



INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT  
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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring you greetings from Canada. I bring you greetings from my Prime Minister, the Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who speaks on behalf of all my countrymen. Canadians from the Atlantic to the Pacific, are prepared to join enthusiastically in the adoption of measures which will help to improve the quality of life for all mankind.

The main message which I wish to convey to this great assembly today, Mr. President, is simple. It is this. Nature is all important. Nature's laws, themselves, are universal. They are far-reaching. They deal with life. They concern us all.

Man breaks nature's laws at his peril. He breaks them and succeeding generations are the poorer for his lack of foresight, his lack of sensitivity, his lack of statesmanship on the ecological front.

Man-made laws, up until now at least, are different. They differ from place to place. They differ from one country to the next. They differ often markedly, from one continent, or from one part of the world to another.

But nature's laws are more exacting. Like the fundamental truths of biological science, they can not be ignored. Mankind may bend them to suit his convenience. But he will find, in the end, that he is all the poorer for having upset nature in a vain effort to win some short-run economic gain.

What bothers me most is the thought that man, as his numbers and affluence increase, seems bent on creating a dull and uninteresting environment for himself. Mass production, mass consumption, mass disposal, massive refuse heaps - all these are characteristic of an age which has lost sight of the balance of nature, of the revitalizing force which still exists in our great outdoors and which, itself, is threatened by our increasingly pedestrian way of life.

Biology, as a science, is still in its infancy. We know even less about biological phenomenon than we do about economics. All the more reason for going slow. All the more reason to try to unravel the mysteries of nature, to monitor changes in our global environment, to play it safe in the harvesting of our living resources. All the more reason to

prepare environmental impact statements before, and not after we launch new projects on a major scale.

I am not one of those, Mr. President, who believes that economic growth and environmental quality are necessarily in conflict with one another. Quite the opposite. I believe that sound economic planning involves environmental statesmanship of the highest order. A good engineer understands the forces of nature; a good economist, because he takes the long view, must also be concerned with nature's biological scheme of things.

New jobs are needed. Challenging new jobs are needed everywhere. But it is often the character of these jobs, rather than their number, which is at issue. They, like the industries to which they are attached, must go with the grain of nature, not against it. We must add to the variety of life. They must help to make the process of living more interesting for everyone everywhere.

Of course we must be careful. We must not make unnatural substances and scatter them around. Produced for one purpose, they may have unfortunate side effects which come back to haunt us in the long run. Hence the emphasis on biodegradation; on the need to replace insidious substances like DDT with other chemicals which are not harmful to living things.

These observations flow from our own experience in Canada. Artificial substances like the poly-chlorinated bi-phenols (PCB'S) have had a devastating effect on our salmon runs and our bird life. We have stopped using them for this reason. We have replaced them with other substances which are more effective from an overall, resource management point of view.

We have learned, to our sorrow, that insect sprays which help to preserve certain forests, can also destroy a local fishery. We have learned that new processes using mercury, while they tended to cut the costs of other chemicals, constituted a hazard to man himself. Nor were these effects localized in their extent. Frequently they spread to other segments of our Canadian community, from province to province, and into the international sphere as well.

We moved quickly to contain these substances, to stop their production; either that or recycle them, keep them entirely within the factory fence.

There is an interesting corollary here. In protecting our local environment, we are often protecting the environment of our neighbour. By practicing environmental statesmanship, we are also helping to enhance the quality of life in lands that we will never see. Good neighbourliness, like cleanliness,

begins at home. Multiplied by similar actions on the part of others, it can be an environmental boon to all mankind.

The draft Declaration on the Human Environment, which we will be shortly considering, Mr. President, contains certain basic principles which Canada endorses as a desirable code for international behaviour. There is, for example, the principle that each nation accept responsibility for the effects of its environmental actions on others. Too often in the past the interests of our global community have been sacrificed by the short-sightedness, I might even say the callousness, of the few.

"Thou shalt not pollute the environment of thy neighbour, the ocean or the atmosphere". This dictum seems self-evident to me. I trust that it will become a part of our global environmental ethic in the future.

I am a firm believer, also, in environmental objectives and standards, levels of performance, which are based essentially on biological criteria, but criteria which also make economic sense as well.

These global objectives, these global standards, involve a simple test. This test pertains to life itself. Living things must not only continue to survive, they must flourish. If anything they should increase in their number and variety as the years go by.

Remember, also, that life in its most sophisticated forms is our own first line of defence. Endanger a single species at the top of the food chain and you are endangering the lives of men, women and children everywhere. Wipe out an animal species like the whale, or a bird like the bald-headed eagle, and mankind may shortly be in trouble too.

These elementary standards, these biological tests, these natural criteria should not be confined to any one country. Properly drawn, they are valid everywhere. They rest on a universal truth and they should, therefore, be global in their application.

Nature's laws are difficult to define. This is why we need more research; especially research on the biological front. But a lack of information should not be allowed to obscure an important point. The case for world-wide standards I believe, is incontestable. It is incontestable, not only because the cost of being clean may not be a cost at all, but because the destruction of all kinds of living things is bound to be destructive from the point of view of society as a whole.

Pollution havens are not for us. They are inexcusable in a comparatively affluent country like Canada. They are inexcusable, also, in the less developed parts of the world.

They are inexcusable because they are short-sighted, because they ignore the destruction, closein, of other resources. They are inexcusable because they also tend to make lives of the local population a dull, drab and even painful thing.

Mr. President, a great deal is expected of this Conference; a great deal in the allied fields of research monitoring and resource management. It can also help us to establish the kinds of global standards that I have been talking about. A number of international institutions will have to be set up for this purpose and, above all, to ensure that our man-made rules approximate ever more closely nature's marvelous way of doing things.

And so, Mr. President, I end where I began. Nature's laws, in truth, are universal. Man-made laws, especially in the area of the environment, must become universal as well.

The Declaration on the Human Environment marks a beginning. Hopefully, it will provide us with a framework of laws and institutions which will help us to protect nature in all its forms. Environmental protection can add immeasurably to the quality of life. It can add, tremendously, to life's enjoyment by men and women the world over.

Thank you Mr. President.