

"Sustainable Development Security Imperative" Says Top US Government
Official

30 years UNEP: Environment for Development: People Planet Prosperity

Nairobi, 5 August 2002 - Delivering environmentally-friendly development is vital for delivering a more stable world, a key member of the United States administration argues in the upcoming edition of the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Our Planet magazine.

Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, claims that "sustainable development" is a "compelling moral and humanitarian issue".

And adds: " But sustainable development is also a security imperative. Poverty, environmental degradation and despair are destroyers of people, of societies, of nations. This unholy trinity can destabilize countries, even entire regions".

Mr Powell, writing in a special edition of the magazine which will be handed to world leaders attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, argues there is real cause for optimism.

"Despite the stories and images of trouble we read in the our newspapers and view on our television screens, this is a time of great opportunities to expand peace, prosperity and freedom. The spread of democracy and market economies, combined with breakthroughs in technology, permits us to dream of a day when, for the first time in history, most of humanity will be free of the ravages of tyranny and poverty," he says.

Mr Powell's essay is among a formidable line up of writers contributing to the special WSSD edition.

Klaus Toepfer, Executive director of UNEP, argues that failure in Johannesburg cannot be contemplated as the risks are too great: " Unless a new course is chartered for planet Earth we risk a new 'Iron Curtain', dividing not East and West, but the haves and the have-nots with all the ramifications of increased tensions, jealousies and hatreds between and within countries".

He looks to the new world trade talks, in which environment is now playing a part; the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the recent agreement in Mexico where nation's agreed to reverse the decline in official overseas development aid, as real glimmers of hope.

Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, flags up the need to address the world's existing patterns of production and consumption.

"If the Chinese citizen is to consume the same quantity of crude oil as his or her United States counterpart, China would need over 80 million barrels of oil a day slightly more than the 74 million barrels a day the world now produces," says the summit's host.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the President of Brazil, says that hosting the Earth Summit of 1992 has helped his country towards the path of sustainable development. He is convinced that such development is key to a healthy and wealthy society.

"It was gratifying to see the Kyoto Protocol recently receiving the approval of our National Congress in response to strong public demand. Brazil has made an enormous effort in combating poverty. It is already reflected in changes in such social indicators as infant mortality and schooling and, before long, it will be reflected in economic indicators as well," says President Cardoso.

Margaret Beckett, the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, writes that a global response is needed to fight a variety of ills: In a globalized world no one nation can solve what are collective problems. Poverty, terrorism, disease, climate change, migration, drug abuse?these are new challenges to the international community".

And Goran Persson, the Prime Minister of Sweden, echoes these sentiments by affirming that governments need the support of all sectors of society including the private sector and civil society.

Notes to Editors- Our Planet magazine is expected to be published on 12 August. In addition to the contributors mentioned above there are also articles from Mohammed Valli Moosa, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, South Africa, on the African Renaissance; David Anderson, Minister of the Environment for Canada and President of UNEP's Governing Council; Peter Wong of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Hong Kong, on corporations and sustainable development; Martin Khor, director of the Third World Network on the role of corporations; Sir Partha Dasgupta, the Frank Ramsey Professor of Economics at the University of Cambridge, on measuring sustainability; Mark Moody-Stuart, co-chair of the G8 Renewable Energy Task Force, on delivering green and clean energy and Richard Wiewiorka and Roy Herberger on a new strategy for sustainable business.

These full articles are available from UNEP's Division of Communications and Public Information by e-mail or fax.

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