

# **I. The Winners of the Blue Planet Prize**

**1992**

1992

## Blue Planet Prize

### Dr. Syukuro Manabe (U.S.A.)

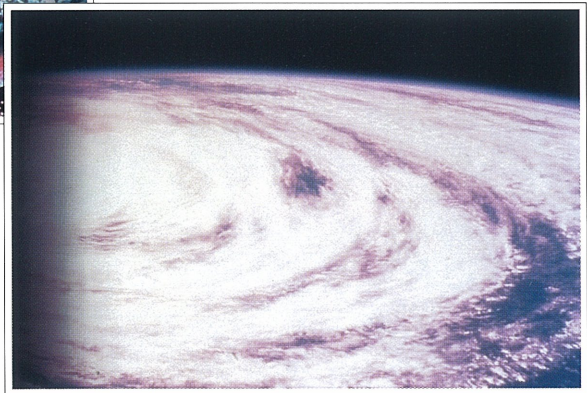
Member of the Senior Executive Service of the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

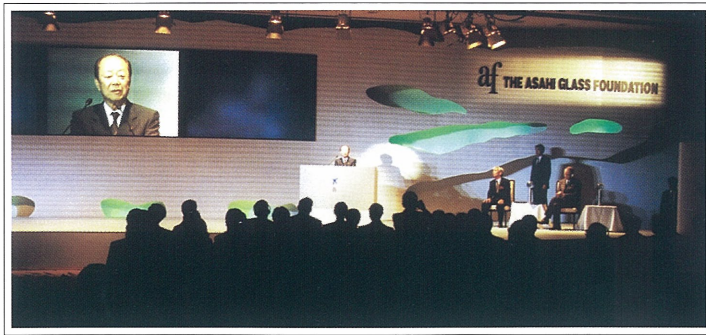


### International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) (Founded in the United Kingdom)



At the 1992 Blue Planet Prize awards ceremony, the opening slide presentation highlighted the beauty of our blue planet with images of the Earth seen from outer space. Each year, the awards ceremony features a slide presentation on a different theme.

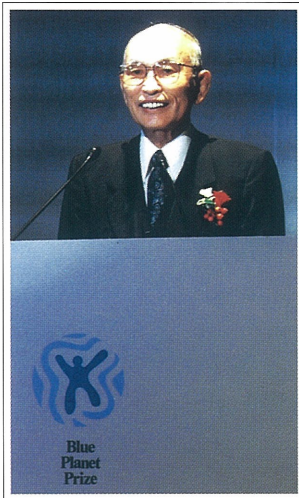




Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa gives a congratulatory speech at the opening ceremony.



As the chairman of the Presentation Committee, Dr. Saburo Okita reports on the selection process.



Hideaki Yamashita, chairman of the Asahi Glass Foundation, delivers the opening address.



Asahi Glass Foundation Chairman Hideaki Yamashita shakes hands with Michael Armacost, ambassador of the United States of America to Japan. Directly behind Mr. Armacost is Sir John Boyd, Her Britannic Majesty's ambassador.



On the day following the awards ceremony, a symposium was held on the topic of creating a new civilization in harmony with nature. Symposium panelists, from left; Keiko Nakamura, Professor, School of Human Sciences, Waseda University; Takamitsu Sawa, head of Kyoto University's Institute of Economic Research; Symposium Coordinator Hirotsada Hirose, Professor, College of Arts and Sciences, Tokyo Women's Christian University; Kenzaburo Oe, author; and Hiroyuki Ishi, Senior Staff Editor, Asahi Shimbun Publishing Company.



Seated with other members of the audience, the laureates participate in a panel discussion that followed the symposium.

## Profile

# International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

### History

- 1971 The IIEA (Institute for Environmental Affairs) was founded by Robert O. Anderson.
- 1972 The Institute was a key player in the UN Conference on Human Development. Barbara Ward highlighted the critical linkage between environment and development and coined the phrase “sustainable development.” The Institute changed its name to IIED, headed by Barbara Ward.
- 1974 The first IIED symposium was held at the UN World Food Conference. This issued a declaration that was front-page news on three continents. Global food supply has been an IIED issue ever since.
- 1975 IIED and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established an independent information unit, Earthscan, as a way of increasing public awareness of key global environmental issues and providing accurate environmental information to key leading media around the world.
- 1976 IIED played a central role in HABITAT, the first UN Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver. Some 20 years later, in 1996, it was responsible for preparing the official report for the second human settlements conference.
- 1980s By 1980, IIED had established a special role in the international arena. It was linked closely with three centers of power and influence: the UN agencies and other international institutions; national governments and their agencies, especially those concerned with environment and development issues; and national and international NGOs. A major part of IIED’s success has been the influence it has had in ensuring the allocation of more than \$50 billion a year in aid by OECD countries.
- 1985 Together with the World Resources Institute, IIED began producing a biennial World Resources Report. The Institute started to pursue practical solutions to problems through its projects.
- 1987 Our Common Future, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development led by Norway’s prime minister, Mrs. Gro Bruntland, was published and publicly acknowledged IIED’s leading role. It laid down a “global agenda for change.”
- 1990s National and international problems often require local solutions. IIED therefore pioneered methods that involve local “stakeholders” in developing policies and processes that work.
- 1992 In the run-up to the Earth Summit at Rio, IIED played a significant role in bringing together NGOs and mobilizing international interest. IIED’s preparatory work had an important impact on the process and eventual shape of UNCED’s Agenda 21.

1995 Each of IIED's program areas is integrated by cross-cutting themes that include collaborative research and the development of tools for sustainable development. IIED completed a major research project, "Towards a Sustainable Paper Cycle," for the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Through this, IIED has established an approach to working with the private sector.

The IIED is an independent, nonprofit think tank. From its inception, IIED has promoted the concept of sustainable development and sought to focus attention on the necessity for development in harmony with the natural environment through various projects in the North as well as the South.

Over the last 25 years, through its research, training, and publishing activities, the Institute has changed or influenced international programs. It has ensured that many more local voices are heard in the larger decision-making processes. It has altered the basis by which we understand environmental problems by emphasizing their environmental and social dimensions. It has shown that, ultimately, solving many so-called global problems really comes down to making changes locally, and that local people can be empowered to achieve their own solutions, provided the right institutional framework is in place. There is, though, some way to go to live up to the ideals that Barbara Ward set out at the Institute's beginnings.

IIED's professional staff presently number over 50. The chairman of IIED's board is Sir Martin Holdgate and the executive director is Richard Sandbrook. Support comes from all of the governments of Western Europe, the EU, foundations, and the international agencies.

## Essay

# Rio Plus Five—What Has Happened and What Next?

**Richard Sandbrook**  
**Executive Director, IIED**

May 1997

Anyone setting out to give a global assessment of progress since the events in Rio in 1992 could well be considered as either a fool, or arrogant or both. There is so much one could report on and in so many places that the task seems absurd. So all that can be done is to attempt a comparison of expectations then with realities now. Hardly a scientific exercise based on empirical research to be sure.

This paper is not the result of an extensive survey or anything that could be considered as methodical research. It is the impression that a group of us have formed at the IIED, an organization that was very involved in the Rio process before and since. I have also drawn on a number of documents that are listed at the end of this essay.

### **The Rio process**

Before Rio happened it was clear that the summit was in many ways a media/interest group circus on one level and a serious intergovernmental process on another. The former were being pushed by a variety of nongovernmental actors who could provide evidence of widespread environmental damage while the latter had to negotiate some of their own sovereignty away in order to do anything about it.

But one should not be naive. Many interest groups were in it for the ride all along and made it clear that the governmental process was not something they took too seriously in the first place. The same can be said of many political “leaders” who came in such numbers to Brazil. Rio gave them every opportunity to show off their environmental bona fides. All sorts of impressive things were said and a few impressive promises made. Some of this was followed up but much was not.

But on balance the Earth Summit in 1992 can be still be seen as a high point of political commitment to solving global environment and development problems. What failed was the “bargain” that some sought at Rio. This was broadly that in return for addressing the big environmental issues of climate change, biodiversity loss, and deforestation the wealthy world would help to finance and support with technology, accelerated development for the South. The agenda for all this was called “Agenda 21,” a shortened form of “Agenda for the 21st Century”.

Since then, we have seen a global recession. Financial cut-backs at home meant that financing sustainable development in the South has slipped down the OECD's agenda. This has made it difficult to carry out the tough task of translating the broad recommendations of Agenda 21 into practical policy options. Furthermore, shortly after Rio the Uruguay Round of GATT was completed very much to the disadvantage of many in the South. Today we have a world in which "globalization" or the liberalization of trade is taking place. Competition for markets is leading to more and more strain on the externalities that are environment and social costs; and more and more inequity. Nothing, it seems, changes—at least not when it comes to market failures.

### **The immediate aftermath**

This is not to say no one has tried. Take the Europeans as an example. Immediately after UNCED, at the Lisbon Summit, the European Council adopted an eight-point plan of action to follow it up. The major outputs included action on National Sustainable Development Strategies and "Round Tables," the Forest Principles, the Climate Plan and Biodiversity. The Community has ratified the Biodiversity and Climate Conventions, and it has been a major force behind the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. The Commission has also submitted annual progress reports to the new Commission on Sustainable Development (CEC, 1993a; CEC, 1994a; CEC, 1995). More importantly, the Environmental Council chose to call the Community's Fifth Environmental Action Programme, Towards Sustainability, as "point of departure for the implementation of Agenda 21 by the Community and the Member States" (CEC, 1993a). (The Programme had been prepared during the UNCED process and shares many of the same principles and objectives.)

Unfortunately, what the European Union has been unable to agree upon are the specifics. These include mechanisms for realizing the ECU3 billion aid pledge for Agenda 21 made at Rio. After the event, the Community and Member States struggled to decide how to meet its pledge. Questions arose, including what the money should be spent on, how the amount should be divided between the EC and the Member States, what proportion should be "new and additional resources" and over what period the money should be spent. All attempts to reach a consensus appear to have stopped and in its report on progress to this year's fifth anniversary meetings in New York the Commission avoids mention of the ECU3 billion pledge.

This is not surprising. The world has changed: while we have witnessed the recession in the OECD so too have we seen the emergence of a new class of "rich" emerging economies. We did not realize in 1992 just how poor the old USSR was (and is); nor did we realize the impact that the far right would have in the USA on their foreign policy. In 1992 South Africa was still a divided country and Rwanda still a jewel in the French aid program. Since then, all confidence in finding solutions to Africa's "crises" has gone. And the debt of the least well off continues to haunt them.

But one thing has not changed. The polarity of wealth (within and between nations) is still with us overall and getting worse. We still have a billion living in absolute poverty, over 30,000 children dying every day from malnutrition and water-borne diseases and so much else besides.

## **Resources . . . no more!**

It is little wonder, then, if you ask one of those making a living by speaking for the South, that you find great cynicism about the Rio process and just how little it achieved in terms of the North-South transfer debate. The promise for an extra ECU3 billion on the table from the EU soon became insignificant as the whole "aid" frame declined from some \$65 billion then to under \$52 billion today. All this will be the cause of much huffing and puffing in 1997 but were the expectations real in the first place? Sadly no!

For example the African group persuaded themselves at the time that a convention for deserts was the way to take part in the newly created Global Environment Facility. They were soon to learn otherwise. The new Convention for drylands is an excellent codification of best practice but it is unfinanced. Any idea of reaching the mythical 0.7% of GNP in the OECD for aid demanded by the development set is as out of the question now as it was then. Even the much-heralded additionality of the Global Environmental Facility has not been without problems in terms of its governance, purpose, and renewal.

An assessment on this broad level is complicated by the shift that is occurring in the international institutions themselves. Since 1992 the crisis in the UN has deepened. The USA has gone on a "rent strike" in that it became deeply in debt to the UN (and still is, although Clinton has made promises to Cofi Annan, the new Secretary General). Such budget as there is has been increasingly diverted from development toward peace-keeping. And attempts at UN reform to reduce waste have been thwarted. The policy is to squeeze until the (UN) "pips squeak." Thus any evaluation of how well the UN and its family of agencies have done in following up on the Earth Summit are complicated by the general anti-UN environment that has developed in the OECD and elsewhere. We must hope that the recent signs that things are now improving, or at least moving, are maintained. But morale in the UN is so low overall that one gets a strong feeling that no one really cares any more unless there is money on the table.

Since Rio, the UN interagency coordination for the environment (through the task force on the topic) has improved although the exact role of UNEP, UNDP and the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD) still seem a little confused. The process in the UNCSD also has been a limited success in so far as it has methodically followed up on Agenda 21 in terms of national reporting and coercion. But this progress has only really concerned the environment and environment ministers. The hoped-for integration of the environment into a system of "sustainable development" has not really happened. The economic powers still meet in the context of the Bretton Woods institutions and do not see the Commission, or perhaps even the UN, as important.

## **Local versus global**

After all of this one must conclude that Rio did very little to change the world at a global level toward a concerted style of development based around the environment: sustainable development if you will. But I would maintain that the Earth Summit was a watershed in terms of how we tackle such issues anyway. It was the event when many governments came at last to appreciate that there are no global solutions to be had to sort out many worldwide problems. The onus of proof was shifted away from the supranational to the national and even the local level.



Much of the world caught up with the idea of subsidiarity at Rio, namely the importance of placing responsibilities at the most local level of administration consistent with a result.

At Rio and shortly afterwards, the UN system also caught up with the idea that there is a limit to how much the North can pay up for a development agenda framed in New York and Geneva! Rio and the social summit at Copenhagen were a much-needed purge of the “internationalist” thinking of the 1960s and ’70s that had somehow survived to the ’90s. Thus the real place to assess the follow up to the Earth Summit is at the local level. That is where the specifics are to be found.

### **... and what do we measure?**

Two years after Rio, my institute (the IIED), was asked to examine the Swedish aid program against the Rio Declaration of Principles and Agenda 21. In order to break this task down we identified a series of themes as follows:

- integration of policies, particularly the integration of socioeconomic with environmental concerns
- capacities to deliver results
- governance to give frameworks
- vision and values to underpin the whole

The point of giving this list is not only to illustrate how very comprehensive the scope of Rio was but also to show the sort of factors that must go into an evaluation of progress. In many ways the Earth Summit gave us a new agenda for all development activities. It was a codification of what many thought important in the business of achieving a more durable existence for life on the planet. It had not been written down before by so many and with such consensus. And there has been some very impressive follow-up along these broad lines, particularly with local Agenda 21 processes and national round tables for sustainable development. There are some 60 countries with some kind of national follow-up forum; IIED has surveyed the OECD governments and, together with IUCN, drawn up a guide to all the strategy processes that are going on.<sup>1</sup> There is much that is positive to report. How far this can be directly attributed to the Rio process is arguable for there were many such processes in hand well before 1992. However, without doubt the international beauty contest that was Rio, institutionalized in the CSD, acted as a spur to progress.

### **Limited capacities**

The real constraint to progress comes back to the theme that ran all through the Rio process, namely “capacities.” There is a feeling at times that the whole system is locked into an enormous catch-22. More plans to raise capacities, no capacities to raise plans. Conventions to mobilize resources, no resources to mobilize conventions. And while a certain amount of planning is needed, all too often in the past five years the planning stage has been an excuse for

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<sup>1</sup>*Strategies for National Sustainable Development*, IUCN/IIED, published by Earthscan, ISBN 1-85383-193-X.

inaction. Too much planning and not enough doing!

Before we all leap to the international convention reflex again in respect of, say forests or water, or fish, we ought to have a clear idea of what will be done by way of a convention that is different and who will pay. International accords are a way of blurring sovereignty in the interest of a common good but they go nowhere if benefits foregone are not compensated for or if costs incurred cannot be met. They are also very expensive to negotiate, as the deserts convention illustrated.<sup>2</sup> If the benefits are not very clear from the outset why not rely on nation states and existing processes?

### **What next?**

The Rio process was not the complete waste of time that some cynics allege. It was a complex affair that will take years to see through. It is a part of a continuum: Stockholm, Brundtland, Rio, Rio +5 and so on . . . gradually as environmental “stress” impacts upon economies and the public, so things will change for the better. But are we keeping up with the trends in the other direction? Many would argue no.

There are many different ways to accelerate change so as to see more positive outcomes in the future. Much the most important are those at the national and the local levels. Thus the so-called “spirit of Rio” will best be maintained by encouraging the local and national responses that we already see. In this regard much more could be done to accelerate the sharing of good practice (in all sectors) to identify policies that work and to encourage processes that result in a clearer set of priorities for action and reform. Transparency and accountability are the preconditions for consensus dialogue around the priorities, and setting priorities saves money. As the recent case study of the paper industry by IIED illustrated billions are being spent in some OECD countries cleaning up emissions that do very little comparative harm whilst ignoring other more important sources.<sup>3</sup> Spending money that at the margin has very little effect is to waste money, no matter who pays (in this case the consumer). This means that those who advocate change must be challenged to join in a dialogue on the costs and benefits and not simply stand outside mobilizing public opinion via the media. More multi-stakeholder processes are needed with the resource to enable civil society to join in mobilization.

The UNCSD process, whereby all this national activity is reported upon, is insufficient. The UN does not tell the truth; it merely reports what governments ask it to report. Thus we still need an independent system of review and monitoring. The idea of an Amnesty International for the environment was nearly achieved by the Green Cross and the Earth Council. Sadly it did not happen. We need such a referee if we are to take half of what is written seriously. Most countries of the world still do not have a “civil” sector that is capable of exposing those who are economical with the truth. The need for independent verification of environment and development trends is still evident. If UNEP could begin to facilitate this

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<sup>2</sup>*Deserts in Development and Cooperation*, Peter Schipuller, DSE no 3/1996, ISSN 0721-2178.

<sup>3</sup>For example, in the USA, the EPA is busy removing methanol emissions from the paper industry stacks. This will cost an estimated US\$10 billion and more. Why? No one suffers from methanol emissions as far as I know. IIED/WBCSD “Towards a Sustainable Paper,” ISBN 1 899825 40 1.

process so much the better, but an alliance of NGOs working with a rejuvenated UNEP would be more likely to succeed.

At an international level the reform of the UN is the priority. There are any number of reports and commissions and initiatives to this effect. But those in the Security Council and those that are powerful within the Bretton Woods institutions have a special role to play. The follow-up to the development/environment/social agenda-setting conferences of the last decade provide the priority. As we approach the millennium surely there is a real opportunity for the G7 and a wider circle to take the initiative. We need a better process for UN reform than death by a thousand cuts and the G7 is in a position to start it. Rio+5 is a chance to start. In 1995 the Commission on Global Governance published their report "Our Global Neighbourhood."<sup>4</sup> This soon disappeared without trace but it did contain some very thoughtful ideas on UN reform. For example, the abolition of ECOSOC, the creation of a new economic security council, transforming the trusteeship council into an organ for the global commons and much more. One important gap to fill is the need for strong countervailing institutions to the economic and trade organizations (the Bretton Woods family). Trade liberalization and structural adjustment are going to go very wrong without a balance for social, environmental, and equity issues. The EU works (just) because it has such checks and balances. Many countries are working out the needed sense of balance too. But at an international level all we have are weak and nearly bankrupt agencies. In the case of UNEP hope of reform is all but gone. Only governments can stop the rot.

We should see far greater attention to positive cooperation to reform our lending and donor institutions toward a common agenda for "sustainability." Redefining the aid agenda to reach those that the market does not reach, toward building capacities in civil society and acting as an investor in global security is a real policy challenge to all involved.

So much is down to leadership. Politicians and senior officials come and go but we rarely use their experience wisely in the international system. There is a class of 1992–5 that is very experienced and that has shown leadership in the follow-up to Rio. It would be good if the Asahi Glass Foundation could act as host to some of them and work out a way of forming a useful "club" to carry forward their example to others. One is not suggesting an interfering way (to those in power now and in the future) but as a resource for an increasingly difficult world that our children face.

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<sup>4</sup>Our Global Neighbourhood, published by Oxford University Press

## Lecture

# IIED's Post-Earth-Summit Strategy

**Richard Sandbrook, Executive Director, IIED**

**Lloyd Timberlake, IIED**

**SANDBROOK:** We have decided to deliver this talk together today. Having come this great distance, it seems to me we shouldn't waste resources, and therefore we should have a collaborative venture. I'd like to begin by saying what a great honor and a great privilege it is for both of us to be here. We have, as you realize, a language problem, because we sadly don't speak the language of the majority of the audience. And so we've tried hard to liaise with the interpreters to ensure that you understand what we're saying. And I'd just like to take this opportunity to very particularly thank the Asahi Glass Foundation for having made us the recipient of its first award. And I'd like to express that on behalf of my colleagues in London, as well.

Generally, the world took a pretty negative view to what went on at the UN conference in Rio this summer. Most said that the so-called Earth Summit was a failure because it failed to reach firm agreement with targets for the protection of the atmosphere, for the world's forests, and for biodiversity. IIED does not subscribe to the view that it was overall a failure, or at least not fully. For us, the preparations and the event itself were full of achievements. A great number of diplomats and government officials in virtually all of the world's nations spent over two years learning the realities of the globe's environment and development challenges. Indeed, I've been heard to call Rio the greatest open university course for diplomats that we could possibly have devised. Heads of state had to develop and express an informed opinion before they took to the podium in Rio. And many of the achievements have much to offer that is both hopeful and positive, provided we now follow through.

In giving this lecture on the occasion of the first Blue Planet award, Lloyd and I want to concentrate on five themes that were well covered in Rio and that now need to be followed up. First is the need for information and education to the public. Second is the need to think and reform our economics so that it takes better account of the environment, most particularly so that there are incentives for the long run within the economic framework. Third is the need to involve the private sector much more deliberately in delivering solutions to our problems. Fourth is the whole question of how we, in the future, invest in human capacities and human abilities to cope. And finally, we will be saying something about the community-driven solutions that my institute has spent so much time working with. In fact, all of these themes are drawn from our experience in recent years and relate to issues on which we will continue to be working. And this is a wonderful opportunity to share them with you.

But first, let's cast our minds back 20 years, 20 years of environment development activities. Now there's been a remarkable shift in attitudes since the first conference on environment in 1972. In the 1970s, the environment was not regarded as an important issue by any econo-

mists, by business leaders, international diplomats, or by many politicians. Many in the industrialized world saw environmental issues only in terms of value issues, or quality-of-life issues. But to many, they are not quality-of-life issues, but life-and-death issues.

Now events have changed thinking, and for example I believe the tragedy of Minamata here in Japan helped to show the Japanese people and the business leaders in Japan that environment can indeed be a life-and-death issue, and this played a role in helping Japan's early start to successfully managing its domestic environment. But education has also been key. In Stockholm, the issue of development, or progress for the poorest nations in this particular case, was hardly mentioned. The richest nations were concerned with pollution and with the creation of international standards to abate it—the famous “level playing field.” Poorer nations wanted to advance their own development, almost at any price, including that of pollution. And it's ironic, also, to remember that the communist countries did not come to the first conference in Stockholm on the environment. They refused to attend on the issue of whether or not we recognized East Germany. But they sent messages to say that they didn't have pollution problems in the communist world, anyway.

Now much has changed. First, the key pollution issues nowadays are not regarded as end-of-pipe problems, which can be solved only by national laws. They're now regarded as global issues, and they are global: acid rain, global warming, ozone depletion. And these are problems that can only be tackled by international cooperation of a type and complexity we've never attempted before.

Second on the environmental front, lines have moved from pollution in the urban North to issues of resource management in the rural South. We have to, and in fact I believe we have come to recognize that the pollution of poverty is alongside the offense of overconsumption. But the most important change has been the change of mindset. The IIED was founded a little more than 20 years ago by a woman who was about 15 years ahead of her time. Barbara Ward realized at the time in Stockholm, before anybody else, that it was useless to worry about the environment when millions of people lived in such deep poverty that they must destroy their very environment in order to survive. And it is pointless to strive for progress and development if that progress destroys the environment, which is the foundation of all progress.

Now for years IIED, and I must confess many others, have labored, often apparently in vain, to change this mindset; to persuade the world that the concern for the environment and a concern for development are and must be inseparable. But from the mid-1980s onward, and really consecrated at Rio, much of the world has at last come around to that way of thinking.

**TIMBERLAKE:** Thus, IIED was very active in the work of the World Commission for Environment and Development, the so-called Brundtland Commission, which completed its work here in Tokyo five years ago. The commission's final report, which IIED staff helped to write, explained and championed the concept of sustainable development, which it defined as forms of progress which meet the needs of today, while not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept gives environmental resources their rational and rightful place in human activities. It has also had the effect of drawing into the environment and development debate the economists, the lawyers, the business people, and the

politicians who had previously remained uninterested.

It was the Brundtland Commission which in fact called for the holding of an earth summit. It was also the Brundtland Commission which noted that one cannot talk about sustainable development or environmental management without talking about economic systems, trade, debt, democracy, security issues, and population. All of these issues were either ignored or were fudged at the Earth Summit in Rio, proving that we're still a long way from a mature and realistic approach to sustainable development. We're now faced with the problems of defining the roles of the global environment facility and with the newly formed sustainable development commission. It is far too soon to judge the worth of either.

But despite its shortcomings, Rio was a success in that it was the first major conference to bring together both the environment and development agendas. One speaker argued that in the term "environment and development" it's not the word "environment" that is most important, nor is it the word "development" which is most important. But it's the small word "and" which is the most important in that expression. The summit's sheer scale and complexity was unprecedented and, as such, left most people very bemused. In bringing together the two agendas on such a scale was a great and a positive achievement, much of which was due to efforts of the nongovernmental community. We never thought it was going to be easy.

Also, let us not forget that people—common people, particularly if they are poor people—have always known that their livelihoods ultimately come from nature. But now there's a widespread consensus on the same point among governments, corporations, diplomats, and many diverse organizations. The agenda of the poor is rapidly becoming everyone's agenda, our own agenda. We have to protect and in many cases restore natural stocks and systems if we are to survive economically in the long run. We should not minimize this new widespread agreement and understanding, nor should we take it for granted. It must be nurtured with a continuing program of public information and education. But to have got this far is progress indeed.

**SANDBROOK:** Now a major challenge that remains, of course, is to integrate sound environmental practice with economic planning in order to achieve this notional thing called sustainable development, at least cost and for the greatest number. That process was only just begun in Rio. The conference set out a vast and complex agenda, a shopping list if you like, for achieving the goal of sustainability, and they called it Agenda 21. Now let me assure you, for those who don't know the UN, Agenda 21 is not a particularly exciting read. But it can be called a comprehensive document. Never before has the UN attempted to put all of the issues together in the way that has been achieved in Agenda 21. Nor has it managed to do it with the consent of so many diverse interests and cultures. However, Agenda 21 does not list or set priorities. It lists all the things we should do, but it does not put them in any sense of order or time sequence.

Now, in order to organize priorities—and we have to if the entire UN and international system is not to collapse under the burden of this shopping list—we have to get involved in the business of politics. But we also believe strongly that politicians need rigorous economic analysis alongside political process. What are the costs and benefits of various courses of

action? How are we to translate the many environmental and developmental priorities into activities with priority for the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the communities, and so on? How are we going to move the rhetoric to action?

The challenge is to integrate economics and the natural applied sciences in order to cost and set priorities. And most particularly, to design economic incentives. Economics must be involved, as regulations, we know, are not enough. And surely economics must be involved in order that we can set the priorities sensibly. How foolish it is at the moment to spend millions of dollars in the industrial world to slightly decrease the nitrate concentrations in our drinking water, while millions more could be saved in the Third World for a mere dollar or two a year. We have to bring some order to all of this, and we need research and analytical tools to help provide it. And one of those tools is environmental economics, which IIED has had such a hand in developing. It provides us with a means of organizing economic process around the very essence of the problem, that of protecting and restoring natural capital.

**TIMBERLAKE:** Business and industry are crucial in this transformation. But the very mention of business and industry in respect to the environment and development tends to provoke negative reactions. So many environmental organizations have invested heavily in opposing the multinational corporations, in blocking much of what they do, and in accusing them of being the main cause for all of our problems. We in IIED have had a very different experience. In the run-up to the Earth Summit in Rio, IIED worked closely with the Business Council for Sustainable Development, a group of 48 international business leaders, chief executive officers (CEOs), chairmen and chairwomen of boards of companies. Several of these were leaders of large Japanese firms. And all worked to offer a business perspective on environment and development issues. We helped them to prepare their 350-page report, called *Changing Course*, which is now available in Japanese as well as six other languages.

At their first meeting, these business leaders were almost completely overwhelmed by the complexity and the scientific and economic uncertainty of saying anything intelligent about the environment. One suggested that they all give up writing a report and simply issue a call for more research. But as they debated, they realized that sustainable development has its own inexorable logic, even for and perhaps especially for business. They were all capitalists, and all believed in open competition of the marketplace as the best way to meet the needs of people and to improve technology. But they also realized, and they wrote strongly in their report, that capitalism and markets will ultimately fail unless the system can be made to reflect the environmental truth, as well as the economic truth.

You may remember that right before the Earth Summit U.S. President George Bush made a speech to the nation pledging not to go to Rio and sign any agreements that would hurt U.S. business competitiveness. At about this time, the U.S. members of the Business Council met with Bush at the White House and presented him with a copy of the book. And they also told him frankly that they had come to a conclusion that was precisely the opposite of his own. They said they felt that those companies and those countries which are not environmentally clean and efficient are the ones which will suffer the loss of competitiveness. And they offered President Bush several reasons for this opinion. First, they noted customers are demanding

cleaner products. Banks are more willing to lend to companies that prevent pollution rather than pay much larger amounts for clean-up later on. Insurance companies are more amenable to covering clean companies. Employees, especially the bright young employees, prefer to work for environmentally responsible corporations. Environmental regulations are getting ever more stringent, and new economic instruments such as taxes, charges, tradable permits, or rewarding will continue to reward the cleanest companies. All of these trends, which will accelerate as science offers more evidence of environmental damage, mean that investments in eco-efficiency will help rather than hurt corporate profitability. It is the eco-efficient companies that will emerge more competitive as these trends take hold.

This is also true of eco-efficient nations. Professor Michael Porter at Harvard Business School reported after a global study that it was the nation with the most rigorous environmental standards at home which often led in the exports of the very products affected by those standards. He mentioned the success of Germany and of Japan, and also the success of the chemicals, plastics, and the paint industries in the United States. Japan historically has suffered from a deficiency of raw materials. And as the 20th century draws to a close and industry tries to move from a linear throughput system toward a more circular recycling system, as in the natural world, then it becomes obvious that this deficiency of natural resources was in part a blessing in disguise. Japan, to use the language of the Business Council, is more eco-efficient than many of its rivals. It uses less energy, less water, less resources in general in its production processes. This not only creates products which are highly competitive, but it also has created a profitable line of efficient production equipment, which the rest of the world will need more and more.

I know that the private sector—business and industry—is only in the first fumbling stages of its progress toward sustainability. But I also know that the operations of business and industry will determine more than any other sector the conditions of our common global future. Governments and not-for-profit organizations such as our own do not deliver the goods and services needed for the relief of poverty and the provision of basic needs. Who supplies water? The private sector. Who supplies food? The private sector. Who builds houses? Business and industry. The entrepreneur has a vital role to play in providing the needs expressed so coherently in Agenda 21. It is time that many more cooperated with business and industry.

But to move this forward, particularly in the developing world, we need a series of intermediaries so that the cut and thrust of the market can be meshed with realities of both the urban and the rural poor. Foundations sponsored by the corporate giants are a start. Just look at their record worldwide, including that of the Asahi Glass Foundation, which brings us here today. Another step is to ensure that the large companies help the medium and small to develop and use low-impact and environmentally efficient technologies. Success in this challenge of technology transfer, or technology cooperation, will involve new sorts of partnerships between business and government. The whole process of development assistance or aid needs to be turned into sustainable development assistance. We must stop dumping unwanted grain and unwanted technologies upon the poorer nations, and instead help business transfer more eco-efficient technology and to form a partnership with communities building their own development.



**SANDBROOK:** Corporate leadership is needed to take on these issues. And we also of course need more corporate involvement in community problems. In the past, the corporate sector has demonstrated they can do this, particularly with respect to education and certain social needs. I believe it is now the turn of the environment and development agenda to get the cooperation of the business community. The Rio conference embraced the market approach, and in return the leaders of the market approach must embrace the needs of the environment and the poor.

Two statistics taken together offer the greatest challenge to sustainability. The first is that 20% of the planet's population use 80% of the planet's resources, leaving the poorer 80% of the people to make do with a mere fifth of the resource base. Now add to that fact the fact that over 90% of all future population growth is suggested to be taking place in the poorer economies, and you can see the problem. Obviously, for business to play a positive role in our common future it must develop ways of turning the needs of the poorest into markets in order to meet those needs, and it must rely less and less on creating artificial needs for luxury products through advertising and the like among the shrinking proportion of the world's population that is in the North. This makes good development sense and good business sense. We have to start using the business sector to solve the development problem.

Now having talked of the capabilities of business leaders, I want to widen the topic to human capacities in general. So often, large parts of the world simply lack the necessary human skills and the institutions and the organizations required to do the job. The Rio summit recognized that we need to build capacities, human capacities, and this implies skill and training transfer. It takes time to build up the capacities of organizations and managements. In other words, we're in for a long haul. Our idea itself has taken 20 years to get where it's got to, and we have still a long way to go.

Now sadly, worldwide we see far too little investment in building human capital, far more diverted to laying down concrete and building physical capital. Rio makes some very optimistic assumptions about our collective ability to manage the world's natural resource base, yet most government administrations are very, very weak and poor at setting and sticking to the sort of long-term policies needed to manage those resources. This is not only true for poorer nations, where most people's lives are directly related to the natural resource stock, but it is also true of the rich nations. The United States, with its wealth of management skills, is finding it difficult to effectively manage its water and its timber. The United Kingdom, a small and crowded island which I come from, still gets rid of 80% of its waste by ill-planned land use for reasons that are quite beyond me. My own government still declines to invest in public transport systems, so that business in the city becomes less and less possible as London comes to a grinding halt daily. So in other words, both rich and poor have much to learn in coping for the long-term future in the planning sense.

Cities, particularly in the South, are expanding with little guidance or planning at all. The directions of growth are chosen mainly by the poorest people when they choose the illegal and dangerous bits of ground on which to site their shanties. And despite this obvious truth, the national governments are loathe to provide city governments with the funds they need to develop. Local government is a really underinvested sector everywhere. And governments

which claim to be encouraging economic development in the countryside still of course practice policies which encourage people to move from the country to the city by assuring the best education, health care, and job opportunities there, and of course subsidies and all manner of other goods and services.

Our economic systems expand and accelerate haphazardly, consuming natural resources and pushing out pollutants. Again, too few are involved in energy and water management, in recycling resources, in conserving of lands. The whole problem needs to be addressed. How do we manage these economies better? One has to marvel at the skill and the persistence of the poor, who cope with all the uncertainty and all the chaos that makes up their everyday lives. I believe as things get worse mostly due to population increases and the added environmental stress that will bring, the poor will be less and less able to cope. And we should recognize that now. Unless we improve management capacities to put all the fine ideas of Rio into practice, we're merely indulging in cheap talk.

For example, the national sustainable development plans called for in Rio by all the governments demand a very high level of informed and integrated planning techniques. We have to invest now in exactly those techniques if we're going to bring the ideas of Rio into reality and make them available in application. So human capacity building is another of the priorities of IIED.

**TIMBERLAKE:** We'd like to turn now to those at the bottom of the international ladder, the very poor and the rural and urban communities in which they live. IIED believes in a community-driven bottom-up development, which is enabled and empowered by top-down processes and frameworks. It is where we now do more than 50% of our work in terms of staff time. Our efforts in this area come under the heading of primary environmental care, or PEC. PEC is based on three very simple concepts: empowering communities, meeting basic needs, and safeguarding the environment. The Rio conference and Agenda 21 had much to say on all three items and on the importance of community-driven approaches in general. This was a triumph for the advocates of this approach.

Yet how many countries, really, enable and empower their citizens to look after themselves? How many can claim to be decentralizing government, establishing equitable land-holdings, establishing open and participatory methods of planning, and improving the lot of women? And how many can rightly claim to be giving incentives to the poor over the longer term? The Bruntland Commission concluded that the first prerequisite for development was, and I quote, "a political system based on effective citizenship participation in decision-making." This participation must exist at the national level, at the village level, and at various levels in between. The commission also declared that people, individuals, and people's groups had a right to participate in decisions, a right to information about their environments, and a right to redress in cases of environmental damage not of their own doing. The reason for these rights have nothing to do with human rights, but are practical. For it's the poorest people—which are the majority in most developing countries—who are the real environmental decision-makers. It is they who decide each day which tree to cut, how many sheep to graze in a given field, or in cities, how to dispose of the family's waste.

IIED has had much experience in the developing world at this level. We've created systems of empowering the poor by giving them knowledge of their environment and their environmental resource base, and then by working with them to better manage those resources. We've made this approach more popular among the big aid agencies of the industrialized nations, for we can actually demonstrate the positive results of empowering the poor. Deserts can be turned into productive land, trees and forests regenerated, barren land made productive, water and housing supplied. How is all this done? By giving people the right to organize, by giving them a stake in their future and rewards for their efforts, and by providing them with a knowledge of their environment.

It all sounds simple and straightforward, but making it happen takes persistence and commitment and an attitude of mind that is centered on the belief in people and their culture. And I should add that this approach is also the linchpin of any entrepreneurial society.

**SANDBROOK:** Now I want to close with one perhaps slightly philosophical thought about this concept of sustainable development. We in IIED have been focusing in the past on the practical and pragmatic reasons why governments, why industry and business, and ordinary people should pursue this goal. But the concept has one very serious flaw, and that lies in the fact that ultimately it is based on our concern for future generations and for our children and their children. Indeed, it is also based on concern for the needs of the present, but it's basically about the future. Let's be frank: we in the industrial world have managed to get along quite happily in a world in which a billion people live in abject poverty. Their plight doesn't really affect us very much, and it certainly doesn't seem to affect our economic decisions or our political decisions very much.

Can we show a more serious practical concerns for the needs of future generations? I wonder. We have no institutions championing the needs of future generations, or working for intergenerational equity, a concept which transfers resources from one to the next. Our most sophisticated democratic governments are guided by the decisions of those who vote today, not of those who will be voting in the next century. We have businesses, in fact our entire economic system follows the lead of the money market and the consumers who live today, not those yet to be born. So isn't it all rather idealistic to think that we can move to suddenly consider intergenerational questions?

Perhaps the sort of revolution required is actually impossible. That could be. But there have in the past been huge major changes which were seen to be impossible before. And they were not, of course, led by governments, and they were not really led by the very poor or the dispossessed. These changes were usually led by well-informed people, reasonably well off, working in small groups creating a fuss. And they usually accomplished what they accomplished in the face of all expert advice. Accepted wisdom some while back was that in slave-owning regions of the world, the abolition of slavery would completely ruin the market system. Later, the same was said of child labor: if you destroy child labor, you will ruin our economic system. And of course there were plenty who resisted anything being done in the industrialized world to look after the most vulnerable.

Today, we're often told, occasionally by people who are referred to as world leaders,

that we cannot possibly move to more equitable patterns of development, patterns which respect environmental and human realities, without destroying our own Northern economies. We have to wait before we can start looking after the Third World, wait for better times. In fact, I would put it all very differently. Global security will only be achieved and maintained when we do look after the divisions which currently face us in terms of equity. A world of 10 billion people will not be stable if it is split between the haves and have nots, between those who have a voice and those who do not, between green fields on the one hand and deserts on the other. We must start to build now a new concept of global security. Otherwise, we will not achieve sustainable development.

**TIMBERLAKE:** The final verdict on the Earth Summit has yet to be given. We cannot say it was a success, we cannot say it was a failure. But we do know it was a start in the right direction. We believe firmly that the future will be brighter if the achievements of Rio can be acted upon positively. IIED intends to be a part of that future by concentrating on five key points. We want to help, and I really mean to help, to inform and educate the public; to reform economics to take better account of the environment, and to provide incentives for moving in the right direction; to involve the private sector, business and industry, in delivering solutions; to invest in human capacities; and to reinforce community-driven solutions. If governments, NGOs, and academics work for policies in this direction, we will see answers to the problems of poverty and the protection of the planet within our own lifetimes. If we do not work with commitment in these directions, we will see an insecure, introverted, protectionist, and besieged world of contrasted rich and poor. We owe our children better than this. We have a duty to them and to their children. As Barbara Ward was fond of saying, we also have a duty to hope.

I cannot close without echoing our thanks to all of you for coming to listen to us today, and to the Asahi Glass Foundation for making the award and this occasion possible. Thank you very much.

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