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Facing diversity: sustainable development at the crossroads

When the Rio Earth Summit made the cover of the American edition of *Elle* magazine in June 1992, sustainable development entered the mainstream. Officially known as the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the Earth Summit brought together representatives of 178 countries, including 117 government leaders, making it the largest political summit ever. Rio brought unparalleled media attention to a host of inter-related global issues – biodiversity, climate change, consumption patterns, deforestation, fragile ecosystems, hazardous waste, indigenous knowledge, poverty, responsible entrepreneurship and the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), among many others. In the months leading up to the two-week international gathering of political leaders and tens of thousands of activists, bureaucrats and business people, pop stars such as Madonna, REM, Seal and LL Cool J used MTV videoclips to lobby a reluctant American President George Bush to attend. For 12 days in June 1992, the world's attention turned to Rio. From the green jamboree on the beach to the official conference hall 30 miles away, the idea of sustainable development had suddenly arrived on the world's crowded stage. Competing political interests fought for the spotlight – the ecological, the economic, the social, the developed, the developing, the corporate, the non-governmental, and so on. When the citizens of Rio and the world looked up, they found themselves facing a microcosm of global diversity in the 1990s.

Rio may have succeeded in bringing renewed attention to an array of persistent global problems. However, most participants and analysts concluded that the overall process resolved few differences

and produced little consensus about how to put sustainable development into practice. If Rio was about recognising and analysing global diversity, then the post-Rio period was expected to manage this diversity more effectively.

Implicit in sustainable development is the need for partnership between diverse interests, both present and future. In 1993, the Summit's Secretary General, Canadian industrialist Maurice Strong, argued that:

> ... [the transition to] sustainable development is not just an option but an imperative.… It requires a major shift in priorities for govern-ments and people, involving the full integration of the environmental dimension into economic policies and decision-making in every sphere of activity.… This global partnership is essential to set the world community onto a new course for a more sustainable, secure and equitable future as we prepare ourselves for the twenty-first century. (see United Nations, 1993, p viii)

Partnership has become the cornerstone of post-Rio imple-mentation of sustainable development. Governments and UN agencies are increasingly encouraging local authorities, community groups, indigenous peoples, private sector organisations and NGOs to implement new ways of dealing with many long-standing international, national and local problems. Multi-stakeholder approaches, bilateral agreements and other forms of collaboration are also being adopted by two of Rio's strongest antagonists – business and environmental groups. The emergence of business–environmentalist partnerships, perhaps more than any other post-Rio initiative, has demonstrated that the implementation of sustainable development is underway.

In this chapter, we provide a review of past and current thinking and action on sustainable development focusing on lessons learned from the Rio process and beyond. Our purpose here is to trace the evolution of the concept of sustainable development and to illustrate how and why it has created a context where new forms of collaboration between business and the wider green movement are now possible. The chapter also includes an overview of Earth Summit II, the UN General Assembly's 1997 Special Session in New York to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of Agenda 21 and

other Earth Summit-related agreements and initiatives. As two of the groups identified in Agenda 21 as being critical to its effective implementation, NGOs (including environmental groups) and business/industry continue to play major roles in the imple-mentation of sustainable development strategies. While the major challenge of the post-Rio period remains one of managing diverse and often competing interests, Earth Summit II, nevertheless, has offered business, environmental groups and all other Rio participants opportunities to review progress five years on and to identify a better way forward.

Development roots

Although sustainable development first appeared in the late 1970s, the concept has a much deeper and more complex history. One of sustainable development's key roots is the idea of development, a broad concept with many different meanings. Perhaps most relevant to our discussion is Clive Ponting's description of development as "the process of moving from a pre-industrial society to an industrialised one" (1992, p 398). Linked to the idea of progress, development has historically been seen as both a desirable and necessary means of ensuring that basic human needs and higher living standards are met. Towards the end of the colonial period, development and progress became the twin goals of both the newly-independent states in the southern hemisphere and the new aid programmes of donor countries primarily in Europe and North America. This new era of development was launched in 1949 when American President Harry Truman presented his "bold new programme for making the benefits of … scientific advances and technical progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas" (in Sachs, 1992, p 6).

For much of the post-colonial period, development has been linked to economic growth based upon modernisation, indus-trialisation and the growing influence of global corporations. In 1972, Indira Ghandi, then Prime Minister of India, criticised development's pursuit of affluence for its tendency "to overshadow all other human considerations" and identified this aspect of development as "the basic cause of the ecological crisis" (Stone, 1973, p 117). For their part, development analysts in the North have been divided roughly between those who predict ecological doom as human population outstrips the

Earth's carrying capacity (Ehrlich, 1972) and those who see human ingenuity as overcoming any ecological obstacles to progress (Simon, 1981). The latter group considers population increases and economic growth as desirable whereas the former sees them as ultimately unsustainable.

By the 1980s, political leaders began to realise that develop-ment was in crisis. Under the chairmanship of former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, the Independent Commission on International Development Issues published two timely reports (see Box 1.1). The first, *North–South* concluded that the search for solutions to international development problems was "a condition for mutual survival" (Brandt Commission, 1980, p 282). Three years later in response to worsening global economic problems and a lack of international cooperation, the Brandt Commission produced a second report, *Common crisis*, which concluded that the North–South negotiating process required new principles. Governments had to demonstrate a "willingness to accept diversity" and "on occasion to proceed ... without global consensus" (Brandt Commission, 1983, p 159). Although the North–South negotiating process had deteriorated, most political leaders continued to promote development as the primary means of bringing southern countries closer to the living standards of their northern counterparts. At the same time, the two Brandt reports reminded political leaders everywhere that certain forms of development were also major contributors to both socio-economic inequality and global environmental degradation.[1]

This period also coincided with intensive debates between academics working in the field of development studies. The various development theories of the 1960s and 1970s were being undermined as a fast-changing global economy brought new realities. The emergence of the Tiger Asian economies challenged some of the basic leftist assumptions about the exploitative relationship between the industrialised North and the so-called Third World. Socialist models of development were also in decline. In central and eastern Europe, communist countries faced growing economic and environmental crises. 'Women in Development' emerged as a new UN strategy to promote greater equity for women, but was eventually dismissed as doing little to increase women's participation in economic activities. Meanwhile, modernisation theories no longer seemed relevant with the declining role of the state and the growing reach of transnational corporations. The bottom line, though, was that world poverty was not substantially in decline. Despite a few apparent success stories in

Southeast and East Asia, global free trade and large-scale industrial projects had not been able to reverse the widening overall gap between rich and poor countries. Indeed the 1980s became known as the 'lost decade of development' for much of Latin America and Africa, as well as for significant parts of South Asia.[2]

The dominant global development model of open markets and mega-projects was also being associated with the adverse environmental impacts of industrial activities in both the North and the South. In the North, the 1980s were marked by a litany of high-profile ecological disasters – acid rain and Waldsterben in Central Europe, Chernobyl in the Ukraine, the Exxon Valdez in Alaska and the depletion of the ozone layer over the two poles. In the South, the adverse effects of western-style development upon both natural environments and local cultures were profound. For example, the conversion of pastoral lands to farming and intensive cattle rearing was considered to be less efficient than indigenous practice because, although initially leading to higher production, in the medium term it proved to be ecologically unsustainable.

The cumulative result of this lost decade of development was a general questioning by development academics and practitioners of the whole idea of progress. Many argued that the concept of development assumes there is a developed ideal. As the ideal developed state is characterised as a western or northern industrial economy, development itself was criticised as a western-centric idea, and its projection on the rest of the world as a form of neo-imperialism.[3]

By the end of the 1980s, development thinking had reached an impasse. According to sociologist David Booth, "crucial real-world questions were not being addressed and the gulf between academic enquiry and the various spheres of development policy and practice seemed to have widened" (in Schuurman, 1993, p 49). To overcome this impasse, Booth urged development academics to rediscover development's diversity from the global to the local levels.[4] This has prompted attempts to redefine development in terms of social change, ecological justice, empowerment and community control. For example, David Korten calls for a "people-centered development vision that embraces ... transformation" (1990, p 5).

Box 1.1: Building blocks for sustainable development from Stockholm to Brandt 1972-83

1972 *Action plan for the human environment:* The main output of the

Stockholm Conference launched "a set of internationally coordinated activities aimed first at increasing knowledge of environmental trends and their effects on [humans] and resources, and second, at protecting and improving the quality of the environment and the productivity of resources by integrated planning and management". (Sandbrook, 1983, p 390)

1972 *The limits to growth:* Commissioned by the Club of Rome to stimulate international debate on growth and society. Widely criticised for its apparent advocacy of zero growth economics, the report acknowledged the need for material growth in the developing world, "but warned of an unthinking pursuit of indiscriminate growth by the industrialised countries". (King and Schneider, 1991, p xii)

1974 *Cocoyoc declaration:* A Mexico meeting in October analysed environ-mental problems in a Third World context. The resulting Cocoyoc Declaration highlighted "the problem of the maldistribution of resources and to the inner limits of human needs as well as the outer limits of resource depletion." The declaration "called for a redefinition of development goals and global lifestyles". (Adams 1990, p 40)

1980 *North–South:* Subtitled 'A programme for survival', this was the first report of the Brandt Commission. The report emphasised the mutual socio-economic interests of northern and southern countries. It concluded with an appeal for a global emergency programme to avert disaster in the poorest countries.

1980 *World conservation strategy:* At the initiative of IUCN, a process was launched in October 1977 to develop improved mechanisms for global conservation action. UNEP provided funding and WWF-International also lent its support to the project. Although the final version published in March 1980 included reference to population and food issues, the strategy was "essentially a document on nature conservation". (McCormick, 1989, p 165)

1983 *Common crisis:* Subtitled 'North–South cooperation for world recovery', this was the second Brandt Commission report. Its purpose was to provide a means of improving global cooperation and avoiding a full-scale economic collapse. *Common crisis* emphasised the fundamental problem of financing the global recovery.

Environmental roots

The other historical face of sustainable development is that of modern environmentalism. The modern concept of the envir-onment can be traced to nature preservation groups which emerged in the nineteenth century primarily in Great Britain and the USA. Contemporary environmental awareness in western industrialised countries is,

however, more often associated with the public response to increased pollution in the post-World War II industrial boom and the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent spring* in 1962. Carson's revelations about the harmful effects of DDT and other chemicals created such a public outcry that the use of DDT was eventually banned throughout the North.

Another defining moment for the idea of the environment came in 1969 when Apollo XI transmitted images into people's homes of "a small and fragile ball" on the edge of a vast universe. This image proved to be a catalyst for the movement to conserve and protect our vulnerable planet Earth (see Sachs, 1992, p 26).

Ten years later James Lovelock's *Gaia: a new look at life on Earth* was published. Lovelock's theory of Gaia (named after the Greek goddess of the Earth) transformed our small blue planet, metaphorically, into a living organism which behaves as if it is "a single, self-regulating entity in which life forms and the environment continually interact to create the conditions necessary for life to exist" (M. Brown, 1992, p 67).[5] Fuelled by the idea of a living Gaia and growing evidence of the adverse ecological effects of industrial development, concern for the environment grew rapidly in the 1980s. There was a proliferation of new pressure groups and older established organisations experienced huge increases in membership (Cairncross, 1991).[6] By the end of the 1980s, the environment had risen near the top of the political agenda in western industrialised countries.

A more comprehensive review of modern environmentalism, including its historical, philosophical and theoretical roots is provided in Chapter two.

The emergence of sustainable development

In parallel with the evolution of concepts of development and environment, sustainable development slowly began to emerge in the 1970s. Maurice Strong, who also headed the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm,[7] provided an initial framework for sustainable development in a post-conference reflection:

> [T]he environment issue cannot be conceived in narrow defensive or parochial terms, but in the possibilities it opens up to bring new energies, new perspectives, and a new will to the resolution of the fundamental imbalances and conflicts which continue to afflict mankind. For the developing countries, environmental considera-tions add a new dimension to the concept of development – involving not merely the avoidance of newly perceived dangers, but the realization of promising new opportunities. For the richer nations, it provides a dramatic illustration of the new interdependencies which the technological society has created, and new reasons for a deeper and sustained commitment to a more equitable sharing of its benefits with the developing world. Thus, there can be no fundamental conflict between development and environment; they are integral and indivisible. (in Rowland, 1973, p x)

Strong's post-Stockholm vision of an interdependent world where development concerns are compatible with "all the elements which sustain life on this planet" (Rowland, 1973, p x) launched two decades of debate about how best to make development more sustainable.

Sustainable development was first used as a term sometime in the 1970s following the Stockholm Conference.[8] Various individuals and organisations have been given credit for introducing sustainable development into the public domain, yet the originator of the term remains in dispute.[9] An earlier version is the term ecodevelopment which emerged out of Strong's efforts to bring together international environment and development concerns in the post-Stockholm period.

The Nairobi-based UN Environment Programme (UNEP) played an important role in advocating ecodevelopment in the late 1970s.[10] Although ecodevelopment appeared to reconcile basic human needs

with ecological protection, the concept did not immediately take off. Former IUCN Secretary General, Sir Martin Holdgate, believes that the idea failed to gain wider recognition because nobody "could understand what ecodevelopment meant. The eco prefix [was] not immediately transparent."[11]

Sustainable development, an updated version of eco-development, gained considerably more attention in the 1980s. The decade began with the publication of the *World Conservation Strategy* in 1980 by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)[12] with financial support from another major environmental group the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)[13] and also from UNEP. The overall purpose of the strategy document was "to stimulate a more focused approach to the management of living resources and to provide policy guidance on how this can be carried out" (IUCN et al, 1980, p vi). The document identified the sustainable utilisation of natural resources as one of its three priority requirements for global conservation. Twelve specific areas of action were identified for sustainable utilisation, including, for example, the need to allocate timber concessions with care and to manage them to high standards.

The strategy's concluding section was entitled 'Towards Sustainable Development' and surmised that the underlying causes of underdevelopment and environmental degradation were linked to related global factors. While the *World Conservation Strategy* provided the basis for many environmental group campaigns and programmes in the 1980s, it failed to promote partnership with NGOs advocating for more equitable socio-economic development. Another major limitation was its lack of attention to the social and political obstacles to effective implementation of sustainable development (see Adams, 1990; Reid, 1995).

Our common future

Sustainable development came into popular usage with the publication of *Our common future* in 1987. This best-selling report was the major output of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), an independent body established by the UN in December 1983 to investigate the underlying causes of environment and development problems and to develop "a global agenda for change". Chaired by Norwegian Gro Harlem Brundtland, the so-called Brundtland Commission included ten members from northern countries and twelve from southern nations.

Our common future defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.… It contains ... two key concepts ... the essential needs of the world's poor ... should be given overriding priority; and the idea of limitations ... on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs" (WCED 1987, p 43). The Brundtland Com-mission saw sustainable development as a framework for the integration of policies for environmental protection and socio-economic development. *Our common future* invited all interest groups "to join forces, to identify common goals, and to agree on common action" (McCoy and McCully, 1993, p 6). The report concluded with a call for immediate follow-up action culminating in "an international Conference ... to review progress made and promote follow-up arrangements that will be needed over time to set benchmarks and to maintain human progress within the guide-lines of human needs and natural laws" (WCED, 1987, p 343).

By the end of the 1980s, sustainable development had emerged on the international policy agenda as the new big idea. Sustainable development brought together global environmental sustainability, the development needs of the world's poor and powerless, and the economic well-being of communities and countries everywhere. This attempt to integrate widely divergent interests was the cornerstone of both Brundtland and the Rio process which followed. Critics of sustainable development include those who view it as a scheme for sustained growth within the prevailing industrial model which they believe devalues nature (see Nikiforuk, 1990). One of sustainable development's main strengths, nevertheless, lies in its potential to provide a basis for "partnership to develop joint policies and strategies" (Dauncey, 1989, p 46; see also Box 1.2).

Box 1.2: Partnership and sustainable development

In northern, industrialised countries, the word 'partnership' has tended to be used primarily to describe a profit-making business relationship between two or more people where the partners jointly provide the financial capital and share both control and profits. In recent times, partnership has also entered into common usage as a neutral term to describe a romantic relationship between two individuals (ie, the partners) who may or may not live together.

Over the past three decades, social scientists in different disciplines have been analysing new forms of partnership and collaboration which are emerging in a range of organisational settings. In the face of upheavals associated with economic and technological change, a growing number of businesses are adopting collaborative strategies such as joint ventures and research and development consortia with academic institutions and other companies. With the rise of privatisation and deregulation in the 1980s, local governments in the UK and Europe have been increasingly working in partnership with private sector interests. These public–private partnerships are now seen as "the most acceptable and required form of local governance, and will remain so into the 21st century" (Stewart and Snape, 1996, p 5). Also in the 1980s, NGOs working in different sectors and geographical regions began to speak of each other as partners.

Feminist writers such as Riane Eisler envision "a new integrated partnership politics that factors in matters that have been largely ignored in most analyses of how to move to a humane future" (1996, p 565). Organisational behaviourist Barbara Gray describes this new collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can con-structively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their limited vision of what is possible" (1989, p 5). The catalyst is usually a complex problem which organisations have been unable to resolve alone. Management specialist Sandra Waddock notes that partnerships often emerge when a problem is so broad in scope that it requires "the inter-action of many interdependent actors for [its] resolution" (1991, p 487).

Sustainable development emerged in the 1980s as a new organising concept which integrated a wide range of complex, global issues related to envir-onmental protection and socio-economic development. According to Frances Westley and Harri Vredenburg the Brundtland Commission report offered sustainable development as: "a new problem domain ... in which both environmentalists and

business were clearly stakeholders” (1991, pp 71-72).

The Rio process

The Earth Summit would not have taken place without many years of exerted pressure by environmental groups upon governments, particularly in Europe and North America. With sustainable development and other environmental issues near the top of polit-ical agendas in most northern industrialised countries, the UN General Assembly called for a global meeting to "devise strategies to halt and reverse the effects of environmental degradation in the context of increased national and international efforts to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all countries."

The UNCED or Earth Summit was subsequently scheduled for June 1992 to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of Stockholm. For the UN and its member states, the Earth Summit was also a response to worsening North–South socio-economic disparities and related global environmental degradation. This was a key factor in both the selection of Rio as a strategic southern venue and the adoption of a broader agenda than in 1972.

Despite Rio's lofty ambitions, expectations for the Earth Summit varied widely. Some environmental groups used Rio as a media opportunity to argue that the summit represented the "last chance to save the planet". Others accepted that action by governments and international institutions at Rio needed to be augmented by action at the community level. In this context, political leaders and their representatives needed to be supported and compelled to act by individuals and citizens' groups. The predominant message from the environmental movement to the conference organisers, was, however, that "the world is running out of space and time" (IUCN et al, 1991, p 165).

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), on behalf of its 7,500 member companies and associations, wanted the UN and its member states to ensure that the conference gave "full attention ... to understanding the scientific and economic aspects of environmental issues and to implementing market-oriented approaches". Furthermore, the ICC wanted delegates to recognise that multilateral environmental agreements could have adverse impacts upon trade and economic growth (see Willums and Golüke, 1992, p 18). The other major business perspective was articulated by the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD), which emphasised the essential role of economic growth in sustainable development and argued that the summit should consider a combination of economic instruments,

regulatory mechanisms and private sector voluntary initiatives. The business response to sustainable development before and after Rio is explored in detail in Chapter three.

Expectations of government representatives for Rio were largely influenced by political priorities at home. Writing in *The New Yorker* just days before the official conference opened, John Newhouse described the summit's North–South divide as follows:

> [T]he rich societies of the industrialised North want everyone to begin being sensible about the environment; the people of the Southern latitudes maintain that those who polluted the envir-onment en route to great prosperity are really asking the less well off to take steps that will keep them that way. We will play the environment game, the developing countries say, only if the developed world greatly expands its aid that it provides us. (1992, p 64)

Although most northern governments opposed the idea of a linkage between environment and development when the pro-posed summit was first discussed in 1989 Japan backed southern governments' insistence on equal billing for their socio-economic development concerns.

Media coverage of the actual conference largely focused on irreconcilable North–South divisions. A sample of newspaper headlines painted a picture of chaos, confusion and despair:

> Earth Summit comes down to money (June 3)
>
> Rio talks clogged by Malaysia forest plan (June 8)
>
> Summit is falling apart (June 9)
>
> Chaos reigns supreme as leaders take to stage (June 12)
>
> Good intentions doomed by gulf between rich and poor (June 15)
>
> Earth Summit trips over high hurdle (June 16).[14]

Box 1.3: Sustainable development from Brundtland to Rio 1987-92

1987 *Our common future:* This was the main report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission was expected to "re-examine the critical issues of environment and develop-ment, and formulate innovative, concrete and realistic action proposals."

1991 *Caring for the Earth:* A joint effort by IUCN, UNEP and WWF produced this follow-up to the 1980 *World Conservation Strategy*. Subtitled 'A strategy for sustainable living', its stated aim was "to help improve the conditions of the world's people" by seeking commitment to "the ethic of sustainable living" and by integrating conservation and development efforts.

1991 *Agenda Ya Wananchi:* This 'citizens' action plan for the 1990s' was the major output of the Paris Roots of the Future global NGO conference organised by the Nairobi-based Environment Liaison Centre International. Agenda Ya Wananchi advocated citizen involvement in building a new world. The document was presented to governments at the Earth Summit and was seen as a lobbying tool beyond Rio.

1992 *Changing course:* This book was the BCSD's official report for the Rio Summit. Its purpose was "to present a global business perspective on sustainable development and to stimulate the interest and involvement of the international business community" (Schmidheiny, 1992, p xix). Some 50 business leaders contributed to this consensus report.

1992 *Agenda 21:* Adopted at Rio, Agenda 21 is a framework to make development socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. It provides UN agencies and member states with the tools to develop coordinated international and national strategies for sustainable development. Agenda 21 states that such strategies should be developed in partnership with civil society.

As the conference drew to a close, however, Paul Lewis of *The New York Times* offered a more balanced reflection on the Rio process:

> The Earth Summit … has given the world the first real glimpse of the kind of global diplomacy that is becoming possible now that the cold war is over. But the conference has also shown how difficult negotiating worldwide solutions to worldwide

> problems is likely to be.… The summit agreement that was approved today has already been denounced by some groups as weak – as "business as usual" and "as a failure to set a new direction for life on earth," as Friends of the Earth called it today.… But for many, the accord is important mainly as the start of a process that could eventually change the way the world approaches economic growth and the challenge of underdevelopment in the southern hemisphere, shifting the basis of all new aid and investment toward environmental sustainability. (1992, p A1)

The participation of environmental groups and other NGOs also proved to be significant, as Martin Khor of the Malaysia-based Third World Network reminds us:

> [Rio] succeeded in legitimising the environmentalists' crucial concerns … [and] forged new and stronger links between Northern and Southern groups, between development and environment activists. It would now be difficult for environmentalists to stick to wildlife issues or population, without simultaneously addressing international equity and global power structures … [Rio] has also given legitimacy to the cause of environmental protection in the South. (1992, p 4)

The London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) added that for NGOs, "Rio represented a push forward, a raised profile, and an added recognition by governments and international organisations" (Holmberg et al, 1993, p 19).[15]

For business, Rio heightened awareness about corporate environmental policy and management initiatives such as the ICC Business Charter on Sustainable Development and the BCSD *Changing course* report. Despite Greenpeace and the efforts of others to dismiss these contributions as 'greenwash', the presence and influence of global corporate leaders in the Rio process was considerable. Two hundred foreign executives attended the ICC Industry Forum in Rio. According to the ICC's Nigel Blackburn, Rio confirmed that business had an essential role in cooperating with government and international aid agencies on large-scale investments in environmental improvements such as superior technology, improved

infrastructure and greater energy efficiency (Centre for Our Common Future, 1992, p 6). In its post-Rio analysis, IIED argued that "the long-term result of the [business] presence in Rio … may be a growing willingness by business to participate in such gatherings, and also a growing willingness by governments to accept and encourage that participation" (Holmberg et al, 1993, p 16).

Whereas NGOs such as Greenpeace-International, Oxfam and the Third World Network were highly critical about the role of business and industry in the Rio process, others such as WWF-International, IUCN, IIED and the Worldwatch Institute were much more willing to enter into policy discussions with business about sustainable development.

Box 1.4: Official Rio agreements

- *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development:* A non-binding statement of 27 broad principles to guide for sustainable development. The declaration recognises environmental protection as part of socio-economic development and gives priority to the needs of developing countries.
- *Agenda 21:* A non-legally binding blueprint to clean up the global environment and to promote sustainable development. This 800-page document was adopted by consensus after developing countries with-drew their demand for specific commitments of aid from developed nations to fund its implementation.
- *Convention on Biological Diversity:* A legally binding treaty that requires inventories of plants and wildlife and plans to protect endangered species. It also obliges countries to ensure equitable distribution of benefits from the use of biological diversity.
- *Convention on Climate Change:* A legally binding treaty that aims to stabilise greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at levels which will minimise impacts upon the global climate system. The convention recommends cutting emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases associated with climate change.
- *Statement on Forest Principles:* A non-legally binding document that recommends that countries assess the impact of economic development on their forests, and take steps, both individually and with other countries, to minimise the damage. Earlier negotiations for a convention failed.

After Rio

Since Rio, a number of high-level UN conferences have been held which have close links to the goals of both the Earth Summit and Agenda 21. The achievement of sustainable development depends upon a more integrated response within the UN system and in collaboration with governments, NGOs, business and other actors from the global to the local level. Accordingly, the UN has responded with a series of inter-related conferences which have continued and in many cases deepened the sustainable development debate. Since 1992 there have been six major conferences in this regard:

- International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo.
- World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna.
- World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen.
- Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing.
- Habitat II, The City Summit, Istanbul.
- World Food Summit, Rome.

Nitin Desai, Under Secretary-General for the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development describes the connections between Rio and these six conferences:

> The search for consensus on global co-operation links these economic, social and environmental conferences together in an international policy dialogue that seeks to define a more integrated and holistic strategy for human development and welfare. Although each of these conferences tackles development from a slightly different perspective and offers something unique … they all build on and reinforce each other in significant ways. (Desai, 1994, p 1)

Many have criticised these conferences as global 'talk shops' which resolve little and which add unnecessary complexity to the idea of sustainable development. Others believe that such international gatherings are a necessary part of the process of clarifying and deepening our understanding of sustainable development, particularly as it applies to different sectors, issues and target groups.

Box 1.5: UN Commission on Sustainable Development

At its first organisational session in June 1993, the commission developed an extensive review and reporting process to involve all actors recognised in Agenda 21 and any others deemed appropriate. Environmental groups made substantial contributions to on-the-floor debates and participated in "informal negotiations specific policies and initiatives" a trend which was sustained throughout the subsequent sessions (Dodds and Bigg, 1997). Some 350 NGOs were represented at the 1993 session. Business representation was "dominated by those with interests likely to be damaged by the full implementation of the Rio agreements" (Roddick, 1994, p 7). The oil and nuclear industries were particularly active. "Green industries such as the renewables, water sanitation, etc [were] noticeably absent."[16]

The 1994 session included the following agreements among others:

- emphasis on the importance of continuous exchange of information on practical experience gained by countries, organisations and major groups;
- support for the ongoing work on the elaboration of realistic and understandable sustainable development indicators that can supplement national reporting;
- development of innovative ways of working ... including means by which information can be shared and the expertise of a wide range of actors could be sought. (Dodds and Bigg, 1997)

Other conclusions of the second session were less optimistic, including issues such as inadequate Agenda 21 financing and environmental technology transfer, and the adverse effects of existing consumption patterns upon sustainable development.

The 1995 session established an Intergovernmental Panel on Forests in an effort to improve upon the Forest Principles agreed at Rio. Other major outcomes of the 1995 session included an analysis of consumption and production patterns and an agreed timetable for the preparation of sustainable development indicators.

The 1996 session proved to be a disappointment in comparison with 1995 given that much of the time was spent discussing the parameters of the five-year review of progress since Rio. The 'Day in the Workplace' session hosted by representatives of business and trade unions was singled out as one of the positive outcomes of the session. The 1996 session also concluded that while "eco-efficiency is a promising strategy for policy development, it is not a substitute for changes in unsustainable lifestyles of consumers" (Dodds and Bigg, 1997). The 1997 session – which was open-ended to allow for the full participation of all States – was devoted to preparations for Earth Summit II.

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development

In parallel with the various UN conferences outlined above, a new UN body has been coordinating international policy dialogue on sustainable development. Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 recommended the establishment of a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development "to ensure the effective follow up of the [Rio] Conference, as well as to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues" (UNCED, 1992, p 275). When the 47th session of the General Assembly met in December 1992 to review the Rio agreements, member states passed resolution 47/191 which detailed the terms of reference for the new commission. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)[17] was defined as a functional body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).[18]

In addition to its official mandate identified above, many governments and NGOs saw the new commission as a mechanism for completing Rio's unfinished business. In practice, this meant that the commission was expected to coordinate the efforts of all actors identified in Agenda 21 in order "to build on each other's successes and learn from each other's failures" (Aydin, 1994, p 2).

Since June 1993, the commission has held five formal sessions culminating in the April 1997 meeting which also served as the final preparatory session for Earth Summit II, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to review progress since Rio. For a review of the main outcomes of the sessions to date see Box 1.5 above.

General assessments of the commission's work to date vary. The so-called policy entrepreneurs,[19] particularly members of government and UN agency delegations and some major group representatives, are generally upbeat about its achievements. They believe that the commission has deepened many of the policy debates of Rio. Others, particularly major group representatives, have found the commission process tedious with little in the way of tangible outcomes. As one business delegate bluntly states:

> *Many of us feel that the CSD is not particularly effective. The meetings are boring and have a lot of inertia. They seem to be covering areas which are being covered elsewhere and they're going through*

> *the motions as it were. I think the CSD ought to be able to take a step back and say: What was it supposed to do but has not done very well? Given that all the other processes are going on within the conventions and the other insti-tutional arrangements, is the pace of activity since Rio fast enough? Are there issues which are not being dealt with properly? Can we stimulate those governments which are slower in producing their action plan? Can we stimulate them to do more? Can we give those sorts of signals?*

Other major groups have also been critical of the commission and other aspects of the official post-Rio process. The London-based UN Environment and Development Committee (UNED-UK), a forum for major group dialogue and collaboration on post-Rio matters has organised various workshops and conferences since Rio. At the 1995 UNED-UK Annual Conference *Sustaining developments since the Rio Summit*, the following points were among the conference's main findings:

- Government has withdrawn from a number of essential policy areas to do with sustainable development.
- National government is devolving responsibilities to local authorities, with neither the power nor the resources to carry them out.
- The main point of sustainability has been missed – the need for common goals and cooperation ... among those respons-ible for economy, environment and social equity at national and local level.
- The Biodiversity and Climate Change conventions have produced more meetings and reports but little else.
- The CSD ... is largely a discussion forum as well, where governments describe what could or should be done to further sustainability, but make no commitments.
- There is fragmentation ... among the NGO community.... [T]o solve sustainability problems we have to learn to talk to each other (see McInery, 1996, pp 33–35).

Given that most of the UNED-UK Conference participants were representatives of the nine major groups identified in Agenda 21, it is not surprising that there was strong criticism of the role of governments in implementing sustainable development. The conference findings, however, also reveal a deeply-held feeling among most major groups that governments are failing to provide the necessary policy frameworks for sustainable development. Barbara Bramble of the National Wildlife Federation in the USA and a major player in the post-Rio process argues that governments:

> ... must contribute to and not interfere with international consensus on solutions to global problems no nation can handle on its own.... This role is essentially to facilitate the work of others. It would, indeed, be a loss of power. (in McInery, 1996, p 36)

If the Commission on Sustainable Development, other UN agencies and national governments were to take on board the "serious application of Agenda 21" it would mean "the end of business as usual". As Bramble asserts, "real change will only come when ... the whole business of government" adopts and integrates the principles and recommendations embodied in Agenda 21.

Major group implementation

Whereas most governments continue to resist necessary policy changes, major groups are creating a growing body of practical experience with the implementation of sustainable development. A detailed review of this extensive work is beyond the scope of this book. We offer here a brief overview of various post-Rio initiatives by major groups to emphasise the importance of partnership in the implementation of sustainable development. Agenda 21 identified "the need to activate a sense of common purpose on behalf of all sectors of society" and asserts that "the chances of forging such a sense of purpose will depend on the willingness of all sectors to participate in genuine social partnership and dialogue" (UNCED, 1992, p 230). Among the nine major groups specified in Agenda 21 as key actors in the shaping and implementation of policy alternatives, NGOs and business have emerged in the post-Rio period as both competitors and partners along the road to sustainable development.[20]

Examples of environmental group, business and other major group initiatives in the post-Rio period are provided below:

- World Wide Fund for Nature is the world's largest independent conservation organization, with more than five million supporters and a global network of 24 national organizations, five associates, and 26 programme offices. WWF-International has been involved in the Rio process – from the first preparatory meeting in August 1991 through to the Earth Summit and beyond to the consecutive sessions of the CSD. The organisation has participated in every intersessional and CSD session and as a result has formed a strong working relationship with UN staff and delegates. Each year WWF-International produces concise position statements on the issues tabled at the CSD, offering decision makers action and policy recommendations illustrated with projects and case studies. The CSD has provided important opportunities for advancing WWF's existing programme of work at the national and international levels, including on trade, biosafety and chemical safety. Rio continues to provide a useful banner under which the organisation can further develop its policy and fieldwork based on an integrated approach to environment and development issues and their inter-relationships. The Rio process has led to formal and informal partnerships with other major groups, for example, with industry on energy efficiency centres in Eastern Europe and with other NGOs on Local Agenda 21 and preparations for Earth Summit II. (Source: C. St Laurent, WWF-Inter-national)

- World Business Council for Sustainable Development **(WBCSD)** is a coalition of 120 international companies committed to the environment and to the principles of economic growth and sustainable development. The Geneva-based successor to the BCSD has members in 33 countries, representing more than 20 major industrial sectors. One of its main goals is to promote closer partnership between sectors. The World Business Council's strategy and activities in the post-Rio process are as follows:

  1. The Earth Summit endorsed eco-efficiency as the way forward for business to collectively contribute to sustainable development. At the Business Council, eco-efficiency is the centre of the work programme, and is the fundamental concept underlying its activities. The council defines eco-efficiency as the process of producing more from less; reducing waste and

pollution, and using less energy while meeting the demands of consumers.

2. From the Rio Conference, a number of programmes the WBCSD has followed up include introducing mechanisms to internalise environmental costs; looking at the develop-ment of an open multilateral trading system recognising that trade and protection of the environment are not contra-dictory; developing innovative methods of production and management to use the world's resources efficiently.

3. To help advance the process of eco-efficiency, the council and member companies have worked closely with governments in the North and South; in partnership with environmental campaigners; and communities. The council believes that business is changing to meet emerging social and market trends in which it influences, and is influenced by, change. (Source: A. Holmes, WBCSD)

- International Network for Environmental Management (INEM) is a German-based global federation of non-profit national and regional industry associations, promoting and fostering environmental management and sustainable develop-ment. The INEM network comprises 24 member and affiliated business associations and nine cleaner production centres in 27 countries on five continents. INEM's major post-Rio programme is Industry 21, the first private sector initiative for the implementation of the business-related aspects of Agenda 21. Industry 21 included the Global Environmental Management Survey which compared the state of environmental management around the world. Industry 21 encompasses 13 other programmes and projects. INEM has collaborated with intergovernmental organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and EC; UN bodies such as the CSD, UNEP, UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Industrial Development Organisation (IDO); standard-setting bodies such as the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO); and business associations such as the World Business Council and ICC. (Source: T. Davis, INEM)
- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) serves as the international environmental agency for local governments that have direct environmental management

responsibilities. Formally associated with the International Union of Local Authorities, the Toronto-based ICLEI aims to build and serve a worldwide movement among its constituency of 240 local governments and their associations to achieve and monitor tangible improvements in local and global environmental conditions through cumulative local actions. ICLEI supports the Local Agenda 21 process with technical assistance and networking. Local Agenda 21 is a process whereby community-level, sustainable development strategies are developed by local authorities in cooperation with citizens, local organisations and private enterprises. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 requested all local authorities to develop their own Local Agenda 21 by the end of 1996. A recent ICLEI survey found that more than 2,000 local authorities worldwide have already done so. (Source: J. Walker, ICLEI)

Earth Summit II: June 1997

Earth Summit II, the UN General Assembly's Special Session held in June 1997, was conceived to review progress on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the other Rio Agreements since 1992. Earth Summit II has offered an opportunity to reflect on both the accomplishments and the shortcomings of local, national and international efforts to promote sustainable development. The summit has helped to revitalise the global sustainability agenda as we face the new millennium.

Governments and relevant regional and subregional organ-isations were asked to report on progress achieved since Rio. Contributions were also welcomed from the following: hemi-spheric, regional and subregional conferences on sustainable development; relevant organisations and bodies of the UN system; and the Conferences of the Parties or other regulatory bodies of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification, as well as the regulatory bodies of other relevant instruments and the Global Environmental Facility. The importance of major groups participation in the process was also emphasised.

The Secretary-General's report contained a comprehensive evaluation of the progress achieved since Rio in the imple-mentation of Agenda 21 and related outcomes at all levels, as well as recommendations for future actions and priorities. This report was tabled at the April 1997 Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and included the following:

- concise reports which include appraisals of progress achieved in specific sectoral and cross-sectoral areas;
- country profiles which provide a succinct presentation of progress made and constraints encountered in implementing Agenda 21 at the national level, compiled on the basis of national information received and in close cooperation with the governments concerned;
- major and emerging trends and issues within the context of Agenda 21 and related outcomes of the Rio Conference in the area of sustainable development, including the environmental impact of activities that are extremely hazardous to the environment, taking into account the views of states; and
- recommendations on the future role of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the follow-up to the outcome of the Rio Conference and related outcomes, building on experience gained since 1992.

UNED-UK identified the following substantive issues for Earth Summit II based upon various reports from major groups and official sources:

- strengthen the integration environment and development;
- place greater emphasis upon poverty and unemployment;
- address unsustainable patterns of production and con-sumption;
- implement comprehensive ecological tax reform;
- achieve 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) directed to overseas development assistance;
- evaluate market-based instruments such as environmental cost accounting;
- negotiate a code of conduct and compliance measures for transnational corporations;
- establish an Intergovernmental Panel on Financing Sustainable Development;
- improve the accountability and representation of the inter-governmental process of the Commission on Sustainable Development;

- enhance government regulation and global governance (see Bigg and Mucke, 1996).

Above all, the effective implementation of Agenda 21 and the other Rio agreements depends upon the collaboration of individuals and groups "who understand what sustainable development means in their everyday lives … and who are both able and willing to participate in shaping a sustainable future" (Bigg and Mucke, 1996).

Sustainable development at the crossroads

Sustainable development remains a powerful, yet elusive, concept in the post-Rio period. Between and within communities, social movements, governments, NGOs, businesses, industry associ-ations, academia and numerous other groups worldwide, there are many definitions and interpretations of sustainable development. Certain segments of the environmental movement continue to dismiss sustainable development as a contradiction in terms, whereas others have embraced it as a new way of putting environmental and social issues on the public policy and corporate agendas. Many government, NGO and UN aid agencies have adopted sustainable development as the basis for new technical assistance programmes to address the worsening socio-economic conditions of the world's poor and related environmental degradation. Within the business community, sustainable develop-ment has been used both as a strategic planning framework for environmental management and as a public relations term to enhance corporate image.

The academic community remains largely divided between those who regard sustainable development as a "basically flawed" concept (Beckerman, 1995, p 126) and those who believe that "it invites us to give practical support to the values of social equity, human worth and ecological health" (Reid, 1995, p 235). In between these two extremes, Bill Adams acknowledges sustainable development's "eclecticism and inconsistencies" and yet recognises that it has helped raise awareness about "significant problems and real issues" (1993, p 218). Adams elaborates further on sustainable development's conceptual appeal and calls for practical implementation:

> Sustainable development is a flag of convenience under which diverse ships sail, and it is this catholic scope that goes a long way to explain its power and

> popularity as a term.… [It should embrace] micro and macro scale, from peasant to transnational corporation, from field to bio-sphere…. [It needs to be] lodged in practice, within the daily realities of people's lives. (1993, pp 218-19)

While many researchers and practitioners continue to call for a universally agreed definition, there is growing acceptance that the meaning of sustainable development is evolving. Clearer and perhaps fewer definitions of sustainable development may emerge from the world of practice in the coming years (see Box 1.6).

We believe that sustainable development has become a new organising principle, perhaps an emerging, positive myth, which has the potential to bring together diverse and often competing causes. The mythic quality of sustainable development lies in its capacity to clarify the Earth's complexity and facilitate commitment to new collaborative models. Lending support to this argument, Joseph Campbell believes that "the only myth that is going to be worth thinking about in the immediate future is one that is talking about the planet, not the city, not these people, but the planet and everybody on it" (1988, p 41). The emergence of the sustainable development myth may indeed be an important catalyst for the formulation and implementation of creative and effective responses to many of the overwhelming challenges presented in Agenda 21 and the other Rio agreements.[21]

Box 1.6: Key elements of sustainable development

Sustainable development is both a change process (ie, developing sus-tainability) and a key organising principle, similar to concepts such as social justice, human rights and equity. We believe that less time should be devoted to finding an ideal definition and more to exploring the opportunities and risks which sustainable development presents. Sociologists Tade Aina and Ade Salau see sustainable development as a paradigm which contains "different currents while sharing a broadly similar platform on methodology, philosophy, epistemology, ideology, politics and practice." They believe that sustainable development is based upon a set of key elements which constitute a shared platform. These include:

- ecological integrity and sustainability;
- equity and distributive justice at all levels (global, national, community, household and intergenerational);
- socially-relevant economic productivity and technological development;
- popular participation and collective autonomy;
- prevalence and institutionalization of human and democratic rights. (1992, p 3)

Sustainable development challenges us to understand and act upon eco-logical, social, economic and political issues in an integrated manner.

An emerging consensus between pragmatists within both the environmental movement and the business community indicates that sustainable development must promote solutions to social, environmental and economic problems from the local to the global level. As part of this attempt to identify solutions, a growing number of environmental groups are entering into agreements with business to implement pilot projects which promote sustainable development in a wide range of industrial and service sectors. The rest of the book elaborates on how and why these new relationships have emerged in recent years.

The experience of Rio and beyond indicates that sustainable development has reached a crossroads. The process of finding solutions will still include conflict, however the partnership road to sustainability requires greater emphasis upon dialogue and listening than in the past. In order to be able to resolve conflict between people with quite different interests, the various stakeholders in the future

must begin to work together and learn to value human, cultural and biological diversity as central tenets of sustainable development. Many contentious issues will remain unresolved; competing interests will continue to promote different agendas. The challenge for business and environmental groups, nevertheless, is to learn how to work together more effectively. If Rio was about struggling with diversity, then the post-Rio period provides an opportunity to embrace diversity as a key implementation strategy for sustainable development.

Notes

[1] Gustavo Esteva offers a more damning critique of development. He calls it "a devaluation of [people's] skills, values and experience in favour of a growing dependence on guidance and management by bureaucrats, technocrats, educators, and development experts" (1992, p 138).

[2] In 1990, the World Bank insisted that "the 1980s did not, in fact, reverse the overall trend of progress" and yet conceded that "the setbacks of the 1980s fell heavily on particular regions ... in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America incomes fell ... and the incidence of poverty increased." See World Bank (1990) pp 1-2. With the exception of the initial positive perceived impacts of the 'Green Revolution', there was significant political unrest throughout South Asia. David Korten argues that "the development industry ... is in a state of disarray.... Development has become a big business, preoccupied more with its own growth and imperatives than with the people it was originally created to serve" (1990, p ix).

[3] This perspective is anti-developmentalism and equates development with the project of modernity. Modernity has been the organising principle for nation states since the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, when science and rationality began to achieve reverential respect. Such arguments have fertile ground from which to draw ideas, including sociological analyses of forced consumption (Hirsch, 1977) and supply-led demand (Gorz, 1989). Other examples can be found in development theories about the exploitation of peripheral areas (Wallerstein, 1974) and the creation of underdevelopment by industrialised countries (Frank, 1967).

[4] Booth argues that development needs a new research agenda based upon academics doing a much better job of investigating and explaining the different experiences with development in the 1990s.

[5] However, Lovelock's Gaia thesis implies no consciousness on the part of the Earth.

[6] Membership in six leading UK environmental groups rose from 1.7 million to 3.8 million between 1981 and 1990. In the USA, membership for seven

major environmental NGOs went from 5.3-9.5 million between 1980 and 1990.

[7] The Stockholm Conference had a definite northern bias. According to Adams (1990) the impetus "came from the developed world, and the initial focus was on the environmental problems of industrialization." Only eight of Stockholm's 109 Recommendations for Action dealt with the problem of development and environment (p 37).

[8] Andrew Knight, a specialist in UN reform sees the most positive outcomes of Stockholm as: Earthwatch (an early warning surveillance system); Infoterra (a decentralised information clearing house); World Environment Day; and the Nairobi-based UN Environment Programme (UNEP). However, UNEP is seen as being one of the UN's least effective and poorest agencies (Adams, 1990). And Knight calls Stockholm's achievements only "incremental changes" (Ghosh, 1992, p A10).

[9] David Reid (1995) identifies the following candidates: Eva Balfour, founder of the Soil Association, Wes Jackson, the American geneticist, and the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

[10] Wolfgang Sachs describes eco-development as "an approach to development aimed at harmonizing social and economic objectives with ecologically sound management, in a spirit of solidarity with future generations" (1979, p 113). Key features of ecodevelopment included: meeting basic human needs; the importance of participation; and the role of appropriate technology. Eco-development implied qualitative growth as opposed to zero growth and advocated initiatives such as low energy consumption, recycling and ecological land use and human settlement planning (see Adams, 1990, pp 51-56).

[11] Interview with Sir Martin Holgate, 1 October 1996. From this point on all unreferenced quotes are from interviews or personal communications with the authors.

[12] Now known as the World Conservation Union.

[13] Now known as the World Wide Fund for Nature, except in Canada and the USA where the original name continues to be used.

[14] Post-Rio analysis in specialist environmental or NGO publications was equally despondent. *The Ecologist* referred to "The Earth Summit Débâcle". *Greenpeace Business* condemned the "Rio fiasco". The UK Green Party's *Real World* summed up the Rio process with a leading question: "Wrong Agenda, Wrong Outcome?" Post-Rio environmental books also mocked the Earth Summit process with provocative titles such as Joni Seager's *Earth Follies* (1993) Pratap Chatterjee and Matthias Finger's *The Earth Brokers* (1994).

[15] Another view of the Rio process is offered by Chatterjee and Finger (1994). They argue that NGO interests were coopted through their participation in the

process. By mobilising for Rio, NGOs were legitimising an agenda dominated by governments, UN agencies and transnational corporations.

[16] Personal correspondence from J. Roddick, 23 August, 1994.

[17] The CSD has 53 members who are drawn from UN member states. Seats are allocated as follows: Africa (13); Asia (11); Eastern Europe (6); Latin America/Caribbean (10); and western Europe/North America (13). Membership rotates with one third up for election each year. Elections are conducted through the UN regions. The CSD Secretariat is located within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development in New York, and has a staff of less than two dozen.

[18] One of the principal UN organs, ECOSOC is responsible for coordinating the specialised agencies, several autonomous inter-governmental organisations, functional and regional commissions, sessional and standing committees, and expert, ad hoc and related bodies. See Riggs and Plano (1988) pp 40-44.

[19] Regular participants in international conferences and meetings who in some cases have developed powerful identities as global policy actors separate from the official organisational affiliation. Another interpretation of policy entrepreneurs sees them as individuals and organisations who formulate and implement policies to fulfil their own agendas or to justify their own survival rather than concentrating on identifying and assessing the utility or acceptability of their work to intended beneficiaries who are often excluded from the international policy process.

[20] The other major groups identified in Agenda 21 are: women, youth, indigenous peoples, local authorities, trade unions and workers, farmers and the scientific/technological community.

[21] Murray Edelman challenges the dominant interpretation of myth as untruth or unreality: He calls it "an unquestioned belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning ... [and] a particularly relevant form of symbol in the emergence of mass political movements" (1971, p 53). For anthropologist Mary Douglas, the rituals associated with myth provide valuable "mediating institutions" (1970, p 19).