp and weft link together all that is of the earth and the water, the air and the sky.

We have learned to our cost that development which destroys the environment eventually destroys development itself. We have learned to our benefit that development that conserves the environment conserves also the fruits of development. There is thus no fundamental dichotomy between conservation and growth.

Yet striking the right balance between the environmental imperative and the demands of development is not that simple. Conservation imposes an escalation in costs. When resources are limited, the increased cost of any one project necessarily means less investment for others. This appears to imply a curtailment of economic growth. When the environment is not protected, damage to the environment will extract its own price - from those living in the vicinity, from others at a distance, or even from a coming generation.

We do not know enough about the impact on the environment of developmental decisions. We also do not know enough about how best to offset damage to the

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

environment. There are no easy solutions. Yet we cannot ignore environmental considerations. We have to strive for the optimum mix through increased knowledge and increased awareness.

In India, we are seeing a growing awareness of the symbiotic relationship between the protection of the environment and sustainable development. There is the renowned chipko movement in the Himalayas, where women prevent the wanton felling of trees by throwing themselves protectively around tree-trunks. Island communities join hands to stop the coral-mining which destroys their lagoons. Villagers band together to stop goats from grazing on the bramble planted to halt the advance of the desert. Environmental groups are active. In our Parliament, members are increasingly receptive to environmental concerns. They are beginning to demand that the conservation of the environment be guaranteed before major development projects are undertaken.

At one time, environmental issues related mainly to the quality of life of the affluent. Today, in developing countries like ours, we are primarily concerned with the lives of the poorest. When village ponds and wells go dry, it is the poor who trek to ever-more distant sources for water. When forests are destroyed, it is the poor who go farther and farther afield in the search for fuel wood. As lands are degraded and forests recede, it is the poor and their animals who, in the dry season, trudge hundreds of kilometres in search of grazing lands. It is the livelihood of the poor, and their hopes, that shrivel in the arid anguish of drought and are drowned in the raging fury of floods.

It is also the poor who suffer most from pollution. When water-borne epidemics strike the urban slums, it is the poor who are afflicted by disease and even death. When factories spew harmful gases into the air, it is the workers in the nearby housing colonies who suffer the contagion. When industrial units

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discharge their effluent into rivers, it is the poor fisher folk who are deprived of their incomes.

Although they bear the brunt of environmental damage, the poor are themselves little responsible for any of that damage. For centuries, they have lived in harmony with nature. The problem is caused by large-scale commercial exploitation, which garners the profits but escapes the consequences. Yet when laws are passed and rules are made to conserve the environment, the burden falls on those who have gained the least and suffered the most. The people of the forest cannot suddenly be cordoned off from its bounty. Fuel and building materials must be made readily available, at prices they can afford. Shepherds and cowherds must be found alternative pastures or provided fodder. To be effective, conservation must be humane. That is the challenge before us.

A large number of animal and plant species are seriously threatened. Apart from the ethical and aesthetic case for protecting these disappearing species, it is possible that answers to unsolved problems of health and survival might be found in the yet undiscovered secrets of these gene pool reserves.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

We in India are now developing mechanisms to control pollution and check the deterioration of the environment. We assess the environmental impact of development work so as to harmonize development with the environment. We carry out research and take the results out to the field. We promote environmental awareness among the people. We hope this will lead to greater vision, concern and care in the planning, designing and implementation of development projects. We learn as we go along.

We are trying to integrate these complex environmental issues into our design of development. There are no easy or ready-made answers. In principle we would wish to give equal priority to development and conservation. In practice there are many gaps in knowledge, many intangibles and unknown quantities. Experts disagree and assessments vary.

Conservation is not a national task alone. Even as peace is indivisible, so is the world environment. The one world which Jawaharlal Nehru spoke of so often in this very forum is a world which exists in the physical laws governing the environment. The environment everywhere is jeopardized by the noxious fumes and the life-killing wastes of industrial pollution. The poisoning of the rivers and seas deprives and endangers all of us all over the world. The accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the threat to the ozone layer put the innocent as much at risk as the polluters themselves.

Worst of all is the passing on of pollution and environmental hazards beyond one's boundaries. There is no political boundary which delimits the spread of poisonous gases, no line on a map which radiation cannot cross, no national frontier at which effluents can be turned back. All those affected by such transnational consequences of environmental damage must have an equal say in the resolution of problems. We must also keep the global commons and space free of

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

environmental degradation. The conservation of the earth's environment has to be ensured through democratic discussions and decisions in international forums. It also requires concerted international action to reduce disparities between countries. The compulsions of development and limitations of financial resources tempt many developing countries to exploit their natural resources beyond endurance, ignoring environmental safeguards. If the world economy is to move to more sustainable paths of development, the crucial requirement is to widen the options available to developing countries for growth.

A world economic system which denies itself the benefits of interdependence is both unjust and inefficient. Growth in the developing countries is being hampered by protectionism, the deteriorating real terms of trade, the unfavourable conditions for the transfer of technology and the curtailment of the flow of development assistance.

Programmes of conservation must therefore be addressed to inequities in the international economic order. For example, the lion's share of the world's natural resources has been pre-empted by a few countries. The average citizen of the industrialized countries consumes 10 times more fossil fuels and minerals than the average citizen of the developing world. The world's resources just cannot sustain such profligate consumption of energy and materials.

The developing countries cannot be denied the right to develop; nor are the world's natural resources sufficient for all to follow the greedy path to growth. What, then, is the answer to the conundrum? The answer lies in more rational patterns of consumption, more efficient utilization of depletable resources by the developed countries and more equitable access to those resources for the developing.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

The international community must also address itself to safety measures in high-risk industries. Bhopal, Seveso and Chernobyl have shown how vulnerable we are. It is incumbent on the management of such industries to ensure the utmost vigilance in design, operation and maintenance. Valuable lives must not be lost to inefficiency, indifference, negligence, or worse.

All other environmental dangers pale in comparison to the ever accumulating stockpiles of nuclear weapons. We must remove the threat of a thermonuclear war's wiping out, in a wink of history, life as we know it from our common planet. All nuclear weapons must be dismantled.

The report "Our common future" is both a document of high technical excellence and a call to concerted political action. The report reminds us that "the earth is one, but the world is not". We must recognize that, even as development which degrades the environment is self-defeating, so do impediments to development endanger the environment. We must also recognize that environmental issues are closely linked to the larger issues of peaceful coexistence and international co-operation, disarmament and development. Any unidimensional perspective on the environment would be gravely misplaced. The environment is an international issue, to be placed in the context of international co-operation, to be pursued through international institutions, to be linked to all aspects of international relations. Conservation is each nation's task, but it is a task which can be accomplished only in the setting of a co-operative world order.

In one of his most famous slokas, Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of the Sikh religion, sang:

"Air is the vital force,

Water the Progenitor:

The vast Earth is Mother of All."

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

The verse sums up the Indian tradition of respect for nature, respect for all that gives us life, respect for the sources of our well-being on earth. In our tradition there is no arrogance towards nature, no desire to dominate it. Our ancient wisdom teaches us to seek harmony with all creation. All creation is interdependent.

The core of the Brundtland report is recognition of that interdependence. Everything in our experience, from the centuries-old teaching of our seers to our contemporary experiments in development, endorses the essence of the message given to us by Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland and her colleagues. We thank them in all sincerity for their deep insights and sage advice.

I should like also to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his constructive role in focusing the attention of the international community on this vital issue.

The report of the Commission is the culmination of an important phase of the task. The international community will have to carry forward that task. As experience grows and lacunae in knowledge are filled, answers will slowly be found to the complex questions of development and the environment. The search for the right answers must go on relentlessly. It is a world-wide endeavour to which India pledges unstinting support.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I now call on the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark, His Excellency Mr. Poul Schluter, who will speak on behalf of the States members of the European Community.

Mr. Poul Schluter, Prime Minister of Denmark, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. SCHLUTER (Denmark): It is a special privilege and a great pleasure for me today to speak on behalf of the European Community and its member States. The reason is that I can warmly congratulate the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, on the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which she today has introduced to the General Assembly. Our congratulations, of course, go also to the other members of the Commission on their extremely necessary and valuable report, "Our Common Future".

We think that it was a wise and far-reaching decision the Assembly took in 1983 by adopting the resolution that has resulted in this report.

Over the years we have witnessed doomsday prophecies of what would happen if we just let the world go on as it is going. This applies to environmental aspects in the broadest sense as well as to relations between rich and poor countries. Fortunately, prophecies seldom come true. They may serve as an eye-opener and stimulate a debate on threatening trends. The debates on world development and environmental issues have been very useful. We may disagree on how far we have come in tackling the environmental and development problems. No one, however, will deny that very much remains to be done.

In spite of the remarkable progress in promoting development, it is still a fact that an increasing number of people are living in extremely poor conditions. In spite of the increasing awareness of the need to protect the resource base of the planet it is still a fact that an erosion of that base is taking place with alarming speed.

(Mr. Schluter, Denmark)

The report of the World Commission is not a doomsday prophecy, but a very timely reminder of the fragile ecological balance on which we have based our economic development. By bringing together all the environmental concerns that have been voiced over the years and placing them in the context of a strategy for truly sustainable development, the World Commission has made a useful contribution to the inclusion of the environment in the political agenda of today. It is an appeal to us all and a great challenge at the same time. The report grasps the fundamental questions we are facing right now: What are we doing to nature? What are we doing to each other? What are we handing over to our children and grandchildren? Are we able to switch global development into a new direction? Are we too ossified in our attitudes and modes of thinking to revise our concepts of the quality of life? Is consumption on the present pattern sustainable? Those are fundamental questions - and there are a lot more.

The questions require, in the view of the Community, thorough consideration in all countries, and we have no doubt that we will all come to the same conclusion: a need to find new directions for the evolution of our societies. In this respect we, as policy-makers, have a special responsibility to take the lead and convince our constituencies of the global and mutual interest in finding a path to a better life for all people. But, if I may, I would quote a Danish poet of our time, Piet Hein, who said with three T-words what I believe to be very true: "Things Take Time". We must realistically take into account that this applies also to these problems, even though we know that some of the problems confronting us are serious and, of course, of an urgent nature.

Pessimism and gloominess are not my personal style: I believe in the future. With the creative human mind and political will we have the ability to make the world a better world. The European Community would therefore like to stress

(Mr. Schluter, Denmark)

that the World Commission, although it paints an alarming and depressing picture of the environmental and development problems, strikes a generally optimistic tone in its assessment of our ability to overcome the problems. But it requires that the basic concepts of the Brundtland report be taken very seriously by the world community.

The report is a complex, wide-ranging and thorough description of the current global situation and prospects for the future. It proposes long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development to the year 2000 and beyond. The twin goals of economic development and well-being, on the one hand, and the preservation of and care about the environment, on the other, are placed in a common context which expands our understanding of the interrelationship between these two goals. It stresses the possibility of implementing the two goals at the same time, and makes a number of proposals in that regard.

Let us not conceal the fact that there are differing views on some of the conclusions drawn by the World Commission. We, for our part, have this summer made our views known. When we deal with such highly complex issues, it is not surprising that perceptions may differ.

The basic approach of the report, however, the emphasis on sustainable development, is universally endorsed. Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs is the true challenge of our time. I can assure the Assembly that the European Community and its member States stand ready to shoulder their part of this joint responsibility.

The report emphasizes not only that development must be sustainable, but that it should itself be based on economic growth and that environmental concerns must be integrated into all economic considerations.

Sustainable development is not relevant only when questions of environment or development in general are being dealt with: it is as relevant when dealing with

(Mr. Schluter, Denmark)

specific economic sectors such as energy, industrial development, agricultural policy, and so forth. And sustainable development is an issue for the developing as well as the developed part of the world. Care for the environment is a global concern. As is said in the report, we have in the past been concerned about the impacts of economic growth upon the environment, but now we are forced to concern ourselves with the impacts of ecological stress - such as degradation of soils, water régimes and forests - upon our economic prospects.

(Mr. Schluter, Denmark)

The Assembly decided at its thirty-eighth session that the report of the Commission should in the first instance be considered by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and that UNEP should hand over the report to the General Assembly together with its comments. It further decided that, on those matters which are under consideration by the General Assembly itself, the Assembly would consider the relevant aspects of the report of the Commission.

We are now attending the first session of the General Assembly since the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development was completed and published. It is now up to Member States to react to the strong appeals contained in the report. The report provides us with clear and positive guidance for the solution of the problems.

The Governing Council of UNEP accepted the report as a guideline to be taken into account in its future work. The Governing Council also decided to submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly for its consideration.

The European Community and its member States fully support the adoption of the draft resolution. It recommends that the report of the World Commission be transmitted to all Governments and to other parts of the United Nations system for further study, and invites them to take account of the analysis and recommendations in determining their policies and programmes. It is our hope that the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus and with full determination to follow it up.

Some aspects of the World Commission's report fall outside the mandate and purview of UNEP. We remain ready to discuss those issues also in the relevant organizations and bodies.

Let me in general terms assure the Assembly and Mrs. Brundtland and her colleagues on the Commission that the Community and its member States are prepared

(Mr. Schluter, Denmark)

to discuss the issues brought up in the report of the World Commission to help promote solutions to the immense problems covered in the report. Accordingly, we can give our support to the recommendations in the draft resolution that United Nations agencies should review their policies and activities aimed at contributing to sustainable development.

In this way the report of the World Commission should not only help us and other countries to focus more clearly on environmental issues, but indeed help to anchor the environmental issues firmly in the United Nations system. It should help all United Nations agencies to take full cognizance of the importance of environment issues beyond the specific sectoral aspects which have hitherto been addressed.

The General Assembly itself has an important role in seeing that sustainable development finds its way into the activities of the United Nations system, and we therefore look forward to the General Assembly's review of the issue in 1989.

The Community and its member States have already discussed specific aspects of the Commission's report among themselves, as for example at a meeting of European Community Energy Ministers in Denmark last month. The report and its conclusions will also be discussed next weekend at a meeting in the Netherlands between Environment Ministers of the European Community and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). More generally, in May 1987 the Council of Ministers called upon the European Commission and the member States to think constructively about the conclusions of the report in the light of the discussions in the United Nations and taking account of the multisectoral approach of the report.

The commitment of the Community and its member States to the environmental cause, however, is not new. This has been reflected in Community policies for many years, and was recently reaffirmed in what is known as the Single European Act,

(Mr. Schluter, Denmark)

which contains a new legal basis for our policy on the environment. I should also like to mention that in 1984 the Council of the European Community adopted a resolution on the environmental dimension of the Community's development policy. This was followed last year by a resolution on the European plan for the protection of natural resources and the fight against desertification in Africa. Also, the Conference on forests and trees, hosted by the French Government at the beginning of 1986, should be seen in this context.

At the national level in the European Community thorough attention has been paid to the World Commission report and has led to fruitful discussions. In our member States consideration is now being given to possible follow-up to the conclusions in the report. I am sure that others are having similar national and regional level discussions and we hope that, in compliance with the draft resolution, everyone will participate in a positive manner in the discussions that must take place at a global level in the near future.

We cannot afford to stop the discussions on these important matters after this meeting. It is important that deliberations on sustainable development and its implications are given higher priority and become a continuous and effective process.

This year we have made a start. It is, however, of the utmost importance that the discussions are followed up by actions.

Mr. Poul Schluter, Prime Minister of Denmark, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. McMILLAN (Canada) (interpretation from French): It is a great honour for me, as Canada's Minister of the Environment, to explain my country's perspective on the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in this special debate in the United Nations General Assembly.

(spoke in English)

The Brundtland Report is a landmark document, providing as it does a strategy for the entire world community on the most vital issues of our time.

Those issues addressed in the report - pollution, environmental degradation, economic development and poverty - are not new. Indeed, individual countries and the world community as a whole, through the United Nations, have grappled with them for decades.

In 1969 the then Secretary-General U Thant issued the following warning:

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

"The Members of the United Nations have perhaps 10 years left ... in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to defuse the population explosion, and to supply the required momentum to development efforts. If such a global partnership is not forged within the next decade ... then the problems I have mentioned will have reached such staggering proportions that they will be beyond our capacity to control."*

U Thant was no alarmist. His were well-informed concerns. If he was correct 18 years ago, then we today are not just running out of time, we are living on borrowed time.

The Assembly might consider these facts. Some 15 million acres of productive land around the world are converted into worthless desert every year - an area, during a 30 year period, larger than Canada's three prairie provinces combined. In Canada alone we lose 26 acres of productive farmland every hour to urbanization. More than 27 million acres of forest throughout the world are destroyed each year - an area equivalent, over three decades, to Canada's six eastern provinces. Deforestation caused by logging, farming, ranching and mining is expected to eradicate 1 million species of flora and fauna by the end of the twentieth century. The rate of habitat destruction and species extinction throughout the world is so rapid that renowned Canadian scientist, Dr. David Suzuki, has predicted that all wilderness is likely to vanish within the next 30 years.

Single incidents - such as those of Three Mile Island, Bhopal and Chernobyl - jolt us into realizing both how vulnerable we are and how often we have been spared total disaster by the grace of God alone. Our reprieve may be short-lived.

* Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

If we are, indeed, living on borrowed time, we should ask ourselves, from whom have we borrowed it? The concept of sustainable development articulated by the World Commission provides I think, the answer. The Commission defines sustainable development as that which

"meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (A/42/427, p. 54)

It is significant that the Commission has defined the concept in temporal terms. The message is clear: when we fail to act within the framework of sustainable development we not only borrow from future generations, we steal from them as well.

But, when the natural environment is sacrificed in pursuit of economic goals grounded exclusively in the present, we suffer in our own time. That is especially true of people in the developing world. If poverty is pollution, as some have suggested, then pollution is also poverty. Poverty perpetuates a vicious circle. Out of sheer desperation, people destroy their natural resources for food, heat and shelter - the very resources they need to escape their desperation. As developing nations plunge into debt, the vicious circle is accelerated. We wealthy countries have failed in our efforts to alleviate the plight of the world's poor. Worse still, we have often contributed to their plight, however unwittingly.

Surely the policies of the industrialized world are fundamentally flawed when the interest payments of many developing countries are larger than the amounts they receive from us in aid. We may not ourselves strip their rain forests of virgin timber, but we certainly bear some responsibility for the conditions that compel those who do.

If, in the words of ecologist Richard St. Barbe Baker, the planet is being "skinned alive", industrialized countries contribute to the offence both at home and abroad.

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

Indeed, the history of humanity as a whole has been one of seemingly unbridled planetary destruction. It is as though our ultimate purpose is to exploit every natural resource until nothing remains of it. Having decimated one species, we line up the next victim for slaughter. It is the supreme irony that, throughout history, the very resources that humankind has extinguished are those which, had they been well managed, would have been renewable. One wonders whether we are driven by a kind of death wish that challenges us to test the outer limits of our capacity to destroy everything we touch, including ourselves. Perhaps Bertrand Russell was right when he observed:

"Ever since Adam ate the apple, man has never refrained from any folly of which he was capable."

When will we realize that there is nothing intrinsically hospitable about planet Earth? Our planet does not support a rich and complex web of life because it is ideally suited for that purpose; it is ideally suited for that purpose because of the rich and complex web of life. Without the moderating effects of vegetation, of gas exchanges and of the recycling of materials conducted by billions of invertebrates, the planet Earth would be as unlikely a site for the Garden of Eden as the planet Mars. The disaster created by desertification in areas like Ethiopia where forests once flourished should sound the alarm about the fate of Earth if we persist on our course.

The dire warning and inspired counsel of the Brundtland Commission have come none too soon for all of us. Canada is heeding that warning and accepting that counsel.

The Canadian response to the World Commission extends well beyond Government. Just as Canadians originally called for the Commission, generously funded it and supported its work throughout, so also are we consulting one another about how to act on its findings. Among other things, we formed a National Task Force on

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

Environment and Economy nearly a year ago in anticipation of the Brundtland report. Many of the members of the Task Force are with me today at the General Assembly. Composed of seven federal, provincial and territorial Environment Ministers, corporate leaders, environmental group representatives and academics, the Task Force has met in three different regions and four cities across Canada from British Columbia right through to the east coast. Its report has now been unanimously endorsed by the federal Government, all 10 provinces and both territories. It has also received widespread industry, media and public support.

The Task Force recommendations, like those of the Brundtland Commission, focus on the structural changes needed to integrate environmental and economic decisions both in Government and in business. Those changes are not marginal; they are fundamental.

Mere tinkering with the status quo is a prescription for failure. What is required, in particular, is a change in the way people think - the most challenging change of all. Albert Einstein once observed in a different context:

"the splitting of the atom changed everything except our mode of thinking". The challenge of Brundtland, and of Canada's own Task Force, is to change that mode.

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

The Canadian Task Force report emphasizes the need to make Government and industry leaders more accountable for what they do to the environment. To that end, the Task Force calls for improved environmental assessments, state-of-the-environment reporting and business codes of ethics, among other instruments.

The Task Force embraces the concept of conservation strategies for each jurisdiction within the country - an approach already taken in my home province of Prince Edward Island and begun in Canada's north by the territorial governments and the Inuit.

The Task Force's central recommendation is the creation of broadly based consultative groups, called round tables, at the national and provincial and territorial levels. The round tables would bring together leaders from all sectors to foster ideas on sustainable development in Canada and to provide leadership in putting those ideas into practice.

Already, the principle of sustainable development is taking root in Canadian soil. Nowhere are the roots more deeply planted than in the magnificent archipelago off the west coast of British Columbia, known as South Moresby. The experience should inspire confidence in the approach around the world. At stake was the most internationally significant wilderness area in Canada. Often described as the Canadian Galapagos, it harbours species of flora and fauna unique in all the world. It contains some of the last virgin rain forests on the North American continent. South Moresby is also the ancestral home of the Haida. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has declared one of the Haida's ancient villages, Ninstints, a World Heritage Site. But all the natural and cultural splendour of South Moresby was nearly lost to Canada and the world in a classic struggle between those who wanted to preserve

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

this area and those who sought to harvest its vast natural resources. Instead of clashing fatally, environmental and economic goals were finally reconciled. A national park is to be created in South Moresby as part of a multi-million dollar economic development strategy for the area based on the sustainable development concept. The Haida's role will be central.

To my mind, the relationship of Canada's native peoples to the natural environment provides a model in sustainable development. The subsistence use of renewable resources over centuries by the Haida, the Dene, the Inuit and many other indigenous nations in Canada demonstrates a harmony with nature that is the antithesis of practices that gave rise to the Brundtland Commission.

Beyond Canada's borders, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) - the federal Government's principal arm for foreign aid - has adopted a radically new approach to its development projects in the developing world. The object is to avoid the kind of environmental degradation too often associated in the past with projects funded by industrialized countries. CIDA is committed to promoting programmes that foster sound environmental practices and to ensuring that its projects are subject to the most rigorous environmental scrutiny.

The Government of Canada believes that environmentally sound policies are not a brake on the economy; they are an integral part of the engine of growth. Canada is committed to working with developing nations to alleviate their environmental and economic plight through efforts that reflect their own priorities and cultures. It is not an exercise in imposing our methods on them. Rather, our concern for the well-being of less developed countries is directed at their basic problems: poverty and debt and the environmental devastation they breed.

Towards that end, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Joe Clark, informed this Assembly last month that the Canadian Government has

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decided to cancel all development assistance debt owed to our country by sub-Saharan Francophone Africa. Just last week Canada confirmed its decision to do the same for Commonwealth Africa. We urge other holders of third-world debt to explore how they, too, can strike at this fundamental problem.

Just when one despairs of humanity's willingness to set aside self-interest for the good of the human family as a whole, something happens to provide hope. Two such rays of hope penetrated the darkness last month. One was the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to work towards the dismantling of intermediate- and short-range nuclear missiles. The other was the global accord - known as the Montreal Protocol - to protect the stratospheric ozone, the layer of gases that shields the human race and all other life forms from the most lethal of the sun's radiation.

Both events reinforce the message of the Brundtland Commission that, through global co-operation, humankind's common future can be secured.

It is particularly significant that the Montreal Protocol - the first-ever global protocol for the global atmosphere - was achieved under the leadership of the United Nations Environment Programme. The Protocol now needs to be ratified and implemented around the world to be effective. The Government of Canada implores all Member nations that have not yet done so to sign the Protocol and to ratify it with urgency.

We Canadians are deeply concerned about another atmospheric problem: global climate change. Experts believe that a close-to-sea-level jurisdiction, like my own Prince Edward Island, could literally be washed into the north Atlantic by rising sea levels caused by increased temperatures stimulated by pollution. The Canadian prairies, bread basket to a hungry world, could face sharply reduced crop yields and, worse still, desert conditions that render the land incapable of agriculture.

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

Canada will host an international scientific conference on this subject in June 1988. It will be the most important such conference ever held in the world, drawing as it will some 300 experts from as many as 40 countries. I am delighted that Canada's widely respected Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Stephen Lewis, has agreed to serve as general chairman of the conference.

Earth's atmosphere, like its seas, is a global commons. Ultimately, critical atmospheric problems need to be addressed through international law - a law of the air. The Montreal Protocol is the first element of such a law. The willingness of the human family to forge a truly useful treaty on ozone demonstrates one thing: when the political will is mustered, it is possible to improve the odds in the risky game the world has been playing with its own future.

For Canada, the biggest single risk is acid rain. It is destroying our lakes, killing our fish, undermining our tourism, retarding our forests, harming our agriculture, devastating our built heritage and threatening our health. Half the acid-rain-causing emissions that affect Canada originate in the United States, just as much of the acid rain in many other countries around the world comes from their neighbours.

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

This is a transboundary indeed, a global, problem. In 1985 21 countries signed a protocol in Helsinki, committing each nation to a 30 per cent reduction of its annual sulphur dioxide emissions. Canada was a signatory and, accordingly, established a domestic programme to slash its emissions in half by 1994 based on 1980 allowable levels.

However, such action can be effective only if accompanied by the parallel actions of others - in Canada's case, our American neighbours. We Canadians are attempting to work with our United States friends on the acid rain problem in the spirit that succeeded with the ozone. But a truly global approach on the issue is also necessary. We urge those countries not now parties to the Helsinki protocol to sign it, for their own sake and for that of the world community. An acid-damaged environment is by definition not a sustainable environment.

On behalf of Canada, I make two recommendations. First, the United Nations General Assembly should support the concept of sustainable development called for by the Brundtland Commission, and United Nations agencies and affiliates should ensure their programmes reflect that concept. Secondly, the United Nations should hold an international conference on environment and sustainable development in 1992 - the twentieth anniversary of the historic Stockholm Conference. The purpose would be to review progress by member countries in implementing the Brundtland report. Canada offers to host such a conference.

I conclude on this note. The environment and the economy cannot be addressed as two separate global problems; only by viewing the two as one can either be solved.

René Dubos's fourth rule of ecology is, "Everything is connected to everything else." It is not just an environmental precept; it is also a profoundly moral statement. The statement implies that each nation has obligations to every other nation; and, if all nations are to survive, those obligations must be met.

(Mr. McMillan, Canada)

American writer Norman Cousins has stated, "The starting point to a better world is the belief that it is possible." The Brundtland Commission does more than issue a challenge; it inspires belief that the challenge can be met. On behalf of the people of Canada, I urge all nations, through their actions, to affirm that belief.

Mr. BUKMAN (Netherlands): It was a wise decision of the Assembly to hold a plenary debate on the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and to invite its Chairman, Mrs. Brundtland, to introduce it here today. The World Commission's report is about our common future. If we are to preserve this planet for future generations we must, in shaping our future, use all our imagination and vigour, in close co-operation with all sectors of society. This is the basic challenge of the report.

On behalf of the European Community and its member States, the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mr. Schluter, has set out our basic positions regarding the report. Allow me, therefore, to make some additional observations on the part of the Netherlands.

The 1972 Stockholm Declaration marked the beginning of the acknowledgement that the preservation of the environment is a global concern. Prior to the Stockholm Conference the Netherlands Government took the initiative to hold a seminar on the theme "Environment and development", of which the conclusions had a marked impact on the debate afterwards. Since then, through trial and error we have become more and more aware how closely the two concepts of environment and development are related: they are two sides of the same coin.

(Mr. Bukman, Netherlands)

The Commission's report adds a new dimension to this process of growing awareness of the interlinkage of environment and development. The concept of sustainable development clearly shows the need for an integrated approach incorporating financial, economic and social aspects. In this complex web of relationships the United Nations presents itself as the most appropriate institution in which the "call for change" of the Brundtland report can be transformed into a global programme for action. In doing so, we should base our actions on the lessons of the past. The report rightly observes that poverty is both a cause and an effect of global environmental problems. The present developmental problems in sub-Saharan Africa are a dramatic illustration thereof. Physical conditions often force farmers to over-exploit the land, leading to depletion of the soil and, as a consequence, desertification. Increasing fuel wood requirements exact their toll and newly planted trees are often the only fodder cattle can find. Deforestation is the result. The expanding deserts all over the world are a major problem for which solutions are not yet at hand.

These and many other lessons of the recent past have shown the compelling need for an economic policy that integrates environment with development. An environmental policy is not a luxury that only highly developed countries can afford. On the contrary, it is a necessity for all countries, and the report demonstrates this convincingly.

I have noticed that the report of the Commission has given rise to some concern in developing countries about the practical possibility of implementing its recommendations. Another concern is how the measures proposed will affect economic development. Is sustainable development another, new form of conditionality for development? Moreover, will sustainable development in the final analysis not lead to a slowing down of economic growth?

(Mr. Bukman, Netherlands)

I understand these questions; they are legitimate questions; but the answer is not to dismiss the concept of sustainable development. As the Commission itself has stressed, demands for a higher quality of more environmentally sensitive development should be coupled with increased flows of assistance. If one thing is clear from this report, it is that the donor community should accept the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, not only in theory but in practice. This debate, I hope, will lead to a recommendation which contains a programme of action for the coming years. Increasing the volume of aid should be a necessary feature to be included in such a programme if we take the recommendations of the report seriously.

(Mr. Bukman, Netherlands)

I should like to mention a number of elements which I think should also be incorporated in such a programme. In presenting these elements to the Assembly, I base myself partly on the Commission's report and partly on a policy paper which I presented to the Netherlands Parliament a few months ago.

First, proper management of the environment is an essential pre-condition to improve the quality of development. Quality improvement is very much the result of integrating environmental considerations in the overall process of design and appraisal of development projects.

Secondly, I firmly believe that integration of environmental considerations goes hand in hand with strengthening the environmental institutional capacity of developing countries. We must all realize that this calls for additional assistance in this field. The Netherlands is ready to respond favourably in meeting these needs. In this process Governments have an important responsibility. To achieve sustainable development, however, the participation of ordinary men and women is essential, in terms of both policy formulation and implementation.

A third element to be included is the need to address the critical issue of the balance between the population size and available resources and the rate of population growth in relation to the capacity of the economy to provide for the basic needs of the population, as the report states, "not just today, but for generations" (A/42/427, p. 109). Population policies to this end should be pursued and the international community should assist more generously in support of these efforts. We, for our part, stand ready to do so.

As I have said, national action is a prerequisite for sustainable development, but will never be successful if it is not complemented by international support - support through international arrangements; support through multilateral and bilateral aid.

(Mr. Bukman, Netherlands)

The debt situation in Africa and Latin America is a serious impediment to sustainable growth. Alleviation of the debt burden relieves funds for an integrated development policy. We therefore need to mobilize all our imagination to find long-lasting solutions to this problem. In this respect we welcome the initiatives taken by the World Bank systematically to integrate environmental considerations in its operations.

To further the process of integration of environmental considerations in development policies I consider it important that the conclusions and recommendations in the World Commission's report be discussed throughout the United Nations system. In our view the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination should hold regular discussions on the measures taken by the various parts of the United Nations system in support of sustainable development policies in developing countries.

We, the Governments, have a primary responsibility to design, nationally and internationally, ways and means to achieve sustainable growth. The Brundtland report should be considered as a guideline for the coming years. As we gain experience in our endeavours to achieve the goal, some of the present recommendations will have to be modified and new recommendations will emerge. This process should be closely monitored by Governments.

In order to safeguard a continuous effort, I propose that every two years the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme should be preceded by a meeting at ministerial level which should evaluate the implementation of the recommendations and develop new recommendations for national, regional and international action. One may call this an environment security council, or any other name one likes to give it. What is important is that a body at ministerial level keep a close watch on the state of the Earth.

(Mr. Bukman, Netherlands)

Our common future is at stake. The message of the Brundtland report rings loud and clear in the debate today. We are privileged to live on this earth. We want everyone to feel it a privilege. Thus we have the duty to combat poverty and preserve the earth for future generations.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): First, I wish to express my gratitude to Gro Harlem Brundtland and the other members of the World Commission on Environment and Development for the preparation of the report entitled "Our common future". This document has aroused enormous interest. The problems of the pollution of the environment, the atmosphere and the oceans, as well as the depletion of natural resources, affect the very foundations of the existence of our civilization. And all this is happening when mankind, for the first time in its history, has the possibility of ensuring decent conditions of life for all the people on earth.

It is indeed dangerous, in the most direct meaning of that word, when streams of poison flow through the rivers and poisonous rains fall from the sky on to the soil, when cities and entire regions suffocate in an atmosphere which is over-saturated with industrial and transportation wastes, and when the development of atomic energy is accompanied by unacceptable risks.

The interrelationship of man and nature has assumed a threatening character because of contradictions of global magnitude. The specific feature of these contradictions is that by posing risks to everyone, regardless of their wealth or poverty, they impel countries to rise above their political, ideological or other differences and join hands in the common struggle for the survival of mankind. We shall win this struggle together or lose it together. No other possibility exists.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

This conclusion not only reflected in the title of the report by the Brundtland Commission, but derives from the entire logic of the study conducted, in which environmental issues are dealt with not in isolation, but in close relationship with the problems of peace and security and economic and social development.

The realities of interdependence are such that it is impossible to unite only in the face of the environmental threat while remaining divided in the other areas of international life. As is pointed out in the report a nuclear war would end human development altogether. This conclusion, which is shared today both in the West and the East, the North and the South, is backed up by numerous scientific studies, including those carried out within the framework of studying the problem of nuclear winter and those which are part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the arms race and the environment.

In their Declaration adopted on 1 October of this year, the Foreign Ministers of the developing countries members of the Group of 77 stated that nuclear weapons posed the main risk to the environment and to life on earth. They also reached the fair conclusion that the environment could be reliably protected only if such global problems as poverty, external debts, injustice in international affairs and underdevelopment were solved concurrently. We should not forget these problems, which affect the lives of hundreds of millions people. Yet, we cannot use the burden of the problems of economic backwardness to impose on the developing nations, contrary to the choice of their peoples, development models that are alien to them. And it would be totally inhumane in so doing to engage in speculation about the lofty goals of the struggle against environmental dangers.

Therefore, the Soviet Union, together with other socialist countries, proposes dealing with the problem of protecting the human habitat as an integral component of the task of establishing a comprehensive system of international peace and

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security that would embrace all areas of inter-State relations. Environmental security is an integral component of the programme which was offered to the international community in the article by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, entitled "The reality and guarantees of a secure world".

The prospect of moving towards nuclear disarmament resulting from Soviet-American agreements means the beginning of the building of the nuclear-free, non-violent world in accordance with the principles formulated in the declaration signed in New Delhi by Mikhail S. Gorbachev and the Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi. The path to a world free of nuclear weapons and secure not only in the military but also in the environmental and all other domains is, we are deeply convinced, primarily to be found through internationalizing and universalizing the efforts of States, and enhancing the results of the useful actions emanating from international organizations and negotiations.

Today, there is emerging an increasingly clear need for effective international procedures and mechanisms that would ensure rational management of the planet's resources as the heritage of all mankind. A great deal has already been done in this field. With the participation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) more than 100 conventions and treaties designed to protect the atmosphere and preserve the biosphere of the seas and oceans have been concluded. These international legal instruments, which concern individual aspects of the environmental problem, should be strengthened and used actively.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The Soviet delegation was impressed by what was said by the representative of the Netherlands, who proposed that we consider the question of establishing an ecological security council. We are prepared to participate actively and constructively in consultations in that connection. A comprehensive approach is necessary to solve the environmental problem on a world-wide basis and study it in its linkage with other global problems. This implies joint efforts to implement in practice the theory of the development of the noosphere, as formulated by the French scientists P. T. de Chardin and E. Leroi and the Soviet academician V. Vernadsky. According to that theory what is needed is the reasonable organization of interaction between man and nature serving the needs of all mankind.

Our proposal for drafting a global strategy of environmental protection and rational management of natural resources is aimed in the same direction as the recommendation of the Brundtland Commission for the preparation of a declaration, and subsequently a convention, on the environment and sustained development. The development of such a strategy could be started in the framework of UNEP, using everything useful that has been accumulated both within the United Nations system and outside it. In particular, use could be made of the experience of the Economic Commission for Europe, which is about to complete its work on the strategy for environmental protection in Europe to the year 2000 and beyond, as well as the other ideas on co-operation in this field which are being discussed at this time at the Vienna meeting of the countries participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

A global approach to the problems of the environment implies the establishment of a coherent system of co-operation that would extend to all regions and reinforce all the sectors of ecological security.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

One such region is the northern part of our planet. As part of the plan put forward by Mikhail Gorbachev to establish a zone of peace in the Arctic, the Soviet Union proposes now drawing up a unified comprehensive plan for the protection of the environment of the north. The experience of the joint measures to protect the sea environment of the Baltic, which are being carried out by the commission of seven littoral States, is worth extending to the entire ocean and sea area of the northern part of the earth. The northern European countries could reach agreement to establish a system of monitoring the state of the environment and the radiation security in the region and agree upon steps to preserve their northern forests. I mention here the north of our planet, but I have in mind that work on environmental security in that region could serve to develop a policy which would be a good example and would strengthen similar work in other regions.

The expanding of glasnost in these matters should become a part of the global efforts to defuse the environmental bomb. Countries are already exchanging relevant information, inter alia through international organizations. We believe that this procedure should be institutionalized by introducing the principle of annual reports by Governments on their environmental activities and on environmental incidents, both those that occurred and those that were prevented, on their territory. We are empowered to state that the Soviet Union is prepared to consider with other countries the measures necessary, of course with due regard for the appropriate recommendations of the Brundtland Commission.

In embarking in the United Nations on work on environmental protection, we have no right to disregard the voice of the public forces, without whose participation it is difficult to expect real solutions to global problems, especially those of the environment.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The Soviet public has been increasingly involved in action to protect the environment on the basis of the idea of building a harmonious and peaceful planetary civilization. Non-governmental organizations have put forward numerous initiatives in this field, including, for example, the idea of promoting co-operation to ensure industrial safety, with due regard for its environmental aspects. Clearly this is something for the agencies of the United Nations system to think about, especially such agencies as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, which is already studying the problem of the negative impact of the activities of transnational corporations on the environment of the host countries.

The report "Our Common Future" rightly raises the question of increasing financial support for co-operation in environmental protection, including providing assistance to developing countries in this field. It would be useful to discuss the possibility of setting up an international environmental security fund on the basis of the part of resources saved as result of reducing military expenditures. Such a step would substantially reinforce the environmental fund which operates in the framework of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The report of the Brundtland Commission, the work being done in the United Nations Environment Programme with respect to prospects for environmental protection up to the year 2000 and beyond and the activities of other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in this field provide powerful momentum to internationalization of the dialogue about preserving the Earth's nature for the present and future generations. We are confident that the Commission's activities and the forthcoming discussion of its recommendations will undoubtedly contribute to humanizing international relations and establishing common human criteria and values in those relations. The Soviet Union is prepared

to engage in a concrete search for ways of building our common future through joint efforts, in the interests of all.

Sir Crispin TICKELL (United Kingdom): I begin by saying how much my Government welcomes the report of the World Commission. We join others in thanking Mrs. Brundtland and the Commission most warmly. I take this opportunity to set out the British Government's approach to the issues raised in the report, and I would add that it is the first detailed statement which my Government has made in this regard.

The good management of the environment is one of the most important problems facing the world today, and one of the best things about the Brundtland report is that its basic message is one of hope, for it shows ways in which solutions can be found. It has rightly generated more interest than some of its more sensational predecessors, which offered only gloom and helplessness. It sets us a difficult agenda. At the same time it offers the possibility of sustainable development provided we can cope with the problems of poverty and environmental degradation through long-term economic growth.

The report's title, "Our Common Future", was well chosen. It represents a consensus - and I do not mean a string of paper compromises by committee. It is rather a consensus reached by 22 eminent Commissioners from persuasions and societies which span the world.

We particularly welcome the care taken by the Commissioners in listening to what people from the five continents had to say. By "people" I mean not only government leaders, representatives of voluntary organizations, educational institutions and the scientific community; I mean also the less grand but ordinary people who in the first as well as the last resort must be the agents of the changes necessary to bring economic development and protection of the environment back into harmony. My purpose today is not to bewail the past, nor to repeat what

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is in the report. It is to look forward in a practical fashion to where we all, industrial and other countries alike, go next. I shall have words to say about each.

The Commission asked whether industrial countries were doing enough to help, in particular in such areas as protectionism, agricultural trade and debt. We in Britain are aware of the feeling among the various non-industrial countries that while structural adjustment may be necessary it can be supported only if it is aimed at sustained growth. That needs an open trading system, and we share the Commission's view that it is imperative for such countries to enjoy access to industrial-country markets for non-traditional exports where they enjoy a comparative advantage. We shall play our part in the Uruguay round; but others across the whole spectrum of the world community, from the fully industrialized economies through the industrializing ones to the producers of agricultural goods, raw materials and other commodities, must play their part too.

We share the Commission's advocacy of measured change in trading patterns in agriculture. We take the point, made not only by the Commission but also by the World Bank in 1986, that improvement in the security of world food supplies will require two things: first, reduction of the incentives which led to non-competitive production and overproduction of food in the industrial market economies; and, secondly, enhancement of incentives which encourage such production in other countries. This may not be easy for either group of countries, but we must build rapidly on the start which has been made.

We share the Commission's recognition that Africa cannot pull itself out of the planet's most serious ecological and economic crisis without help. That lies behind the initiative on debt taken by the British Government to help those poorest and most heavily indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa which are pursuing

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satisfactory adjustment policies. Our suggestion that aid loans be converted into outright grants and that there be longer repayment and grace periods for rescheduling official loans has already met with a good response; but we still have some way to go in securing acceptance of our other proposal, that interest rates on such reschedulings should be set well below market levels. Even if we have not yet succeeded in persuading all our industrial partners, we were heartened by the support given at the recent meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers in Barbados.

The Commission rightly challenged all concerned to act at the sources by promoting an environmental reflex in all ministries, administrations and agencies which wield economic power. No one contests the Commission's conclusion that a prime source of environmental degradation is the pollution caused by poverty, a point made very eloquently by previous speakers this morning. Here we, as the human species, run the same risk as any other species in destroying the environment which has created us, which sustains us and which gives us hope for the future. In some parts of the world millions of poor and hungry people know this all too well, yet their options are extremely limited. For many it is more important to survive until next week than to think of the prospects for their children and grandchildren.

In this respect we greatly welcomed the recent work of the World Bank in seeking to devise policies for development which took better account of the longer-term needs of the environment. My Government is financing one of the 30 country studies to which the Bank has pledged itself. We are also responding to, and to some extent have anticipated, the three specific challenges which the Commission set for such bilateral donors as the United Kingdom.

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First, the Commission called for donors to adopt new measures to ensure that all aid projects could be properly sustained. We are doing just that. Our Overseas Development Administration is preparing a rigorous but comprehensible methodology for routine use by all those planning and implementing projects. At the same time, it has examined and revised its existing economic appraisal techniques to ensure that they give due weight to such long-term considerations as the environment.

Secondly, the Commission called for special programmes to help restore, protect and improve the ecological process in development. In the past five years British aid spending on projects involving natural resources has increased by three quarters, and in forestry, to which the Commission drew particular attention, our spending has increased threefold.

Thirdly, the Commission called for special programmes to strengthen the institutional and professional capacity needed in aid-recipient countries. We here pledge our full co-operation. We particularly welcome the initiative taken by the Commonwealth Secretary-General on "Conservation for Sustainable Development".

Time does not allow me to dwell on the many other policy recommendations of the Commission which deserve our support: for example, those on the role of women, population, health, education, food security and urban growth. But I should like to underline our support for the Commission's views about the loss of species and habitats. Again, we have very practical measures that we should like to see undertaken. We support proposals to link conservation and development on the lines recommended in the World Conservation Strategy, and the establishment of parks and reserves to safeguard critical species and habitats. That has already been done in some parts of the world. We agree that the destruction of tropical rain forests is a particular concern, and we have already shaped our policies to help sustainable

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use of those important natural resources. We are ready to help others to do likewise through our aid programme. We have also pledged our support for the Tropical Forestry Action Plan and the International Tropical Timber Agreement, and have assisted research on tropical forest conservation and development both through our own programmes and by supporting those of international agencies.

We found the Commission's contribution to thinking on long-term energy prospects constructive and stimulating. We agree with the conclusion that future development depends critically on increasing quantities of energy from dependable, safe and environmentally sound sources, and that no single energy source or combination of them can be guaranteed to meet this need. The Commission was right to emphasize the central role of energy in development: those dependent hitherto on fuel wood need to use it much less intensively, if they are to look after themselves in their own interests.

So various a problem as shortage of energy has equally various answers. We can all improve our efficiency, and recent technical developments should help us to do so. Hydroelectricity still has further potential. So do other renewable sources of energy. But, as the Commission recognized, it will be some time before they can make a substantial contribution to world energy needs. Renewable resources have much appeal, but we have to be careful that they themselves do not adversely affect the environment. We found the Commission's assessment of the potential risks and benefits of nuclear energy generally fair and balanced. We agree that internationally accepted safety standards must be developed and applied to civil nuclear operations.

Fossil fuels will remain an important source of energy for the foreseeable future, and so too must be used in an environmentally acceptable fashion. We take the problem of atmospheric pollution very seriously. Over the last year my

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Government has endorsed plans to instal flue gas desulphurization equipment at three of our largest existing power stations and at all new ones, to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide. We plan to instal low nitrogen oxide combustion technology at our 12 largest coal-fired power stations and all future such stations. We participate in international air-pollution monitoring schemes, and support a major research programme on the environmental effects of reductions in emissions.

Our policies are not designed to penalize industry, which is essential to growth. We support the principle of "the polluter pays", and have already seen good results in Britain. But more work needs to be done on pollution control, and the Government has launched a scheme to encourage innovation. Industry has an important part to play in the development of pollution abatement and control equipment and works closely with the Government. British industry is participating fully in the current European Year of the Environment.

The Commission drew attention to the problems of chemicals and hazardous wastes. Guidelines have recently been agreed under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in both respects. After recent accidents we are all better aware of the need to foster international co-operation to prevent the recurrence of such tragedies and mitigate the effects of any accidents in the future. Such problems may be at present of most concern to the industrial countries; but as and when others industrialize they should profit from our mistakes and set in place the necessary legislative and institutional framework to control pollution.

The Commission rightly devoted attention to the idea of the global commons - those areas beyond the jurisdiction of individual nations. We share the Commission's view of the importance of proper management of the oceans. North-East

(Sir Crispin Tickell,
United Kingdom)

Atlantic fisheries are already subject to arrangements for effective international co-operation on conservation and management. We are active in monitoring the seas around us, and in November shall host the second International Ministerial Conference on the Protection of the North Sea. We pay a tribute to UNEP for its Regional Seas Programme and would welcome its extension. In Antarctica we agree that the way forward is to build on the Antarctic Treaty system.

On the problems of the atmosphere we recognize the effect which various forms of pollution may have on stimulating climatic change. We heard a particularly eloquent speech this morning from the Prime Minister of the Maldives on that very point. We fully support the need for further international scientific work on the whole subject. We welcomed and signed the agreement reached in Montreal last month on a Protocol to the Ozone Layer Convention to limit emissions of substances which deplete the ozone layer. We also support the need for further international discussion of the problems of debris in outer space.

It follows from the report that all countries should take steps to build the environmental dimension into national policies. This really is, I think, the key: to build the environmental dimension into national policies. We have started to do so. But of course no country can act alone. Countries need to work together on problems which cross national boundaries, cross the shores of continents and affect the good health of our planet as a whole.

For that reason we welcome the Commission's emphasis on environmental monitoring, and UNEP's role in this respect. We also support the proposal to expand the Global Environmental Monitoring System and to develop the Global Resource Information Database. The proposal for an independent international programme for risk assessment is interesting. We shall have to think about how this might relate to UNEP and other bodies, and how it would be organized and

(Sir Crispin Tickell,
United Kingdom)

financed. We also agree with the suggestion in the report that UNEP's role in catalyzing work in the United Nations system on sustainable development should be strengthened and the resources of the Environment Fund should be appreciably enlarged. But this could not happen overnight, and for the moment we would favour concentration by UNEP on fewer activities in order to produce better practical results in each.

Obviously, there are points in the report with which we cannot concur. For example, we would be reluctant to see any new institutions established before making sure they did not duplicate the work of others. We are by nature suspicious of declarations or new conventions until we know what practical purposes they are designed to serve. The proposal to channel revenue from the global commons to sustainable development would in our view create more difficulties than it could solve. The call for ending the disposal of waste at sea does not recognize that this can in strictly controlled circumstances represent the best practical environmental option.

In conclusion, I repeat my Government's welcome of the report. It follows that we would be reluctant to see it go the way of some other such reports, which gather dust on some elevated shelf until the time comes for yet another report on the same issues. For these issues are among the most important of our time and of times to come. We hope therefore that its recommendations will be followed up at all levels - international, national and regional. We warmly support proposals to this end in the draft General Assembly resolution from the Governing Council of UNEP.

Mr. HILL (United States of America): The United States joins other delegations in welcoming the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, "Our Common Future". When 22 eminent individuals from the four corners of the globe, from developing as well as developed countries, from divergent political and economic systems, can reach consensus on the outlook for the environment and for development well into the next century, it behoves the community of nations to sit up and take notice. As Chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, at the White House, I have been impressed with the scope of the report's coverage, the tremendous amount of research and the care with which the report was crafted, which attest to the seriousness of purpose which the Commissioners brought to this effort.

The credits and acknowledgement list alone demonstrate the outreach of the Commission and the lengths to which it went to ensure that the best possible thinking went into its study. The Commission should be especially commended for offering the opportunity for public participation in its work. On behalf of my Government, I should like to express our deep appreciation to Prime Minister Brundtland and her fellow Commissioners for the personal efforts they have all put into this undertaking.

The United States shares the Commission's overall view, as expressed in "Our Common Future", that the nations of the world, working co-operatively and energetically, should continue the growing effort to resolve the most urgent problems of providing needed goods and services, while also safeguarding environmental quality for present and future generations. The Commission suggests that this be done by ensuring that the environmental implications of intended activities, and their long-term impact, be incorporated in the policy planning and economic decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels, in the private as well as the public sector. Early in this century,

(Mr. Hill, United States)

President Theodore Roosevelt said:

"... neither man nor nation can prosper unless, in dealing with the present, thought is steadily taken for the future."

That is the message of sustainable development, a message my Government fully endorses. The question is how best to do it. I am optimistic that there is a way.

Over the past 40 years an extensive network of international organizations has come into being. This network comprises not only the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the multilateral development banks, but other more narrowly-focused intergovernmental organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and regional development organizations. Furthermore, since Stockholm we have seen the birth and maturing of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). At this point, I should especially like to commend the dedication of Mr. Mostafa K. Tolba, the UNEP Executive Director, for his tireless efforts to improve our work in preserving and protecting the quality of the global environment. A special note of thanks should be given to him for his most recent success in bringing Governments to agreement on the Ozone Protocol just completed in Montreal. All our Governments must now move forward quickly to ratify and implement that agreement in order to fulfil our responsibilities.

In addition, we have a world-wide network of non-governmental organizations which is growing in strength and experience every day. Those organizations, some large, some small, have come into their own in the past decade. They often operate at the grass-roots level and provide a way for channelling the vital energy of citizen involvement. Finally, we have international industry's response to the challenge, most recently evidenced in the establishment of the international Environment Bureau.

(Mr. Hill, United States)

My Government believes that the required mechanisms are in place, and are steadily improving in their effectiveness. This, of course, is fortunate when we consider the fiscal realities that most countries - developing and developed alike - face today. Using existing mechanisms, most especially UNEP, reduces bureaucratic layering and avoids resources from being diverted from other needed activities. Rather than establish new programmes, bodies or activities, the challenge we face is conveying the message of sustainable development through the present network. This approach must be integrated into the policy formulation processes and operational practices of this existing network. To this end, we strongly support the proposal to have the General Assembly transmit "Our Common Future" to the governing bodies of the organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, with an invitation for them to take its analysis and recommendations into account, as appropriate, in their work plans.

Institutionalizing sustainable development in the United Nations system, however, is only part of the equation. The best efforts of UNEP and other United Nations agencies, of non-governmental organizations and of industry, will not achieve our goal if conditions essential to fostering sustainable development are not reflected in the national policies of the countries concerned. The countries of the world cannot realistically expect to achieve sustainable development when imposed government solutions impede the efficient allocation of limited resources, stifle creativity and innovation or reduce incentives to work productively.

I am convinced that if we are to be truly successful, we need a "bottom up" approach, not a "top down" approach. Rather than a "sustainable development programme", we need a sustainable development "movement", one which engages and indeed is created by individuals and institutions working in their businesses and in their communities. As President Reagan pointed out from this podium last month,

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it is simple, ordinary people who make the difference and who are leading those of us in this room, not the other way around. He noted:

"Around the world, new businesses, new economic growth, new technologies are emerging from the workshops of ordinary people with extraordinary dreams."

(A/42/PV.4, p. 28)

Experience has shown that, given information and choice, people will make sound judgements and select the long-term sustainable route rather than squander the inheritance of future generations. Encouraging individuals at the local level is vital.

In order to ensure a framework for the integration of sustainable development, especially at the local level, it is important that support be available, as needed, for training, for access to information and to enable nations to draw on the experience of others. To this end, the United States continues to expand its bilateral co-operation with developing countries in the areas of environmental protection, conservation and natural resources management. The mechanisms for this collaboration include the Agency for International Development (AID), the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Department of Agriculture, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and various programmes of the Department of the Interior. For example, AID is spending approximately \$300 million annually on environmental and natural resources projects, ranging from water quality improvement to forestry management, to pollution control. These projects have as their objectives the protection of human health, maintenance of the global ecosystem and the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development. They manifest the commitment President Reagan made to international environmental co-operation in America's Agenda for the Future, in which he said:

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"Recognizing that environmental problems do not stop at national boundaries, we will collaborate closely with other nations ... The United States has long been the world leader in making its scientific talent, data and information, and financial resources available to the international community ... and we intend to maintain such a role."

In a comprehensive survey of this dimension, it is not surprising that there are approaches and assertions with which everyone cannot agree. For the United States, these include the notion of a linkage between decreases in defence spending and increases in development spending, automatic funding of environmental organization programmes and the report's treatment of the complex problem of transferring technology while protecting proprietary rights. We also disagree with some of the suggestions concerning nuclear energy, the Law of the Sea Convention, the Antarctic Treaty and management of outer space. On the other hand, there are many elements in the report reflecting principles and approaches to which the United States firmly adheres; for example, its emphasis on economic growth, especially in developing nations, as a means of enhancing the environment by attacking poverty, which is often at the root of environmental degradation, and the importance of new technologies in addressing environmental problems.

In this context the United States welcomes the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Its theme of sustainable development is a powerful idea, and we look forward to collaborating on implementation of this approach. That being said, I must caution that we feel deeply that the United Nations and UNEP activities in support of sustainable development must be carried out within existing levels of resources and that care must be taken to ensure that programmes that might duplicate current activities are not undertaken. Also, the United Nations system should not be burdened with an excess of reporting requirements.

(Mr. Hill, United States)

It is clear that economic development is essential for the betterment of mankind and that, as pointed out in the report, technology is the mainspring of economic growth. While prudently managing the environmental risks we face, we should not be frightened of new technologies and such additional advances as biotechnology, new energy sources, new chemicals and new medical frontiers. We must remember that we shall never live in a completely risk-free world. Economies grow because of those who take risks and because those who succeed are rewarded for their efforts. We must recall that human genius, individual freedom and rewards for personal initiative offer the global society an opportunity for a better life - and a better environment.

The PRESIDENT: I call on the Minister for International Development Co-operation of Sweden, Ms. Lena Hjelm-Wallen, who will speak on behalf of the Nordic countries.

Ms. HJELM-WALLEN (Sweden): The World Commission on Environment and Development has in its report brought home to all of us its urgent message on the state of the environment and development, its forceful analysis of the interdependence of environment and economic growth and its compelling call for political action to set the world on the right track of sustainable development. The Nordic Governments, on whose behalf I am speaking, are happy to endorse the Commission's reasoning and its general conclusions.

The report provides a comprehensive and challenging agenda for all of us, and I should like to bring out three themes.

First of all, we have to realize the urgency of dealing with the sources of environmental degradation. The present development patterns not only expose us to more and more direct environmental threats, but are seriously compromising even the possibility of future generations meeting their needs. The ways in which the

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resources management of the nations of the world have developed are not sustainable. That is our present predicament.

Manipulation of vital biosystems today causes widespread environmental decay. The large emissions of carbon dioxide through the massive increases in the use of coal and oil threaten seriously to change climatic conditions. Acid rains are killing forests and other ecosystems, causing physical damage to constructions, as well as threatening human health. Hazardous chemicals are poisoning our environment. The earth's protective ozone layer has already been affected.

The mismanagement of natural resources is not only detrimental to the prospects of future development, but unjust. There is a stark contrast between the very high consumption in the richest countries and the utter poverty of so many of the world's people. But even poverty is to a large extent caused by the mismanagement of natural resources. In many poor communities the peasants' struggle to make a living, or even survive, on already strained lands leads to soil erosion, forest depletion, desertification and water shortage, thus making it even more difficult to survive. Where this happens people are often too poor to afford the necessary investments in the future that would make it possible for the land to support them. This is the poverty trap facing millions and millions of people, and their number is growing.

The realization that poverty is the main cause of environmental degradation in developing countries leads directly to the second theme, the conclusion that only stronger economic growth can finally eradicate today's abject poverty and the environmental problems connected with it. In many developing countries the present growth rate is not sufficient and the environment is being continually and increasingly strained.

(Ms. Hjelm-Wallen, Sweden)

Economic growth in the developing world is closely dependent on strong growth in the developed world. It is important to keep up a strong demand for exports from the developing countries. The trade imbalances between large industrialized countries must not be allowed to cause a world recession. The growing protectionism must be resisted. The debt problems must be solved in a rational way. Development assistance must be increased, as must the general flows of resources, including private investment, to the developing countries. This is imperative if the difficult, but necessary, adjustment efforts that many developing countries today are making are to be successful.

Economic growth is a prerequisite for environmental improvements. This is equally true in both developed and developing countries. But the question is what kind of growth and how its benefits are distributed. Present methods of production consume far too much of non-renewable resources and make far too strong demands on the environment. They are not sustainable. We need innovative thinking and new approaches; we need new technologies. The current state of knowledge would make it possible to go a long way towards satisfying these needs if used, but we need also more research. This implies new, sometimes costly investments, but, in the concept of sustainable development, the point is that such investments pay and make economic sense.

Another way of looking at the same interrelationship of environment and development is to state that environment is not a sector of its own requiring a certain set of environmental solutions. Environment concerns the whole range of human activity. All sectors of society, including both Government and industry, must be made directly accountable for their influence on the environment. Specific action will be needed to arrest environmental deterioration where it is most threatening. But a genuine course of sustainable development requires changes that

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affect the fundamental ways of production in our societies. As the Brundtland Commission put it, we need to get at the sources.

This brings me to my third theme. Many of the required changes will be not only technologically and economically demanding but, to an even larger extent, politically demanding. They will require a larger say for today's disadvantaged people and social reforms. They will require more knowledge, as well as institutional and legal initiatives. Some of the changes will be difficult to achieve since they strike at deeply entrenched customs and ways of life, at distribution of income and power.

The demands on political will should be seen primarily, however, not as restrictions, but as our opportunity to act. The fact that political will is so important means exactly that sustainable development is within our reach. The Nordic Governments therefore particularly welcome the realistic optimism in the Commission's report.

(Ms. Hjelm-Wallen, Sweden)

This forum, the General Assembly of the United Nations, is the correct forum in which the nations of the world should declare this political will to act. We must now ensure that the analysis and the conclusions in the report have a real impact on the work programmes of the United Nations system. We must also review our national policies in this light.

The concept of sustainable development must be fundamental to the work of the United Nations for the future. The United Nations has already taken important steps. The most comprehensive expression of this is the environmental perspective of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). With this perspective and the report by the World Commission on Environment and Development an analytic foundation is laid and directions for action pointed out. The Nordic Governments strongly support the adoption of the two draft resolutions proposed by the Governing Council of UNEP.

Active steps must now be taken to promote sustainable development by reviewing policies, budgets and activities within the whole United Nations system, not only those of the organizations under the responsibility of the Secretary-General, especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), but also the specialized agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We must further encourage a strong emphasis on the environmental aspect of development in the World Bank and the International Development Association (IDA), in the regional banks and funds and in other international organizations.

(Ms. Hjelm-Wallen, Sweden)

The concept of sustainable development is central to national decision-making. Industry and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to analyse and follow up the recommendations in the report. In pursuing their national programmes, Governments will need to keep in close touch. Existing regional bodies could be used. Regional and global conferences would also be warranted, to review and agree on action programmes for sustainable development.

The Brundtland Commission brings out very clearly that environment and development are of common concern. The Commission's report is a strong call for reinforced international co-operation and a strengthened United Nations. In the end this is what is demonstrated again and again: only by concerted action can the nations of the world achieve peace, security and sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.