

Prime Minister  
Gro Harlem Brundtland

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The Tanner Lecture on Human Values

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES OF THE 1990's  
OUR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS FUTURE GENERATIONS

Throughout human history, responsibility for the future of our own children and grandchildren has always been inherent in human nature. The future generation is associated with hope, continuity and progress. It has been the pride of the present generation to leave a heritage on which the next one can bring society forward.

This was possible for many in earlier generations. The future appeared stable and predictable. At the beginning of this century, neither human numbers nor human technology had the power to alter systems of the planet radically. It was not until we gained access to vast energy resources that we acquired the irrevocable power to destroy the biosphere. As this century draws to a close, a greatly increased human population and its activities have that power. And the results are showing. People have altered the Earth, and the altered Earth has changed people's lives to an unprecedented degree.

The future appears neither stable nor predictable. We don't know what life will be like for the next generations.

We all know the signs of the global crises now approaching. Global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, continued population growth, massive loss of species and biological diversity, acceleration of deforestation and desertification - these are all threats which will soon lead to breakdowns in vital support systems for life on Earth.

These trends must be reversed. No more scientific evidence is needed to reach that conclusion. Our foremost responsibility towards future generations is to ensure that there will be a future world worth living in. The future generations are knocking at our door today. The living conditions of our children and grandchildren will be determined now. Since they cannot take care of their own destiny, we must do so on their behalf.

We have but a very short time to design and implement the necessary changes in our attitudes, behaviour and policies. The changes we make - or fail to make - will have a decisive influence on the survival of life on earth.

Taking command of our common future will be a formidable task.

The interdependence that we now face goes beyond our traditional habit of dealing with issues one by one.

At present world attention is focused on the crisis in the Gulf. Leaders all over the world are preoccupied with a war. People are uncertain and afraid. At the same time -20 million people are facing starvation in Africa. These are different crises requiring different remedies. But they both touch upon our responsibility for future generations. Giving priority to one immediate challenge, must not lead us to neglect the others. Long-term problems are also urgent.

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When we entered the 1990s we did so against a background of positive and radical changes as former adversaries were moving further away from confrontation towards cooperation. Democracy was gaining ground not only in Europe but also in other parts of the world. There was a new belief in our ability to cooperate on common goals and aspirations, a new belief in respect for human rights and international law.

Iraq's brutal invasion of Kuwait last August and its persistent refusal to abide by the decisions of the UN Security Council to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from that country were serious setbacks.

It is a tragedy - and it raises serious concerns - that it has been necessary to use force, as authorized by the United Nations, to expel Iraq from Kuwait. All countries are under a duty to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. Those countries which are not themselves directly engaged, such as my own, must render appropriate support.

In Norway, we are doing so in fields where we have expertise and tradition. Our efforts are aimed at minimizing human suffering and protecting the environment. We have responded positively to a wide range of needs including a British request to send a mobile hospital to Saudi Arabia, and we will provide transport for wounded personnel from the area to Europe. Let me express the sincere hope to those British families, whose sons and daughters are currently in the Gulf that they will return safely and that they will do so sooner rather than later.

The objective of the present conflict is to restore the independence of Kuwait. This is not a war against the Iraqi people or against the territorial integrity of Iraq. The objective must be accomplished with a minimum of loss and human suffering.

The Middle East will need a period of healing and a new basis for future cooperation, based on the three priority issues I proposed to the United Nations in 1987 as Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Peace, environment and development. Stability in the Middle East must be based on a system which takes all legitimate interests into account. Our

European experience demonstrates that economic integration and interdependence is the best insurance policy against the reopening of confrontation.

I want to make one particular point about the war in the Gulf before returning to the challenges of peace. How could we in the industrialized countries, - we who are so determined to reduce offensive capabilities in Europe, allow the enormous build-up of Iraqi power? Governments and the private sector alike are responsible. Governments have failed to establish the necessary national and international rules, control and surveillance, and the private sector has exploited this vacuum in pursuit of profit.

We cannot ever again allow such dictators to arm for war. We need new treaty obligations which can control and verify trade in arms. The Security Council and the CSCE countries have a particular responsibility to give this issue top priority.

The enormous destructive power of modern weapons also makes it vitally necessary to strengthen our methods for conflict management and crisis control, short of the use of force.

In Iraq we have to deal with a leader whose ruthlessness knows no limits and who has subjected far more than his own population to tremendous sacrifice. The treatment of prisoners of war challenges the fundamental humanitarian minimum expressed in the Geneva Conventions. The environment itself has become a victim. Major deliberate oil spills have led to an ecological catastrophe in the waters and on the shores of the Gulf. Fires from burning oil wells add to the accumulation of soot and climate gases in the world's atmosphere. The president of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), my friend and fellow World Commissioner Sonny Ramphal - who is here today - has expressed his fear that nature is being made a major hapless victim of war.

When the discussions on postwar arrangements in the Gulf area begin, the question of an environmental strategy to redress ecological damage caused by the war should also be high on the agenda. We must do our utmost to ensure that the world community will emerge from this conflict with a deepened commitment to the rule of law in all international relations. We must see to it that the principles of international law which have justified the current operation will be systematically applied in the future.

In the Third World, anxieties are today rising that the Gulf war will have a dangerous impact also on development, that the costs of the operation and the ensuing disruption in the world economy will make it even harder to find the additional resources needed to put sustainable development on its own feet in the South. In Africa, the spectre of famine is again growing in several countries while the eyes of the world are turned elsewhere.

Through satellites and cables we receive fragmented images from all over the world, 24 hours a day. Complexity is reduced to disconnected simplicity. One day of multi-media information comes

close to what Umberto Eco calls a journey in hyper-reality. But decision-makers must not be blinded by the immediate. We must adopt a longer term view and never forget what it takes to promote change; in-depth knowledge, firm commitment and a clear vision of where we are headed.

Does the fact that leaders all over the world are preoccupied with a war mean that we have to change the agenda for the 1990s? Should we postpone dealing with all those other vital issues which will determine the future of humankind far into the next century?

No. Far from it. The hostilities in the Gulf will come to an end. It is essential that we do not lose sight of the objective of long-term management, even in times of crisis. We must reverse the dangerous trends which threaten the human environment. We must use resources without overusing them. And we must ensure that our children and grandchildren can realize their aspirations and ambitions.

In the course of the 1980s sustainable development became firmly anchored on the international agenda. We now know that ecology and economy are inextricably linked, and that environmental degradation can only be reversed by restructuring the economic system which has led us into the present crisis.

To reverse the current decline, we must integrate environmental concerns into all levels of economic planning, performance and accounting. A truly effective strategy for change must be built on a cradle-to-grave approach, from scientific exploration and technological innovation, through the cycles of production and consumption, to emissions control and waste disposal.

Most of all - a strategy for global change must deal squarely with the issue of world poverty, which is both a cause and an effect of global ecological decline. There is no way that we can win the battle to save our global environment unless we mount a full-scale, committed offensive against poverty and under-development in the Third World.

A better and more sustainable management of global change remains a prime political task for the 1990s. It will require leadership and long-term perspectives in political decision-making.

This cannot be achieved by top-down processes. It must have its base in the grass roots of our communities, in the minds and priorities of the individual citizen and voter, in the network of interest groups and non-governmental organizations as an essential part of our pluralistic societies.

To reverse present dangerous trends, we face an ethical challenge of new dimensions.

The transition to sustainable development touches on core issues of our societies. It concerns basic values and moral codes for human behaviour, attitudes and concern for fellow human beings,

for nature itself and for future generations.

In situations where survival is at stake, there will be overwhelming pressure to satisfy the immediate needs of the present. The World Commission's definition of sustainable development -our prescription for global change - is based on that reality. We see sustainable development as a process of change which can satisfy the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet and to satisfy their needs.

To engage all humankind in the efforts to save our global environment - and nothing less will do - we must also ensure that all peoples have an opportunity to satisfy basic needs without inflicting further damage to their own environment. This is clearly possible in today's world, but it requires broad political action for sustainable progress and human survival. We must begin now to ensure a better management of natural and human resources.

Today, we see many encouraging signs that these concerns for the environment are being reintegrated in our value systems. A powerful coalition - at least potentially - encompassing a wide variety of ideological and intellectual approaches is developing.

As modern research increases our understanding about the effects of man's interface with nature, more and more individuals reach the conclusion that only academic interest is no longer enough, that the findings require action, that our only chance for survival is to change our present behaviour before it is too late.

An obvious approach is based on human solidarity. The feeling of social responsibility for the poor and the underprivileged has always been a strong element in the political debate. Many now realize that poverty is a threat against the rights of the child, against equality and women's rights, against the vitality of nations and the social order. Today, there is increased awareness that this sense of responsibility must be extended to cover the interests of future generations.

We have also seen a growth of religious or spiritual approaches to global environmental issues. In Christian thinking, we see a new focus on the need to protect the work of creation. We see ecumenical initiatives to bring representatives of all the major faiths in the world together to work out a shared global vision, and to bring together political and spiritual leaders to formulate it.

Many different voices take part, but not all of them are singing in harmony. The value systems underpinning this new environmental concern are as varied as the fragmented reality that constitutes the world society of today. Through this diversity of voices, I believe an important message is emerging. The fact is that our planet is in danger, we have to act now to save it, and we can only manage if we do it together.

In many indigenous cultures, the need to protect the Earth is still a basic element of their faith.

From these many roots, from the cultures of science, faiths and ideologies, a new global environmental ethic may be in the process of being born. There has been an amazing change in public awareness and in the political attention given to environmental problems only in the four years since the World Commission on Environment and Development issued its report four years ago.

More and more groups and individuals now accept the need for a new code of behaviour defining basic principles for man's relationship with nature and the environment. A growing number of professional groups are revising their ethical norms to include principles reflecting environmental concerns.

Scientists have become more aware of the social and environmental responsibilities which follow from their work, and are discussing a new scientific ethic.

In industry, major ecological accidents such as the "Exxon Valdez" led to the elaboration of a new set of principles for corporate behaviour towards the environment, an effort which is now being expanded and made more global by the International Chamber of Commerce through the preparations of a Business Charter for Sustainable Development. Principles of environmental management for industry and business are being laid down.

We need to convey determination and belief that individual and collective efforts really matter, that we can succeed in reversing even deep-rooted negative trends if we put our hearts and minds to it. If we prophesy only doom, people will have no motive for change. If we signal that the task is almost hopeless, we will foster environmental nihilism - not stimulate a new global ethic.

There is reason - however - to express deep concern on one important account. The development dimension tends to be neglected or given insufficient attention in most discussions on environmental ethics.

A comprehensive environmental ethic cannot include only principles addressed to man's relationship with nature in our own half of the world, principles which are affordable or implementable only for countries or groups in the industrialized world. A true global ethic must give prime consideration to the need to achieve sustainable development in the South, where the vast majority of the members of future generations will be born. The achievement of a livable global environment depends on the sustainable development of the entire human family.

The goal to eradicate world poverty is itself one of the most important ethical challenges, but it is also an essential ingredient in the establishment of a new global ethic to save our common future.

On this crucial issue, there has been very little progress during the last few years. A large number of the least developed countries still experience negative per capita growth. Their struggle to ensure even the most basic of human needs for their citizens is becoming more precarious each passing year.

The development of a global economy, which has brought wealth and affluence to the industrialized countries, has left large parts of the Third World behind. The total number of people living in absolute poverty - most of them in the South - is increasing every day. We all know the results - rapid urbanization, high population growth and increasing pressure on the Earth's finite resources.

Many of our most pressing environmental problems, including those which deal with resource depletion and burden-sharing concern the question of how to cut the pie of natural resources on our planet, both within and among generations. Again, it is not enough to agree on how we should behave as individuals or group members on environmental issues. We must move beyond that.

The next logical step in our efforts to establish a global environmental ethic is to address how we should distribute environmental quality, how we should split the benefits of natural resources and how we should share the burdens for reversing past mistakes, among nations and individuals. This is a question of justice, of equity and of equal opportunity.

Today, the countries of the South clearly see the environmental hazards inherent in present development patterns. They have repeatedly stated their willingness to contribute their share to the global efforts now needed. I was very encouraged in reading the report of the South Commission, which stressed the importance of self-reliance, of the mobilization of indigenous systems of agriculture and industry.

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We have now begun the hard work of integrating the principles of sustainability into the way we run our societies - from the level of the individual to the level of international decision-making.

Statements from all over the world are clear as regards the willingness to act, but there is also a considerable confusion about what to do, about who should do it, - and when. We face considerable difficulties when we try to translate words into decisions and action.

We need solutions that can work. We need political leadership and we need public support. Changes depend on whether or not our democracies are able to produce forward-looking decisions. The truth is that in order to make decisions which will improve the environment, governments depend upon an environmental movement in the population that is strong enough to support even

the most difficult decisions. Extreme solutions will not do. The advocacy of draconian measures will not be accepted by our peoples. All political decisions must, in fact, be supported by - or have the potential support of - the majority of the people. Only then can truly effective change come about.

We are ready to express our firm support for a global climate convention. Most people will answer yes to this question. But are we willing to reduce the use of our private cars? We are ready to support giant clean-up operations of the North Sea, but are we ready to change our use of detergents? We are ready to call for increased efforts to counter acidification, but are we ready to accept that our local, technologically outdated factories must be closed down?

Democracy is central - and it is a precondition for environmental change. At the end of the day we must all recognize that the basic values of our societies are the very foundation for political action.

Past experiences demonstrate how difficult it is to implement political decisions which have a long-term perspective. Democratically elected governments tend to have an urge to remain in power, even after the next election.

When I was Minister of the Environment in Norway in the 1970ies, I was deeply engaged in an issue which involved the governments of Norway, the UK and other countries, that is the acidification issue. Far-sighted scientists in Norway had come to the conclusion that acidification of Norwegian soil and waters was due to sulphur emissions outside Norway, including those originating here in the UK. Only through close cooperation between science and governments were we finally able to convince governments in Europe of the root of the problems. This all finally led to European agreements on transboundary air pollution. But the road to the implementation of that goal was and is paved with obstacles provided by science, by governments and by people who had an interest in maintaining existing patterns. Clearly, the necessary decisions were most difficult in those countries where most of the pollution originated.

Such is often the difficulty of change. The World Commission believed that changes were not only necessary but also possible. Therefore the report was not a prophecy of doom, but indeed a positive vision for the future.

Never - ever - have our knowledge and capacity to address vital challenges been greater. Science thus holds a key to change if it can put its knowledge and research to use for environmental protection. As I am speaking to representatives of that segment of the population which are keepers, explorers and developers of this human knowledge, my appeal to you is to engage in democratic decision-making.

Science - like art - is a listening-post at the outer edges of human perception. But science cannot work in isolation. For



science to make maximum impact on the societies of tomorrow it must interact with politics, with democratic debate, and it must be geared towards defined needs.

Isaac Newton, whose name is forever linked with the University of Cambridge, said that he felt like a little boy looking for pebbles and shells in the sand while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before him. We have taken to sea on that great ocean, but we shall not drift around at random. Democratically elected politicians must have a clear vision of where to go and a firm grip on the rudder. Science must deliver navigational information and the crew must be convinced that their contribution and support are essential if the voyage is to be successful.

Thus it is the responsibility of the men and women of science to take active part in shaping and directing of our common future. To make full use of human knowledge, we need better interplay between science, politics and public opinion. Science cannot confine itself to glassbead games in an ivory tower. Scientists must sit down with the politicians. The doors of laboratories and studies must be opened up for a real, in-depth dialogue with politics. You must convey what is possible and point out how we can chart the unknown.

This is in fact a fundamental aspect of democracy. Democracy is not confined to participation in decision-making. Democracy is also about the right to know, to be informed and to be able to make informed choices based on the best available facts and assessments.

If we succeed in forging this alliance, we can make the necessary changes and offer concrete solutions.

Let me address some of the policy issues that will be central on our agenda in the 1990s.

Firstly, awareness raising and public participation are vital for change. We need a strong public opinion to keep democratic pressure on political decision-making alive. We need a knowledgeable, impatient and action-oriented coalition for our common future to keep alive the call that we have to act, and act more urgently to meet the current crisis. We cannot allow public interest in environment issues to be a passing fad, to let it slip away from our political agenda in the same way as it did for many years after the 1972 United Nations Conference on Environment in Stockholm.

As a follow-up to recommendations of the Bergen Conference on Action for a Common Future held in May 1990, Norway and the Netherlands have taken the initiative to convene a group of experts to discuss the elaboration of a Charter on Environmental Rights and Obligations. A first draft adopted in Oslo in late October contains fundamental principles both about each person's rights to an environment adequate for his general health and well-being, and about each person's responsibility to protect and

conserve the environment for the benefit of present and future generations. The intention is that such a Charter could be adopted by the countries in the ECE region during 1992. If this effort succeeds, such a Charter could also be envisaged at the global level within the United Nations.

Secondly, irreversible, global and transgenerational issues must be given highest priority. During the preparations for Brazil, the world community will negotiate new legal instruments and measures to stop the loss of biological diversity and to halt the pace of climate change. Both issues are among the most urgent and pressing environmental and developmental problems facing us. With their deep impact on the living conditions for the generations to come, they also have profound ethical implications.

In our time, plant and animal species have been become extinct at a rate never before witnessed in human history. Five to 15 per cent of the world's species could disappear in the next thirty years, primarily in the tropics. This is irreversible loss of a global resource. It means that generations coming after us will have much less variety and variability in life forms on Earth.

Climate change is probably the most difficult issue we have ever faced. It is not merely a pollution problem. It is part of the very essence of lifestyle and consumption patterns on a global scale. The problem goes to the core of the North-South gap. It is a fundamental part of the economic life and industrial level of states. The greenhouse effect is real. We cannot deal with it without addressing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In Norway we are committed to our national reduction targets. Those who now try to avoid the issues must rethink their policy.

Thirdly, cost-effective measures must be the core of a new generation of environmental agreements.

The World Commission pointed to the sharp contrast between the integrated and interdependent nature of the new challenges facing us, and the nature of the institutions we have set up to face them. Our responses have tended to be fragmented and limited to narrow mandates with closed decision-making processes.

The preparation for Brazil is therefore a demanding task. Not only must we deal with specific problem areas in order to come up with concrete solutions. We should also deal with the links between the global problems.

We must deal with the sources of emissions in the same context as we deal with the capability of nature to absorb them. This approach would allow us to reach agreements based on a more equitable sharing of burdens.

A comprehensive approach would also permit us to be more cost-effective in our choice of responses.

Today's environmental agreements are not capable of achieving optimal results. The marginal costs of reducing emissions vary greatly from country to country, yet we have continued to adopt agreements based on the simple notion of equal percentage reductions, regardless of how this affects total costs or - even more importantly - total results. Through such approaches, we have in fact applauded smaller reductions than would have been possible if we had based our agreements on the principle of cost-efficiency. Percentage reductions have provided a license to pollute up to a certain level for many countries who could and should have performed much better.

In a new generation of environmental agreements, we must seek maximum environmental benefit at a minimum cost. In Europe, we now have a unique opportunity to improve results through a regional approach. Through environmental investments in Eastern Europe - where the marginal costs of reductions are quite low, we could drastically reduce the export of long-range pollutants, improving both our national and European environment much more than if we scattered our investments in countries with low pollution and higher marginal costs. We will all benefit if we start our reductions where they cost less.

At the global level, some indication of the difference in costs can be seen by comparing emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> per produced unit. Japan is responsible for 14 per cent of the world's gross national product, but only for 5 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. China is responsible for only 2 per cent of the world's national product, but for as much as 9 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

All countries must commit themselves to appropriate efforts to combat global warming. Equity and efficiency must be combined in order to optimize results that would be acceptable to all parties concerned.

Among the greenhouse gases, CO<sub>2</sub> is the most important and the most difficult to deal with, but deal with it we must. I believe we should develop agreements on the use both of international CO<sub>2</sub> charges and tradable CO<sub>2</sub> quotas.

We can establish a global ceiling for emissions. Each country or region may then reduce emissions according to an emission quota within this global ceiling. This could then be subsequently lowered.

Countries or regions could then choose to use their quotas, or to trade them. Countries where the costs of reducing emissions are high could buy quotas from other countries where such costs are low. Economists suggest - and I believe they are right - that both the country which receives and the country which sells emission rights will gain by such agreements.

Fourthly, international cooperation to harmonize the use of economic instruments should be intensified.

We must make better use of the market to give us a cleaner environment, more quickly and at less cost. I am convinced that much can be done by combining the effects of standards, emissions limits and new economic instruments.

Left to itself, the market is a very inadequate instrument for environmental management. In our present economic system, market prices do not reflect the true environmental costs of exploitation, production, consumption and waste management.

We need to internalize environmental costs in all aspects of economic management. We have made limited progress in this field in dealing with the problems of sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and harmful waste. We need to do much more, especially in the field of energy and energy conservation.

More active use of economic instruments to benefit the environment will require an international harmonization of rules and regulations to avoid distortions of international trade relationships. This will be particularly important when we start discussions on more use of environmental taxes to reduce energy-related emissions, for example of CO<sub>2</sub>. When we move further in this direction we will learn that real change in economics and politics is what counts. Economic incentives may prove just as controversial as regulations precisely because they are aimed at changing the patterns of production and consumption. For a politician in one country to succeed in promoting such changes, we need politicians working for the same goal in other countries.

Fifthly, additional resources to developing countries will continue to be a precondition for progress.

In our effort to save the global environment, a special responsibility lies with the industrialized countries. The wealth accumulated in the industrialized countries is based on a long process of growth during which environmental concerns were given small or no attention. Our economies have been built on cheap and abundant fuel, and we have been using it as if there was no tomorrow. We have drawn upon the natural capital left to us by our forefathers, we have paid little or none of the true environmental costs of our growth, and we have passed most of the bill to the generations coming after us.

70 per cent of all emissions of greenhouse gases which accelerate global warming come from the countries of the North. We have used the world's atmosphere, oceans and soil as a free wastebasket for much too long. This waste-basket is now almost full, and we have no chance - not in reality and not morally - to tell the developing world that it must stop using that basket because we have already filled it up. The industrialized countries must therefore assume the main burden of reducing the global level of emissions.

This means that we must increase our technological and financial assistance to Third World countries to enable them to take part in the global effort. True additionality is necessary. If this

is rejected, the whole global consensus will be at stake.

As a contribution to the global effort now needed, my Government has established a separate climate fund of NOK 75 mill. for 1991, to be used for international measures which can assist developing countries in adopting measures which would halt climate change. These funds are separate from and they are additional to our regular budget for development cooperation, which is already the highest among OECD/DAC countries, amounting to more than 1 per cent of our GDP per year.

For a number of years, Norway has made considerable effort to target its aid to the poorest parts of the population in many countries. In recent years, we have tried to strengthen even more the environmental dimension of our aid programs. I am pleased, therefore, that this year's State of the World report, from the WorldWatch Institute depicts Norway as the world leader in development assistance and points to us as a model. "If the world as a whole had the priorities reflected in Norway's aid budget", says Worldwatch, "Third World environmental reforms would be much further along". I want to make this policy far better known, because it will really make a difference only when other and larger, and more influential countries are ready to act in accordance with internationally agreed policies and targets for development.

Sixthly, we must strengthen our international institutions to make them more effective in finding solutions to environmental problems.

We need stronger international authority to make decisions which are binding for member states, even in cases where not all nations agree. This means that nation states must increasingly be willing to transfer formal decision-making to international authority in order to regain political control over processes already outside the control of the individual state. It serves little purpose to talk about sovereignty when effective sovereignty in effect has been lost a long time ago.

The concept of the nation state - which has been the building block in our system of international organization during this century - is today very much part of the process of global change. In an age of rapidly growing global interdependence, the traditional nation state is increasingly unable to tackle the challenges of modern civilization alone. Unprecedented, profound and continual technological change has created new and as yet unresolved problems of governance, both nationally and internationally.

The political leaders of our time have their basis in the national states. They are dependent upon the attitudes and the perspectives which can be shared in a democratic sense with their own nation. Although these perspectives will have to cross national barriers, they are still dependent on having a basis in national policy. This is a great dilemma which we must help each

other to bridge.

It has been said that we are the first generation which has the ability to really change the course of world development, and that we may be the last to have the possibility to do it. That is why our generation has a unique responsibility and opportunity to manage global change, and to do it in time.

With the increasing pace of development and technological change, we see a growing gap between our perceived needs of the present and the real needs of the future. How can we best help democracy today to take account of the interests of tomorrow? How can we best help democracy to see the future? And let me repeat - we have no alternative to democracy.

How can we chart a new course on behalf of our children - and do it in time? To build bridges from the generally perceived reality of today to the future, we must all assume the challenge of creating sustainable development patterns, built on knowledge, foresight and common responsibility.

Democracy is the only acceptable principle and practice also for international decision-making. In an interdependent world we have to lift democracy to the international level. As Sonny Ramphal has said, "Those who are for democracy locally and nationally must also be its champions internationally, for its values and principles are indivisible."