

Joint Communiqué of Three Concerned Leaders*

Nineteen years ago, on this day of the calendar, delegates from all over the world gathered here in Stockholm for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. A few years before, the people of this planet had seen the first pictures taken from space of our one and single common home, 'small and blue and beautiful'. No wonder that the Conference theme became 'Only One Earth'.

The results of the 1972 Conference were of historic importance. The Stockholm Declaration laid down principles for the responsibilities of States which have never been challenged. The environment was firmly placed on the international agenda and its relationship to development acknowledged. The United Nations Environment Programme was created. Important conventions were signed in the follow-up to the Conference. A new awareness of the fragility of the world's ecological system began to influence minds and policies.

World Changes During the Latest Twenty Years

The world today is very different from that of 1972. Tremendous political and economic changes have taken place. But the impact of the Stockholm Conference has been felt throughout the period; environmental damage at the local and regional levels has been checked in many parts of the world, where progress, wealth, and advanced technologies, allowed countries to take effective action. Nevertheless, in other parts of the same world, most countries continued to face enormous economic and social problems — thus being unable to give the environment, in spite of increasing public awareness, the priority it might have otherwise deserved.

All these and many other efforts cannot conceal the fact that the planet's future is still at risk. Over the last decade, new and global threats have been perceived and others have become more acute — such as ozone-layer depletion, climate change, pollution of the oceans on a global scale, reduction of biological diversity, and degradation of land resources. The realization of those problems, whose consequences go far beyond national boundaries, leads to the realization of a sense of common responsibility towards the conservation of the planet's environment. The international community has to act as one — to tackle those problems in all their interrelated aspects — if we are to keep alive the hope of a better environment for the generations to come.

Development Coupled to Environment

Furthermore, we have begun to understand better that global environmental action requires global development action. Poverty is in itself both a cause and a consequence of environmental deterioration. The gravity of the detrimental effects of this vicious circle is particularly evident in the fast-growing cities of the 'developing' world, in which living conditions have been continuously deteriorating, sometimes to levels well below the minimum requirements of human dignity and surely of

health. Individual responsibility for the environment, which is the basis for effective action, cannot be expected from people who see no hope of a better life. Solidarity at the international and national levels is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Following the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, all these strands came together in the resolution by the UN General Assembly to convene the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that Brazil will host in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. If the Stockholm Conference consolidated the inclusion of the environment in the international agenda, the Rio de Janeiro Conference is to be seen as a bridge between global environmental concerns, the many different initiatives already under way to face them, and a joint and concerted action by the whole international community — aimed at the promotion of new and environmentally sound models of economic development.

The unique amplitude and comprehensiveness of the agenda set forth for the 1992 Conference stand as a signal of the high hopes of the whole international community.

Passing the Torch

As the torch is now being passed — from Stockholm to Rio de Janeiro, from the Baltic to the Atlantic, and from North to South — Sweden and Brazil are united in a joint commitment to the cause of environment and development. The President of Brazil and the Prime Minister of Sweden, together with the Secretary-General of the Conference, solemnly pledge to spare no effort to make the Conference a success, and to cooperate closely in order to achieve decisions on concrete and effective action in Rio de Janeiro.

The Rio Conference is firmly placed in the perspective of the 21st Century. On this World Environment Day 1991 we look towards next year's great Conference as the dawn of a new era of international cooperation — a true global partnership for environment and development. *The Future of Our Only One Earth is In Our Human Hands.*

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* Issued in Stockholm, Sweden, on the occasion of the celebration there of World Environment Day, 5 June 1991 — see also the substance of the speech of the President of Brazil, entitled 'Passing of the Torch', to be published in our next issue. — Ed.