



NORTH/SOUTH CONFERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 25-29 MAY 1998

The North/South Conference for Sustainable Development: "Solidarity for the Future" will take place at the Federal Parliament Building in Berne, Switzerland from 25-29 May 1998. The conference, organized by the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations (composed of Swissaid, the Catholic Lenten Fund, Bread for All, Helvetas and Caritas), is expected to gather more than 900 participants, including political and economic leaders and representatives from civil society and the scientific community.

The conference is designed to address aspects of political, economic and social change that will shape North/South relations in the 21st century. It will give broad public exposure to the concerns of the South with respect to solidarity and sustainable development, formulate demands for sound future development and examine them from the perspectives of the North and the South, leading to conclusions that are relevant to Switzerland. A number of prominent personalities will address the conference, including Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania, Nafis Sadik, Director of the United Nations Population Fund, and José Ramos Horta, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The conference will be organized around topics addressed in the "North/South Manifesto for Sustainable Development," published by the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations (see below). On Monday, 25 May, participants will consider: Switzerland's Global Role; on Tuesday, 26 May, the Global Workplace versus the Swiss Workplace; on Wednesday, 27 May, Implementing the Aims of the Rio Earth Summit; on Thursday, 28 May, A Closer Look at Solidarity; and on Friday, 29 May, Forward to 2050.

Participants will hear keynote speeches on these topics each day, followed by open discussion, and, from Tuesday through Friday, will take part in a number of simultaneous workshops. Panel discussions will be undertaken on these topics from Monday to Thursday. The final day of the conference will be devoted to youth and will be jointly organized by the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations and the Swiss Coalition of Youth Organisations. Approximately 150 young people will come together in "Future Workshops" to develop common visions of a world characterized by sustainability and solidarity. In addition, special cultural events will be offered each evening. On the final two days of the conference, a North/South Market for Sustainable Development will be held, featuring information, products, entertainment and delicacies from many parts of the world.

NORTH/SOUTH MANIFESTO FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The North/South Manifesto for Sustainable Development is the foundation of the North/South Campaign for Sustainable Development. The Campaign consists of six elements, three aimed at increasing Parliamentary awareness -- letter-writing campaigns, seminars, and trips with Members of Parliament to Swiss development cooperation projects in the South -- and three geared toward raising public awareness -- the North/South Conference for Sustainable Development, a petition to establish the Foundation for Solidarity, and the North/South Manifesto for Sustainable Development. The Manifesto was produced by the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations in late 1996 and was finalized at a workshop with partners from the South in January 1997. Following is a brief summary of the Manifesto.

Progress and Shortcomings in Recent Decades: The Manifesto outlines progress in development in the South but also notes negative trends, such as continued poverty, the widening gap between rich and poor, habitat loss and marginalization of low-income groups and poor countries. It emphasizes the need for a radical change in the way people live and do business, especially in the North and thus also in Switzerland. Both the North and the South must take decisive steps towards more equitable and sustainable development.

A Plea for Sustainable Development: The Manifesto states that people everywhere are entitled to a life with dignity: to prosperity, fundamental political liberties, education, cultural diversity and an intact environment. These basic rights must also be ensured for future generations. Development must not be equated with economic growth; sustainable development is an integral process in which ecological, social and cultural dimensions are just as important as the economic dimension. The central focus must be on human beings, not competition and the marketplace; civil society must be the driving force as well as the beneficiary of sustainable development. North/South relations should be governed by a new set of ethical principles that extend far beyond those of the marketplace. The only firm foundation for development efforts is the principle of "caring and sharing."

A Coordinated Effort: The Manifesto calls on all actors in government, trade and industry and civil society to cooperate to fulfill this vision of sustainable development. Because this vision concerns the North as well as the South, representatives from Africa, Asia and Latin America also participated in drawing up the Manifesto. It contains 21 North-South guidelines that are intended to indicate the direction Switzerland should take in the 21st century.

21 GUIDELINES FOR SWITZERLAND'S ROLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Government Policy: Focusing Policy on the South: Swiss foreign policy must be concerned with equity for the South, going beyond the boundaries of development cooperation to deal with the structural causes of poverty. The Manifesto calls on:

1) government and administration to create a proper framework for achieving sustainable development, such as by initiating ecological tax reform to levy taxes on energy rather than employment;

2) Switzerland to align its foreign economic policy with the declared aims of its foreign policy, by, *inter alia*, ceasing to promote bilateral trade with countries where violations of human rights occur and promoting uniform global social and ecological standards for multinational corporations;

3) Switzerland to pursue an active foreign policy that gives priority to a North/South commitment to sustainable development, by showing steadfast commitment to a policy that promotes peace and justice to prevent conflict and to combat exploitation and lack of good governance;

4) Switzerland to enter into binding partnerships with the South, such as by opening up the Swiss market to imports of both raw and processed agricultural products; and

5) Switzerland to actively participate in the search for global solutions (global governance) by demonstrating commitment to global terms of trade that stipulate both the rights and the obligations of multinational corporations towards society and the environment.

Trade and Industry: Fulfilling Social Responsibilities: The private sector is assuming ever-increasing importance and influence as public-sector involvement declines, markets are liberalized and businesses go global. At the same time, companies are showing a growing responsibility towards society and the environment. Businesses must perceive their responsibilities as comprehensively as citizens perceive the rights and duties of citizenship. What is required now is to bring business interests into line with national and global political demands. The Manifesto calls on Swiss trade and industry to:

6) pursue business activities in an environmentally friendly manner, by, *inter alia*, applying the "polluter pays" principle in pricing policies and systematically incorporating ecological considerations in research and development and in processes of production and disposal;

7) provide sufficient jobs, such as by making current paid and unpaid jobs more available and more equitably distributed between men and women, by introducing new work patterns and part-time jobs and supporting the concept of a lower rate of taxation on employment and a higher rate on capital and energy;

8) desist from engaging in economically, socially, politically and ecologically destabilizing practices, i.e. by abstaining from making capital investments in speculative, destabilizing transactions and giving preference to ecologically sound financial investments;

9) gear business activities more pointedly to the needs of the poorer developing countries, regions and population groups, such as by accepting more imports from the South that generate jobs and earnings locally and expanding research capacities in the South; and

10) act in the interests of society, including accepting a level of taxation that allows the state to exercise the functions which have been democratically delegated to it (education, social and environ-

mental policy, public health, etc.) and pursuing an open information policy and detailed, transparent accountability for all multinational corporations.

Civil Society: Challenging Those with Power: Actors in civil society can be an independent third force alongside industry and government in actively helping to combat economic marginalization, social discrimination, loss of political self-determination and ecological degradation. The Manifesto affirms its commitment to:

11) strengthening civil society as an independent third force, including cooperating with partners committed to empowering the poor or influencing the framework of conditions affecting the poor;

12) participation of all members of civil society as a basic principle, i.e. by supporting grassroots movements in the South that oppose and offer alternatives to totalitarian regimes and calling for the participation of private organizations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other multilateral institutions;

13) giving alternative social models a chance, by, *inter alia*, fostering research partnerships between North and South that address sustainable development issues outside the mainstream;

14) expanding development-related information and educational activities, such as by getting private organizations to invest in information, education and development activities; and

15) establishing appropriate new coalitions between actors in civil society and their counterparts in Switzerland and abroad, by collaborating with business, politics, universities and consumer organizations and with grassroots initiatives in the South.

Individuals: Shaping the Future Together: The Manifesto emphasizes that each individual can contribute to putting the North and the South on the path to sustainable development. It calls on individuals to:

16) treat everyone with respect, regardless of their sex, origin, skin color or religion;

17) strive for a more socially and ecologically balanced way of life;

18) give preference to sustainable production and fair trade;

19) actively participate in community service; and

20) exercise political rights in favor of sustainable development.

Learning Together - Surviving Together: By changing course towards sustainable development, the way for a new social contract is being paved. The Manifesto calls upon all actors in the North and the South to share power, pay attention to the positive aspects of other societies and learn from one another, in order to give sustainable development a chance and give all people, including present and future generations, a chance to live with dignity. It calls on all actors to:

21) seek to learn from one another, the North from the South, the South from the North.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Conference will open in the Federal Parliament Building at 13:30 with opening remarks by Conference Chair Werner Külling, Executive Director of Helvetas and President of the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations, as well as Flavio Cotti, President of the Swiss Confederation and Foreign Minister of Switzerland, Pallo Jordan, Minister for Environment and Tourism of South Africa, and Nafis Sadik, Director of the United Nations Population Fund.

PANEL DISCUSSION: A panel discussion, on "What Direction Should Swiss Foreign Policy Take," will be conducted from 16:15-18:00.