

NAIROBI DECLARATION (1982)

The world community of states, assembled in Nairobi from 10 to 18 May 1982 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm, having reviewed the measures taken to implement the Declaration and Action Plan adopted at that Conference, solemnly requests Governments and people to build on the progress so far achieved, but expresses its serious concern about the present state of the environment worldwide, and recognizes the urgent necessity of intensifying the efforts at the global, regional and national levels to protect and improve it.

1. The Stockholm Conference was a powerful force in increasing public awareness and understanding of the fragility of the human environment. The years since then have witnessed significant progress in environmental sciences; education, information-dissemination and training have expanded considerably; in nearly all countries, environmental legislation has been adopted, and a significant number of countries have incorporated within their constitutions provisions for the protection of the environment. Apart from the United Nations Environment Programme, additional governmental and not-governmental organizations have been established at all levels, and a number of important international agreements in respect of environmental co-operation have been concluded. The principles of the Stockholm Declaration are as valid today as they were in 1972. They provide a basic code of environmental conduct for the years to come.

2. However, the Action Plan has only been partially implemented, and the results cannot be considered as satisfactory, due mainly to inadequate foresight and understanding of the long-term benefits of environmental protection, to inadequate co-ordination of approaches and efforts, and to unavailability and inequitable distribution of resources. For these reasons, the Action Plan has not had sufficient impact on the international community as a whole. Some uncontrolled deterioration, deforestation, soil and water degradation and desertification are reaching alarming proportions, and seriously endanger the living conditions in large parts of the world. Diseases associated with adverse environmental conditions continue to cause human misery. Changes in the atmosphere – such as those in the ozone layer, the increasing concentration of carbon dioxide, and acid rain-pollution of the seas and inland waters, careless use and disposal of hazardous substances and the extinction of animal and plant species constitute further grave threats to the human environment.

3. During the last decade, new perceptions have emerged: the need for environmental management and assessment, the intimate complex interrelationship between environment, development, population and resources and the strain on the environment generated, particularly in urban areas, by increasing population have become widely recognized. A comprehensive and regionally integrated approach emphasizes this interrelationship can lead to environmentally sound and sustainable socio-economic development.

4. Threats to the environment are aggravated by poverty as well as by wasteful consumption patterns: both can lead people to over-exploit their environment. The International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade and the establishment of a new international economic order are thus among the major instruments in the global effort to reverse environmental degradation. Combination of market and planning mechanisms can also favour sound development and rational environmental and resource management.

5. The human environment would greatly benefit from an international atmosphere of peace and security, free from the threats of any war, especially nuclear war, and the waste of

intellectual and natural resources on armaments, as well as from apartheid, racial segregation and all forms of discrimination, colonial and other forms of oppression and foreign domination.

6. Many environmental problems transcend national boundaries and should, when appropriate, be resolved for the benefit of all through consultation action. Thus, states should promote the progressive development of environmental law, including conventions and agreements, and expand co-operation in scientific research and environmental management.

7. Environment deficiencies generated by conditions of underdevelopment, including external factors beyond the control of the countries concerned, pose grave problems, which can be combated by a more equitable distribution of technical and economic resources within and among states. Development countries, and other countries in a position to do so, should assist domestic efforts to deal with their most serious environmental problems. Utilization of appropriate technologies, particularly from other developing countries, could make economic and social progress compatible with conservation of natural resources.

8. Further efforts are needed to develop environmentally sound management and methods for the exploitation and utilization of natural resources and to modernize traditional pastoral system. Particular attention should be paid to the role of technical innovation in promoting resources substitution, recycling and conservation. The rapid depletion of traditional and conventional energy sources poses new and demanding challenges for the effective management and conservation of energy and the environment.

Rational energy planning among nations or groups of nations could be beneficial. Measures such as the development of new and renewable sources of energy will have a highly beneficial impact on the environment.

9. Prevention of damage to the environment is preferable to the burdensome and extensive repair of damage already done. Preventive action should include proper planning of all activities that have an impact on the environment. It is also important to increase public and political awareness of the importance of the environment through information, education and training. Responsible individual behaviors and involvement are essential in furthering the cause of the environment. Non-governmental organizations have a particularly important and often inspirational role to play in this sphere. All enterprises, including multinational corporations, should take account of their environmental responsibilities when adopting industrial production methods of technologies, or when exporting to other countries. Timely and adequate legislation action is important in this regard.

10. The world community of states solemnly reaffirms its commitment to the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan, as well as to the further strengthening and expansion of national efforts and international co-operation in the field of environmental protection. It also reaffirms its support for strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme as the major catalytic instrument for global environmental co-operation, and calls for increased resources to be made available, in particular through the Environment fund, to address the problems of the environment. It urges all Governments and people of the world to discharge their historical responsibility, collectively and individually, to ensure that our small planet is passed over to future generations in a condition which guarantees a life of human dignity for all.

10th Governing Council session
13th meeting
18 May 1982