



## **SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAS: 29-30 MARCH 2001**

The first Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Americas convened from 29-30 March 2001 in Montreal, Canada. Sponsored by Environment Canada, the two-day meeting brought together environment ministers from 34 nations of the Americas with democratically elected governments and more than 100 other representatives from governments, international organizations and United Nations agencies. The meeting provided a forum for debate among the ministers of environment in order to develop key messages to be forwarded to the Third Summit of the Americas, which will convene from 20-22 April 2001 in Quebec City, Canada.

The meeting was structured according to three key themes:

- the challenge of environmental management in a changing hemisphere – the need for innovation;
- environment and health – understanding the linkages; and
- conservation of biodiversity in healthy ecosystems.

The meeting resulted in the adoption of a Ministerial Communiqué, which will be forwarded to the Third Summit of the Americas.

*Editors Note: As a matter of policy, Sustainable Developments does not directly attribute statements made by governments in closed discussions when requested to do so. In a few instances, this report refers to governments that provide examples of concrete steps taken toward addressing environmental concerns discussed at this meeting.*

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS**

Cooperation in the Americas dates back to the establishment of the International Union of American Republics in 1890. In 1910, this organization became the Pan American Union and, in 1948, took its present form as the Organization of American States (OAS). At present, all 35 countries of the Americas have ratified the OAS charter and are members.

**FIRST SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS:** The First Summit of the Americas was held in Miami in 1994 and marked a new stage in cooperation in the hemisphere. Governments reaffirmed the role of the OAS in strengthening democratic values and institutions, and established a range of new roles and priorities for the organization. The Summit covered a range of topics, including strengthening democracy, human rights, cultural values, free trade, sustainable energy use, biodiversity and pollution prevention, and resulted in a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action signed by all 34 heads of state in attendance. One of the most important initiatives to emerge from the Miami Summit was agreement to work towards creating a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). It was decided that negotiations for a FTAA should conclude no later than the year 2005.

### **SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

In 1996, a Summit on Sustainable Development was convened in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. The objectives of the Summit were to establish a common vision for the future according to the concept of sustainable development and to ratify the principles subscribed to at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The Summit produced the Santa Cruz Declaration and Plan of Action which includes initiatives in the following areas: health and education; sustainable agriculture and forestry; sustainable cities and communities; water resources and coastal areas; and energy and minerals. General consensus on including economic, social and environmental elements within an understanding of sustainable development was the most important achievement of the Santa Cruz Summit. Consensus was also reached on other issues such as financial resources, technology transfers, division of responsibilities, cooperation and biodiversity.

**SECOND SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS:** The Second Summit of the Americas was held in Santiago, Chile, in 1998. At this Summit, the presidents and prime ministers of the hemisphere decided to place increased emphasis on social policies and other matters, such as how to consolidate and improve the quality of democracy, respect for human rights and the path to a FTAA. The meeting produced the Santiago Declaration and Plan of Action, which contained initiatives grouped according to the following subjects: education; preserving and strengthening democracy; justice and human rights; economic integration and free trade; and eradication of poverty and discrimination.

### **REPORT OF THE MEETING**

On Thursday, 29 March, David Anderson, Canadian Environment Minister, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. He noted that the meeting would feed into the Summit of the Americas process, which started in Miami in 1994. He said the meeting aims to build and maintain political momentum for cooperative actions by sending a message to the world leaders on the need for sustainable growth and prosperity.

He outlined the meeting's methodology of work, which included the discussion of three topics: the challenges of environmental management in a changing hemisphere and the need for innovation; understanding the linkages between environment and health; and the conservation of biodiversity in healthy ecosystems. He explained that each session would open with a guest speaker and that participants would make brief statements on every item of the agenda.

Before the opening of the first session, a film prepared by the IUCN on the natural resources of the Americas' environment was shown.

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### THE CHALLENGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN A CHANGING HEMISPHERE – THE NEED FOR INNOVATION

Thomas Homer-Dixon, Director of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Toronto, delivered the guest speaker address on "The Challenges of Environmental Management in a Changing Hemisphere: the Need for Innovation." He said that the hemisphere had experienced many improvements and changes in the last decade although he warned about the accelerated path of changes to ecosystems in the region. He suggested that there is a need to shift to a new paradigm of environmental innovation instead of environmental protection and suggested the need to act innovatively and proactively. He also highlighted the potential of the hemisphere to achieve progress with sustainable development. On economic incentives, he stressed the need to reach a balance among trade and environment policies across the hemisphere, and suggested that taxes and incentives should not discourage the protection of the environment.

On environmental information, he highlighted the need to improve its use and flow, and suggested that environmental policy should encourage the promotion of sharing information across society and among different stakeholders. He also underscored the importance of information for increasing the capacity of different groups, and suggested promoting partnerships to avoid information sharing gridlocks. In closing, he suggested that the hemisphere could pioneer new forms of institutional integration that could help achieve greater levels of cooperation for mutual benefits.

Alicia Bárcena, Director of Environment and Human Settlements, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and facilitator of the session, said that the hemisphere had witnessed many interesting proposals for environmental management and highlighted the great progress achieved through sub-regional integration. The following questions were put forward to guide the session:

- What are the changes, trends and pressures as a result of increasing economic integration?
- Are there particular areas or sectors where we should focus our efforts?
- Do we have the appropriate frameworks, processes, laws, procedures and technical/scientific resources in place to manage the environmental pressures associated with increasing economic integration? and
- How can we enhance our environmental protection and conservation efforts through mechanisms for public participation?

In general, ministers acknowledged that economic integration can impact the environment by increasing pressure on natural resources, and encouraged hemispheric cooperation to ensure environmental quality and conservation of natural resources. Some ministers highlighted the uniqueness of the hemisphere's wealth of resources, especially biodiversity. One minister noted that a process of hemispheric integration could become a model for other regions of the world. One minister said the meeting represents an opportunity for heads of states to balance economic progress and environmental conservation and endorse new hemispheric action on capacity building, transfer of technologies, information sharing, and cooperation for the development of projects.

Regarding changes resulting from increasing economic integration and priority areas, a number of ministers underscored the urgency of poverty alleviation and highlighted the linkages between poverty and environmental degradation, with some indicating it is the biggest threat to environmental conservation. Some ministers drew attention to the rapid rate of urbanization, as well as the loss of ecosystems and the services they provide, such as clean water, as major challenges to be addressed. Many ministers acknowledged the need for innovation to mitigate environmental problems and called for cooperation to facilitate technology transfer, information sharing and institutional capacity building to this end. Ministers also underscored the need to improve the access of rural areas and small and medium enterprises to the transfer of information and technologies and called for increased private sector involvement in technology transfer. They noted specific areas where technology transfer is needed included managing water resources, developing renewable energy capacity, and managing solid waste.

Ministers also noted: the need for further regional work on economic incentives; the need to strengthen existing coordination agencies and regional and international organizations; the need for additional financial resources; and the need to enhance civil society and private sector participation in environmental decision-making.

One minister drew attention to the fact that due to inequalities within the hemisphere, some countries are better placed to help other countries. He remarked that in some Latin American countries, poverty stands in the way of developing environmental programmes. He said his country is in need of better technologies for managing water resources and for developing renewable energy capacity.

With regard to trade and environment, a number of ministers stressed the importance of market access and opposed non-tariff barriers to trade. One minister noted the need to eliminate subsidies and trade barriers from global agreements and suggested including measures such as the evaluation of environmental impacts, as well as environmental and labor standards. He highlighted the experience under NAFTA in eliminating the use of non-tariff barriers to trade and suggested that integration does not require homogenization. One minister called for a free trade agreement to ensure the protection of the environment and trade access.

Noting that the loss of ecosystems and the environmental services they provide such as the provision of drinking water can result in crisis situations, one minister said tariffs for public services such as water are leading to protests in his country. He cautioned that the recent trend of rapid and disorganized urbanization places conflict on the horizon, particularly in regard to social protest. He said most sectors are in the early stages of acknowledging environmental concerns as integral to their activities. Several ministers stressed the integration of environmental considerations into all sectors.

One minister urged early incorporation of environmental concerns in planning processes. Another stressed that the multilateral banking system should promote incorporation of environmental concerns in all sectors. He commented that his country is currently looking to secure a loan for a water sanitation project and that, at the same time, the World Bank is applying pressure to make national environmental legislation weaker.

One minister noted that his country's biodiversity is being lost due to drug trafficking activities and urged attaching economic value to biodiversity and finding markets for it so that it may provide an alternative source of income and work for the people.

Regarding climate change, one minister urged finding a common position within the hemisphere. Several ministers stressed that the obligations of international conventions must be met.

With regard to the unique situation of small island developing States (SIDS), one minister noted some of the obstacles they face, including limited financial resources and limited information on the implications and obligations of existing conventions. He suggested that conventions appoint treaty officers to provide states with guidance on their commitments and assist them with building capacity for negotiations. He pointed to the lack of capacity in his country to analyze the nexus of trade and environment issues.

On the topic of whether the existing processes, laws procedures and technical/scientific resources are adequate to manage environmental pressures from economic integration, several ministers stressed improving existing environmental laws and their enforcement. They also underlined the importance of regional cooperation and management programmes to protect ecosystems such as coral reefs and to develop fisheries management plans. One minister called for fairer distribution of the benefits of globalization and suggested the adoption of regional and bilateral agreements to achieve sustainable development.

Remarking that tourism is a critical source of income for island states, one minister noted the need to establish standards along with monitoring facilities to ensure that these standards are met. Another minister suggested continuing work on existing environmental management tools and developing the initiatives adopted at previous Summits on the enforcement of environmental laws. Another minister noted that there has been no analysis of implementation of the agreements reached at previous Summits, regretting that the decisions seem to have not been put into action.

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One minister called for a new approach to concentrate efforts toward a true and irreversible development. He lamented that enterprises that come to his country to establish businesses have not been concerned with their impact on the local environment and said that, to avoid this in the future, an environmental code is being drafted. He underscored that laws are useless if they are not effectively enforced.

A number of ministers and government representatives of the MERCOSUR highlighted the recent signing of an environmental agreement for the sub-region on 14 March 2001, and drew attention to actions outlined within the agreement, including: sustainable management of natural resources; environmental planning and the use of planning tools that will allow development of sustainable activities; application of environmental policy instruments; incentives to optimize environmental management; and harmonization of legislation of the parties to the agreement. They also drew attention to the primarily financial and capacity-related obstacles that confront implementation of the agreement, including capacity for implementation at the national and sub-national levels. They called upon international bodies to assist in building capacity through the transfer of their know-how and knowledge.

One government representative highlighted the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, noting that it promotes policy harmonization of countries in the Amazon basin and encourages joint research projects.

Regarding the integration process in Central America, one minister commented that it had been a lengthy process, but successful in protecting the Mesoamerican biological corridor, which accounts for almost half of the biodiversity of the world and contains more than thirty shared national parks. He said that the initiative started as a tool to protect the natural diversity of the area but gradually incorporated social, human and economic aspects.

Another minister highlighted the formulation of the St. George Declaration of Environmental Principles, which is expected to be signed by Caribbean states in April.

On the topic of enhancing environmental protection and conservation through public participation, some ministers underscored the importance of a decentralized approach and of stakeholder involvement in policy development. They emphasized the importance of local community involvement and called for community-based management initiatives. One minister noted that local communities can be the best defenders of the environment when they see value in conserving their natural resources.

Several ministers underscored the importance of access to good information in addressing environmental issues and information sharing, and some promoted the use of the Internet to facilitate access. Others underscored their need for increased capacity to understand and apply such information.

Some participants called for improved public education on environmental issues, with one suggesting a review of curricula of formal education at all levels. Another minister urged for a reformulation of public awareness programmes, policies and institutional coordination to enhance understanding of the value of national parks. He encouraged the participation of municipalities in this process and the creation of municipal environmental management units to facilitate participation.

Ministers also highlighted positive national developments in their respective countries. Colombia highlighted the restructuring of its transportation and energy policy. Trinidad and Tobago detailed the creation of "green funds" to provide resources for community projects for environmental protection and conservation and the creation of a national environmental information system, consisting of a database for environmental management. Haiti noted it is in the process of drafting an environmental code. Bolivia cited its forestry sector as an excellent example of partnership between business and indigenous people and said that its forestry legislation reform has resulted in a small revolution, reducing forestry concessions from 22 million to 5 million hectares.

Alicia Bárcena concluded the session with a summary of the views exchanged by participants. She highlighted: success reported with regard to water management, energy efficiency, forest management, decentralization, and the role of communities; and sub-regional integration experiences with NAFTA, MERCOSUR and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty. She noted that ministers had also stressed the integration of economic

policies, harmonization of environment and trade, better governance, management of environmental vulnerability, technology transfer, additional funding and effective enforcement of environmental laws.

### ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH: UNDERSTANDING THE LINKAGES

Mauricio Pardón, Director of Environmental Health, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), delivered the guest speaker address on "Environment and Health – Understanding the linkages." Highlighting the role of health concerns as a major catalyst for environmental conservation, he noted that a billion people in the Americas are exposed to atmospheric pollutants above acceptable levels, resulting in approximately 100,000 deaths annually. He emphasized the special vulnerability of children to toxins in the environment. He said that once pollution occurs it is difficult to remedy and underscored the need for efforts to prevent future pollution.

With regard to water, he noted that 76.5 million people in the Americas do not have access to safe drinking water and pointed out disparities in water quality from urban to rural areas, noting that rural areas are often much worse off. He indicated that there are opportunities for cooperation on collective goals for water and wastewater management that could be based on partnership with the private sector and civil society.

Session moderator, Elizabeth Dowdeswell, former Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), drew attention to some guiding questions for the session:

- What can we collectively do to better address clean air issues?;
- What are other environmental health issues that the countries of the hemisphere can coalesce around?;
- Should efforts to address environmental health issues place emphasis on children?;
- How should civil society be better engaged on environmental health issues?;
- How can international financial institutions, development agencies and multilateral organizations help us address environmental health issues in the region?;
- How should we engage our health counterparts in addressing environmental health issues?; and
- Can we identify priority environment and health problems that we should begin addressing immediately?

Overall, ministers acknowledged the connection between environmental health and public health. One minister said environment and health must be considered as one issue and not as two separate entities. Ministers stressed partnership and decentralization in addressing health and environment issues, with some underscoring that local community participation is essential for sustainability. A UN agency stressed addressing poverty, health and environment as a package. Several ministers called to increase cooperation among ministries of environment and public health and some expressed support for holding a meeting of ministers of health and environment. A participant noted that issues such as air and water pollution and waste management influence public health and require coordinated action of authorities at the national and sub-national levels of government. Another participant suggested that some pollution problems have roots in cultural behavior in Latin and Central America, which would require tremendous public awareness and education efforts to bring about change.

With regard to clean air, one minister drew attention to trans-boundary air pollution and stressed the importance for regional cooperation to provide solutions. Another minister promoted collaboration to address such issues through the Forum of Latin American Countries, which has more influence in many environment-related areas. He said that the World Bank Clean Air Initiative is a mechanism that provides a good start to addressing air pollution. One minister expressed her support for clean air operations that reduce business costs. Another minister noted efforts in his country to reduce air pollution, including holding periodic "days without cars" to encourage the use of public transportation and bicycles. One government highlighted its recent motor vehicle control policy that will gradually phase out older vehicles. A number of ministers noted their achievements in phasing-out leaded fuels. One participant described his country's experience with a

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programme to replace fossil fuels with hydrated alcohol that mitigated, but did not solve the air pollution problem. He noted that additional actions would include the removal of lead from gasoline and a federal system to control vehicles equipment.

Regarding water, several ministers underscored the importance of access to safe drinking water. One minister commented that Latin American nations consider the subject of water the most important. One minister indicated that his country's problem with water pollution is a matter of quantity and not quality, highlighting the need for additional resources to invest in technologies that allow extraction and connection to the national grid.

Ministers flagged poor management of urban water resources and non-point source water pollution as issues to be addressed. One minister drew attention to the high costs associated with water sanitation and urged innovation of more cost effective techniques for water treatment. Another minister suggested countries should see costs of water treatment as investment. A number of ministers stressed that the cost of clean water should be incorporated into the cost of doing business. Another minister suggested the need for further cost-benefit analysis of water treatment.

A minister commented that run-off from mercury-based mining operations is resulting in water contamination in his country, but noted efforts to improve mining techniques to minimize such pollution. Ministers also drew attention to pesticide and fertilizer usage and their impacts on watersheds – a problem which is often transboundary.

Some ministers also expressed concern that pollution in rivers has resulted in a decline of fish stocks, a loss that is translated into a loss of economic activity and a loss of an important protein source for local populations. One minister stressed the importance of integrated water resource management on national and regional levels. A UN agency representative said water is an issue that is changing in the region due to: economic integration resulting in new ways of land occupation; privatization of many services; and decentralization. She underscored the importance of modernization of water legislation.

On issues for the hemisphere to coalesce around, ministers identified solid waste management, pesticide and fertilizer use, lead and mercury contamination, occupational health hazards resulting from environmental conditions, and ozone depletion. On solid waste management, one minister commented that the growing number of disposable consumer goods is resulting in increasingly large amounts of solid waste to be disposed of, and called for efforts to change these patterns, including consumer awareness and recycling programmes. One minister noted that waste management is especially challenging for small countries where economies of scale for activities such as recycling do not exist. He said improved awareness and individual responsibility must be a part of any waste management program. A minister noted the need for more information on the disposal of hazardous materials and substances that have radioactive components. A government representative also highlighted international and regional cooperative efforts to protect populations from toxic substances.

Another minister drew attention to early impacts of climate change, including the presence of malaria in locations that were previously free of the disease. A UN agency representative highlighted a series of books on the impact of forest fires on public health.

One minister underscored addressing ozone layer depletion and the associated health risks of skin cancer and other diseases that result from UV radiation. Expressing concern over the lack of action from the countries responsible for the holes in the ozone layer, she noted that every domestic action to mitigate the situation has been taken, and underscored that the responsibility for action lies with the international community.

Regarding the vulnerability of children, one minister noted that waterborne diseases are a leading cause of infant mortality in her country. One minister drew attention to pre-natal and infancy health risks due to the accumulation of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in women's fatty tissue, which can be released during pregnancy and breast feeding. A number of ministers expressed support for the recently negotiated convention on POPs, which addresses twelve POPs.

On how international financial institutions, development agencies and multilateral organizations can help address environmental health issues in the region, one minister suggested that they can help national

bodies by supplying technical and financial support to build the infrastructure and carry out sanitation projects. Another minister lauded the work of PAHO and WHO in the region.

One minister called upon international organizations and multilateral banks to assist in identifying what the cost of restoring ecosystems and putting an end to pollution would be, and how this cost can be covered. Another minister remarked that the costs associated with poor health due to environmental degradation far outweigh the cost of making the necessary investments in the environment. Another minister suggested that, given the limited availability of resources to develop projects, projects that are ultimately self-funding should be developed. A multilateral development bank representative highlighted the enormous cost of environmental quality and suggested addressing how to increase the capacity of countries to pay for their environmental services. He proposed taxes, fines and incentives for the private sector and noted the need to strengthen all countries' institutional capacity to manage the environment. Another multilateral development bank representative suggested a polluter pays principle, noting that it is difficult to implement. She said the greatest challenge is building political will to pay for environmental quality and called for increased partnership with the private sector.

Regarding priority environment and health problems to be addressed immediately, ministers pointed to deforestation, deterioration of the urban areas and reaction to environmental emergencies. One minister suggested identifying the synergies among the priority areas of work in order to coordinate the use of resources and the preparation of policies.

Participants also stressed the need to create new governmental structures to comply with regulations and legal frameworks and the need for institutional capacity building, including personnel training for the implementation of existing legal instruments. Participants also highlighted the need to keep regulations up to date and the promotion of partnerships between civil society and the private sector. One minister urged the participation of civil society, the review of curricula at all levels of formal education, and the involvement of communities.

Brazil highlighted its legislation to control water pollution that entrusts national and regional committees with enforcement, and mandates the national authorities to set the standards of physical and chemical conditions. Barbados said it is engaged in a process to enact regulations on clean air pollution that would control the release of several substances into the atmosphere. Mexico highlighted successful reduction of DDT use prompted by NAFTA. Honduras noted that it recently approved a motor vehicle control that will phase out older vehicles.

An international organization highlighted its operations and partnership projects among countries, for example, a project on climate change in Brazil with partners in the US, Colombia, Venezuela, the West Indies and others. An international organization representative highlighted its model for sharing experiences from one country with other countries.

### CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY IN HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

Yolanda Kakabadse, President of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), delivered the guest speaker address on "Conservation of Biodiversity in Healthy Ecosystems." She drew attention to the Americas' wealth of natural resources, noting that they hold 51% of the world's forests, 65% of the world's tropical forests, 52% of the world's potable water, more than 40% of the world's plants, more than 52% of the world's amphibians and 44% of the world's birds. She identified managing this wealth in order to fight poverty as the largest challenge facing the hemisphere, and commented that improper management of these resources and the subsequent loss of biodiversity could generate even more poverty. She said conservation and protection must form part of economic development and stressed that a hemispheric alliance must take social, political, economic and environmental considerations into account. She said the economic capacity of biodiversity is undeniable and emphasized the need to integrate environmental concerns into trade policy. She called for institutional strengthening to provide better information and noted the need to address inconsistencies in domestic legal

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frameworks. She drew attention to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan as an example of regional cooperation for the rest of the world.

Session moderator, Russel Mittermeier, President of Conservation International, reminded participants that biodiversity loss is an irreversible process and identified two paths in front of the world today with regard to biodiversity: liquidate it now and restore it later; or value intact ecosystems now. Pointing to efforts in the Americas, he noted that: Suriname recently declared 10% of its area as protected; Peru and Bolivia each identified mega-corridors; and Brazil identified seven mega-corridors. He further commented that Brazil has an interesting network of private conservation areas that could provide some examples.

He highlighted the importance of protected areas for biodiversity conservation, noting that these can take the forms of traditional national parks, private reserves, conservation corridors, mega-corridors, international agreements on migratory species conservation, and conservation concessions. He highlighted the importance of a global assessment to register all existing species. The ensuing discussion focused on:

- Regional and sub-regional experiences from biodiversity conservation efforts;
- Improving information on biodiversity conservation;
- Enhancement of citizen engagement and partnerships; and
- Strengthening linkages and networks within the hemisphere.

Regarding regional and sub-regional experiences, a minister highlighted the establishment of the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) as a result of the 1996 Bolivia Summit, and informed participants that IABIN has a website offering technical information on issues such as how to deal with invasive species and how to evaluate risks from introduction of GMOs. Ministers also highlighted that the initiative to conserve the Mesoamerica Biological Corridor involved ministers of agriculture, transportation and economy, and suggested that this could be seen as a model for others.

One minister said the development of solutions to biodiversity loss is slow in comparison to the magnitude of the problem and urged the international banking system to provide an assessment of the costs of protecting biodiversity to facilitate decision making and dialogue with other national decision makers including ministers of finance and economics. Regarding the global biodiversity inventory project, one minister hoped to hold a meeting of countries in the region on the subject.

Several ministers also underscored conserving marine biodiversity, noting its importance to nutrition and economic activity. Others also drew attention to the increasingly important issue of invasive alien species and marine pollution from solid waste such as plastics.

A minister from a small island developing State drew attention to the challenge of achieving a balance between creating employment and conserving his country's small land mass. He suggested that improved information on global trends would assist in making the decisions required to reach a successful balance between development and conservation. He also called for more information on specific issues such as alien species. Stressing the importance of the Caribbean Sea, he said the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) would like it to be a nuclear free zone because an accident during transportation of nuclear waste could literally wipe them out.

Another minister appealed that special assistance be given to countries with a high level of poverty that are protecting species at the expense of development. He drew attention to the need to learn more about soil biodiversity, noting that use of agrochemicals has resulted in the destruction of soil biodiversity.

On enhanced citizen engagement and partnership, one minister said that increasing awareness of the value of biodiversity has produced results in protected areas and areas that border them. Ministers also pointed to the need to strengthen institutional capacity to, *inter alia*, protect areas and provide public education on environmental benefits.

Several countries highlighted their protected areas and drew attention to challenges surrounding their management. They stressed the need to provide alternatives for economic gain for protected area dwellers so that they will not resort to destroying the resources. One minister raised the question of how to make protected areas open for economic development. Another minister reported that it had successfully relocated some

local communities outside of protected areas. One minister indicated that biodiversity and social diversity must be addressed together. Participants also indicated that more data on protected areas is needed to provide guidance on how to better manage them.

Several countries highlighted domestic accomplishments: Colombia noted that it designated 28% of its land as an indigenous reserve because the indigenous people, only 3% of the population, have demonstrated capacity to manage ecosystems; Costa Rica remarked that 26% of its territory is under some form of protection; Guatemala highlighted that 28% of its area is protected; Dominica noted its reputation as the "nature island" and remarked that one of its preserves is a UNESCO world heritage site; Chile highlighted its development of an integrated biodiversity conservation programme; Belize outlined its efforts toward establishment of a national biodiversity information system; and Ecuador informed that it recently declared three additional protected areas.

In closing, Mittermeier highlighted issues that emerged during the discussion: the need to address marine and freshwater biodiversity conservation; the need to create better mechanisms for biodiversity information sharing; the need to develop understanding of what biodiversity loss means and the cost of its restoration; the importance of involving local communities; the value of contributions from indigenous people; the need to protect migratory species; and the need to address invasive species.

### ADOPTION OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMUNIQUÉ

On Friday, 30 March 2001, ministers considered a draft Ministerial Communiqué to be issued from the meeting, which had been drafted by a group of government representatives over the course of the meeting. Anderson introduced the Communiqué, urging participants to focus on commonalities and consensus.

One minister requested that reference to the "Santa Cruz +5" meeting be included in the Communiqué. Others agreed and text reflecting this was included.

Participants next considered three textual options for a paragraph intended to acknowledge, *inter alia*, commitment to mutually supportive policies regarding economic integration and environmental protection, the need to strengthen environmental management systems, and the contribution of unsustainable consumption and production patterns, poverty and social inequalities to environmental degradation. A number of countries supported one option, which placed emphasis on the role of consumption and production patterns, and opposed another option that emphasized poverty as a source of environmental degradation, noting that this option inappropriately over emphasized the role of poverty in environmental degradation and downplayed that of consumption and production patterns. A number of other positions were expressed and participants agreed to establish a drafting group. The drafting group decided upon text stating that while poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, a major cause of environmental deterioration is unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

In a paragraph regarding the threat of habitat loss to biodiversity conservation, participants discussed two bracketed textual options, one promoting cooperative regional activities to protect key transboundary ecosystems and the other promoting commitment to cooperative regional activities. While some ministers preferred the first option, several others preferred the second option, indicating that preference should not be given to one ecosystem type and that the first option could result in debate about what constitutes "a key transboundary ecosystem." Some participants also indicated that "regional activities to protect key transboundary ecosystems" is encompassed by "commitment to cooperative regional activities" and the second option was accepted.

Proposing a new paragraph relating to human health and environment, one minister remarked that the previous days discussion on environment and human health had drawn attention to the need for further information on how to quantify the relationship between environmental degradation and human health and the cost of inaction. He indicated that it was the ministers' collective responsibility to take a step forward on this issue and proposed including text in the Communiqué calling upon international organizations and multilateral banks to identify mechanisms to address the cost of reversing environmental harm and to make

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recommendations on how this might be accomplished. Another government representative supported the proposal as a proactive step toward better information on the additional costs of health services that result from inadequate environmental management. A drafting group developed text urging international organizations, including multilateral financial institutions, to consider ways and means of identifying and addressing this issue. This text was added to the Communiqué.

Participants next discussed whether to include a paragraph on climate change. Noting that the drafting group had not been able to reach consensus on the matter, Chair Anderson proposed compromise text recognizing that climate change is a critical global issue that requires global action and solutions and stating that all countries in the hemisphere reaffirm their commitments to combat climate change, both at home and internationally, and would pursue the implementation of existing international agreements to achieve their commitments.

A government representative of a MERCOSUR country, supported by the vast majority of the countries represented, expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed text and said he would not be able to sign the Communiqué if it was included. He argued that the text did not reflect the current stage of the international negotiations on climate change, and that the wording suggests that countries are at the beginning of the negotiation process instead of at the stage of implementing a negotiated and adopted Protocol.

One government representative suggested accepting the paragraph proposed by the Chair, recalling that this forum was not a negotiation process on climate change. He suggested that by adopting the text, participants were recognizing climate change as a critical global issue and leaving additional consideration for the appropriate negotiation process.

A government representative from an Andean Pact country opposed the text arguing that accepting it would reflect a step back in the negotiation process and that it was time to send world leaders a strong message to pursue the international process on climate change. Another government representative opposed the text, noting that many countries have adopted actions to combat climate change within the framework of the international agreement. A minister opposed the Chair's proposal arguing that it was outdated and underscored the importance of communicating a different message. Other government representatives stressed that it is their responsibility to examine the issue. A minister from CARICOM underscored the need to adopt a statement that reflects the current developments in the international negotiations. Another country drew the attention of participants to the costs of inaction and explained that if there is no concrete action today, in one year the cost of actions would be multiplied by US\$201,000. One minister suggested adopting a paragraph that reflects the consensus of the majority of the participants. One participant requested suspending the session for consultations on a new proposed text and Chair Anderson conceded.

After consultations, the session was resumed and one government representative announced that the vast majority of ministers and government representatives had reached agreement on a new text for the paragraph on climate change. The proposed text referred to: the work done at the international level within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the priority of the need for implementation of the Kyoto Protocol; the recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which shows that the climate is changing as a result of human activities and impacts; the vulnerability of all countries and in particular of SIDS; the resolution to continue and intensify efforts in order to make the necessary progress to ensure environmentally sound and cost effective responses to climate change; the need for capacity-building, technology transfer, adaptation measures, and market-mechanisms; and the need for Annex-I countries (developed countries) to the UNFCCC to engage in an effort to reduce their domestic GHG emissions.

Chair Anderson noted that this text could not achieve full consensus and that a paragraph reflecting the failure to reach consensus on the critical issue of climate change would be included in the Communiqué.

Noting that all governments represented aside from one had reached consensus, a government representative suggested annexing the text agreed to by all others to the Communiqué. This suggestion was opposed. The Communiqué was adopted and will be forwarded to the Third Summit of the Americas in April.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Canadian Environment Minister Anderson thanked everyone for their participation at the meeting, indicating that it was a historic occasion as it was the first gathering of the environment ministers of the Americas. He challenged the ministers to unite in making the Americas a model and "shining light" for the rest of the world. In closing, he said the meeting had established a common belief that the environment is not a luxury, but fundamental to sustainable development. The ministers in turn expressed their gratitude to the Canadian Government for organizing and hosting the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

### **SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNIQUÉ**

The Communiqué contains general statements and four subsections on: international environment and sustainable development issues; the challenges of environmental management in a changing hemisphere – the need for innovation; improving the environment for better human health; and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. The following is a summary of the Communiqué. The complete text is available at <http://www.iisd.ca/sd/ema>.

### **GENERAL COMMENTS**

The ministers recognize the different levels and patterns of development of countries, their cultural diversity, and the diversity of ecosystems within the hemisphere and are aware of the relationship between the environment and socio-economic factors such as poverty, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, inequity in distribution of wealth and the debt burden. The ministers commit to work together to ensure that economic, social and environmental policies are mutually supportive and contribute to sustainable development.

### **INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

On international environment and sustainable development issues, the ministers acknowledge the important steps taken toward the implementation of the international sustainable development agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The ministers declare the current decade the "decade of action" and commit to actively participate in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio + 10) in 2002 in Johannesburg. In addition, they decide to work with the Organization of American States (OAS) and other agencies, to organize a meeting at the ministerial level before the end of 2001, to be held in Bolivia to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Santa Cruz Summit of 1996. The ministers recognize that policy coherence begins at home and must be further improved at the international level, and welcome UNEP Governing Council's decision 21/21 mandating governments to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment of options to strengthen and promote a more effective system of international environmental institutions and coordination. In this regard, the ministers emphasize the need for effective mechanisms, including financial mechanisms and other means of support as appropriate such as, but not limited to, the Global Environment Facility, in order to enhance capacity-building, technology transfer and sustainable development projects. The ministers reaffirm their countries commitment to implement multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and to work on building synergies. In particular, the ministers noted that they discussed the critical issue of climate change although there was not full consensus on a paragraph to be added to the Communiqué.

### **CHALLENGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN A CHANGING HEMISPHERE AND THE NEED FOR INNOVATION**

On the challenges of environmental management in a changing hemisphere and the need for innovation, the ministers recognize that poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress and that unus-

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tainable patterns of consumption and production are a major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment. The ministers commit to maximize the potential for mutually supportive policies regarding economic integration and environmental protection. They agree to strengthen environmental management systems in their countries in areas such as:

- improved knowledge, appropriate tools and incentives and better partnerships on national indicators, sharing of best practices and information exchanges, and the development of environmental science networks across the hemisphere;
- public participation, by increasing knowledge, public education and participation, transparency and accountability on environmental issues, enhancing access to information and technologies at the community level, in keeping with national legislation;
- private sector participation, by promoting an innovative business climate through a mix of environmental policy initiatives and tools, based on a sound regulatory framework, market instruments and voluntary initiatives;
- capacity building, by enhancing the development and strengthening of environmental laws and institutions, and for environmental law implementation, compliance and enforcement;
- advancing the development of pollution prevention strategies, in partnership with industry, environmental groups, and indigenous and local communities, with the goal of increasing investment to encourage pollution prevention; and
- costs of environmental degradation, urging international organizations including multilateral financial institutions to consider ways and means to address this issue.

On improving the environment for better human health, the ministers recognize the interrelationship between the environment and human health and commit to build stronger bridges between these sectors. They decide to call on the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to support the convening of a regional meeting between ministers of environment and ministers of health to take stock of progress achieved, to identify priority areas for renewed emphasis and cooperative initiatives, and to explore ways of moving the environmental health agenda forward in the Americas and globally, with a view to contribute to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. The ministers highlight the conclusion of negotiations to reduce or eliminate the production, use and release of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) that pose threats to human health and the environment, and encourage governments to sign and ratify the POPs convention and the resolution of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS).

The ministers commit to: work on the improvement of air quality on transportation and industrial emissions and transboundary pollution; encourage public and private sector and individual actions; and support scientific research and sharing of best practices in the areas of air emission inventories, smog-forecasting, health impact advisories and community programs. The ministers also commit to: enhance access to safe drinking water and sanitation services; strengthen national and regional capacities for integrated water resources management and for waste management; ensure that freshwater and marine and coastal environments, including coral reefs, are sustained; and prevent land-based sources of marine pollution. The ministers stress the need to lessen the vulnerability of their citizens and communities and to reduce the impacts on their economies caused by natural disasters. To this end ministers endeavor to: pursue preventative measures; improve science and monitoring, including early warning systems; and provide accurate and useful information to the public.

### CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

On the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, the ministers highlight healthy and productive ecosystems as the basis of the economic and social health of nations and note the critical situation of the ecosystems of the hemisphere currently under stress as a result of human activities. They commit to stimulate and strengthen cooperation for the conservation, management, and sustainable use of biological diversity and healthy ecosystems throughout the Americas in support of the objec-

tives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other related agreements and initiatives, including the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. They highlight the efforts undertaken by the working groups of the CBD on access to genetic resources and the protection of traditional knowledge and encourage governments to cooperate in the areas of information sharing, in particular, with the implementation of the Biosafety Clearinghouse, and developing the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN).

The ministers commit to work on habitat losses by: developing better information on losses and the implications for biodiversity; promoting improved management of protected areas through cooperative regional activities; exploring the expansion of existing hemispheric networks for terrestrial and marine protected areas, including linkages to create biological corridors such as the Mesoamerica Biological Corridor; and developing information-sharing networks for invasive alien species as well as cooperative efforts on prevention, control, management, public education and outreach, and incident notification.

Finally, the ministers commit to work in areas including: migratory species, by supporting the development of a hemispheric strategy to enhance their conservation and sustainable use throughout the Americas that includes management, and the protection of wintering and breeding areas and migration routes of species within and across boundaries; forests, by promoting the adoption of concrete and urgent actions toward the implementation of sustainable forest management, building on existing international instruments and cooperation such as criteria and indicator processes, including the UN Forum on Forests and the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests; and illegal trade in wild flora and fauna, by strengthening partnership networks and information systems to assist in the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR

### CONFERENCE ON EQUITY AND GLOBAL CLIMATE

**CHANGE:** This international conference will be held in Washington, DC, from 17-18 April, 2001. Organized by the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, the meeting will consider "fair and reasonable" actions for all countries in addressing climate change. For more information contact: Christie Jorge Santelises; tel: +1-703-516-4146; e-mail: jorgec@pewclimate.org; Internet: <http://pewclimate.org/events>

**CSD-9:** The Ninth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be held at UN Headquarters from 16-27 April, 2001. This session will focus on: atmosphere; energy/transport; information for decision-making and participation; and international cooperation for an enabling environment. The topic of the multi-stakeholder dialogue segment will be energy and transport. For more information contact: Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: [vasilyev@un.org](mailto:vasilyev@un.org); Internet: [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd9/csd9\\_2001.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd9/csd9_2001.htm) For information for major groups, contact Zehra Aydin-Sipos, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-8811; fax: +1-212-963-1267; e-mail: [aydin@un.org](mailto:aydin@un.org)

### HEMISPHERIC TRADE AND SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM

The Symposium will be held in Quebec City, Canada from 17-19 April. The event will provide a constructive, policy-oriented, and knowledge-based forum for dialogue on trade and sustainability issues in the Americas. For more information contact: Hemispheric Trade and Sustainability Symposium, Montreal, Canada; tel: 1+514-985-0343; fax: 1+514-987-1567; e-mail: [symposium@iucn.ca](mailto:symposium@iucn.ca)

**THE THIRD SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS:** Thirty-four democratically elected heads of government from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean will gather in Quebec City, Canada, from 20-22 April, 2001, to address four themes: (i) economic integration, (ii) democracy and human rights, (iii) education and poverty, and (iv) discrimination. For more information contact: The Hemisphere Summit Office Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2; Tel: 1+613-944-0505; e-mail: [mediainfo@americascanada.org](mailto:mediainfo@americascanada.org); Internet <http://americascanada.org/eventsummit/menu-e.asp>

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**CSD-10 (PREPCOM):** The Tenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development is expected to convene for a meeting in New York from 30 April to 2 May, 2001 to serve as the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10). For more information contact: Andrey Vasilyev, Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: vasilyev@un.org; Internet: [http://www.un.org/rio+10/web\\_pages/first\\_prepcom.htm](http://www.un.org/rio+10/web_pages/first_prepcom.htm)

**THIRD UN CONFERENCE ON LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES:** This meeting will be held from 14-20 May 2001 in Brussels, Belgium. For more information contact: Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries, UNCTAD, Geneva, Switzerland; tel: +41-22-907-5893; fax: +41-22-907-0046; e-mail: ldc@unctad.org; Internet: <http://www.unctad.org/en/subsites/ldcs/document.htm> and <http://www.un.org/events/ldc3/conference>

**DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE ON PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS (DIPCON):** The diplomatic conference for the signing of the POPs convention is scheduled to take place from 21-23 May 2001, in Stockholm, Sweden. For more information contact: Jim Willis, UNEP; tel: +41-22-917-8111; e-mail: chemicals@unep.ch; Internet: <http://irptc.unep.ch/pops/>

**INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE CONFERENCE:** The conference will be held in Saskatchewan, Canada from 28-30 May, 2001. The conference seeks to bring together academic and community-based knowledge about protecting traditional resources, cultural knowledge, and bio-diversity. For further information contact: Priscilla Settee, Conference Co-ordinator, Indigenous Peoples Program, University of Saskatchewan; tel: (1-306) 966-5556; fax: 966-5567; email: Priscilla.Settee@usask.ca

**CONFERENCE ON BUILDING BRIDGES WITH TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE:** This conference will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii from 28 May to 3 June 2001. It will address issues involving indigenous peoples, conservation, and sustainable development. For more information visit: <http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/traditionalknowledge>

**"ISTANBUL+5":** This Special Session of the UN General Assembly will be held at UN Headquarters from 6-8 June 2001. It will review and appraise progress made on the implementation of the outcome of the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). For more information contact: Axumite Gebre-Egziabher, UN Centre for Human Settlements, Nairobi, tel: +254-2-623-831; e-mail: Axumite.Gebre-Egziabher@unhcr.org; Internet: <http://www.istanbul5.org/>

**WTO COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT:** The meeting will be held in Geneva, Switzerland from 27-28 June, 2001. For more information contact: Hans-Peter Werner, Information and Media Relations Division; tel: +41-22-739-5007; Internet: [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/envir\\_e/cte00\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/envir_e/cte00_e.htm)

**FIRST SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE UN FORUM ON FORESTS:** This meeting is scheduled for 11-22 June 2001, at UN Headquarters in New York. For more information, contact: Secretariat, Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, tel: +1-212-963-6208; fax: +1-212-963-3463; e-mail: vahanen@un.org; Internet: [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/unff\\_2001\\_fsm.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/unff_2001_fsm.htm)

**RESUMED COP-6 / 14TH SESSIONS OF THE UNFCCC SUBSIDIARY BODIES:** The resumed COP-6 (as outlined under COP-6 decision FCCC/CP/2000/L.3) and the 14th sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in Bonn, Germany from 16-27 July, 2001. For more information

contact: the UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; Internet: <http://www.unfccc.int>

**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON BIODIVERSITY AS A SOURCE OF NEW MEDICINES:** This symposium will be held in Cali, Colombia, from 16-19 August, 2001. For more information contact: Ligia Pabon de Majid; tel/fax: +57-2-330-2461; Internet: <http://www.biofarmacongress.com>

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT:** This US Department of Agriculture Forest Service seminar, which is being hosted by the University of Montana, will take place from 9-25 August, 2001. For more information contact: James Burchfield, e-mail: jburch@forestry.umt.edu; Internet: <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/is/ispam/welcome.htm>

**CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY IN THE ANDES AND AMAZON BASIN, LINKING SCIENCE, NGOs AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.** This international congress will be held in Cusco, Peru from 24-28 September, 2001. The meeting will focus on the Andean countries ecosystems. For information contact Sigrun Lange, INKA e.V, International network for the conservation of cultural and biological diversity, Gravelottestr. 6, 81667 Munich, Germany; fax: +49-89-4591-1920; e-mail: Sigrun.Lange@inka-ev.de; Internet: <http://www.inka-ev.de>

**JOINT FAO-WHO MEETING ON PESTICIDE RESIDUES:** The 26th Session of the Joint Meeting of the FAO Panel of Experts on Pesticide Residues in Food and the Environment and the WHO Expert Group on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) will take place from 10-28 September 2001, in Geneva. The 27th Session is scheduled for 20-29 September 2002 in Rome. For more information contact: Amelia Tejada, FAO; tel: +39-6-5705-4010; Internet: <http://www.fao.org/waicent/FaoInfo/Agricult/AGP/AGPP/Pesticid/Events/c.htm>

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBALIZATION OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT - CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES:** This meeting will take place in Trieste, Italy, from 11-13 September, 2001. For more information contact Derya Honca, Program Coordinator, Center for International Development, Harvard University; tel: +1-617-495-1923; e-mail: m\_derya\_honca@harvard.edu; Internet: <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidbiotech/r&dconf/description.htm>

**BOLIVIA + 5:** This event will be held in Bolivia to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Santa Cruz Summit of 1996, before the end of the year. The meeting will present contributions to the Rio + 10 Summit in 2002. For more information contact: Ministry of Sustainable Development and Planning, Av. Mariscal Sta. Cruz 1092, Casilla 12814, La Paz, Bolivia; tel: +591-02-330704 / +591-02-330648 / +591-02-330590

**WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+10):** The World Summit on Sustainable Development for the ten-year review of progress in implementing the outcome of the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992, will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. The exact dates are yet to be determined. The Summit will aim to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development at the highest level. More information is available online at: <http://www.un.org/rio%2b10/>