

The Taplow Court Declaration April 1992

Background

In advance of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio, Brazil, in August of the same year, SGI-UK, together with UNESCO and the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, hosted a Pre-UNCED Conference on Sustainable Development at its national headquarters, Taplow Court, in Buckinghamshire from 12th to 15th April 1992.

The Conference's conclusions on the issues of the influences of ecology, economics, education, ethics and culture on sustainable development are embraced in the Taplow Court Declaration which was presented at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio.

The Taplow Court Declaration

The peoples of the Commonwealth of Nations comprise a large and vital segment of humanity, reflecting a wide range of geographic, biological, ethnic, economic and cultural characteristics, and by these characteristics are both challenged and empowered to contribute to the global dialogue on the environment;

The delegates assembled from 30 Commonwealth and other nations, international agencies and non-governmental organisations at this Consultative Conference, reflecting a global diversity of cultures and interests, re-affirm the capacity and persistent quest of the human spirit to resolve issues of survival and progress, as the only viable foundation for the future of all peoples;

I The Pre-UNCED Consultative Conference Declares:

- (a) That the physical, biological, social, cultural and ethical dimensions of the environment are critical to the sustenance of life, its survival and harmonious balance;
- (b) That the ethics of environmental concerns are at the heart of our common future and shall abide though political movements fade, economic systems change and ideologies are eclipsed and forgotten;
- (c) That efforts to achieve sustainable development must address the issues of poverty, population explosion, lack of opportunity and unacceptable living conditions as a matter of overriding urgency to meet human needs and improve the quality of life in all parts of the world;

- (d) That Environment and Development must be sustained on the basis of the recognition of the interdependence and reciprocity of all life and on the unity and solidarity of humankind;
- (e) That the fundamental ethical postulates of a new world order for Sustainable Development must be based on principles of equity and a universality of commitment measured through the achievement of a better quality of life for all peoples of the world;
- (f) That sustainable development for the whole world and for all its people can be achieved only on the basis of spiritual values, scientific knowledge, technological capacities, cultural exchange and enhanced communication capabilities, the promotion of government integrity and the creation of appropriate legal frameworks, all intertwined and woven into a Universal Ethic of Human Ecology which alone can close or reduce the gaps created by disparities, conflicts of interest, tensions, alienation and violence;
- (g) That the building of bridges through dialogues embracing cultures, faiths, genders and generations is a means to raise awareness and share knowledge and experience of the connection between humankind and the environment and to achieve respect for the diversity and the distinctiveness of cultures and environments, thereby constituting the foremost task on the global agenda;
- (h) That an emphasis on environmental ethics in education is prerequisite to the resolution of threats to the survival of local diversity and the achievement of global stability, and is essential for the rediscovery and rehabilitation of human dignity and individual responsibility;
- (i) That every effort must be made through environmental education to ensure that local knowledge, awareness, attitudes, participation and ethical responsibility are integral to the progress of development, the enhancement of the quality of life and the prudent use of natural resources, thereby resisting the drift to wasteful and profligate patterns of consumption;
- (j) That effective mechanisms to ensure enhanced accountability for activities transcending national boundaries must accompany the global harmonisation of cultural and ethical policies on the environment;
- (k) That recognition of the unique perspectives of the indigenous peoples of the world, the original ecologists, is vital to an understanding of the intrinsic qualities of the environment and its management, and as a

counterweight to contemporary notions of progress defined exclusively in terms of economic development;

- (l) That the role of women rooted in their traditional and profound understanding of the environment and concern for life must be extended and enhanced;
- (m) That the spirit and energy of youth, to whom the future belongs, must be mobilised as an essential component of a driving force for Sustainable Development; and

II The Pre-UNCED Consultative Conference recommends to UNCED: the consideration *inter alia* of the following suggestions made during the course of the deliberations of the Consultative Conference:

1. To set up a Task Force for the preparation of a United Nations Covenant on Environment and Development and to secure its promulgation for the safeguarding of environmental human rights, entitlements and obligations, to establish and confirm the legitimacy of collective international environmental action, to facilitate advisory and financial assistance for sustainable development and to constitute an international mechanism for the monitoring of activities affecting the environment; human ecology and environmental education should be fostered as a measure for achieving it;
2. To reinforce and reorient United Nations organisations responsible for both Environment and Development;
3. To improve international co-operation, monitoring and funding of sustainable development plans and projects for the advancement of environmental protection, by requiring all countries receiving financial and technical aid to have a greater accountability than hitherto, so as to achieve by the 21st Century greater efficiency in government, which was emphasised by the Conference as being essential to ensure that funds are received by and benefit the people for whom, and the purpose for which, they are intended;
4. To encourage political commitment to the resolution of those issues of world trade, poverty, economic disparity and population growth which inhibit progress towards an ecologically sustainable world order;
5. To provide for promotion of research, education and communication in all parts of the world in respect of Environment and Development, and to facilitate through environmental education a global awareness of Sustainable Development and encourage non-governmental

organisations to research, assess and otherwise support environmental and developmental issues and to foster an informed public opinion, strengthened political will and enhanced environmental vigilance and accountability;

6. To encourage the international community to respond adequately to world-wide concern for the dangers of pollution from nuclear contamination; and to take practical measures in reducing and finally eliminating such dangers;
7. To strengthen world-wide concern at the grave threat to island states' survival and to low lying coastal territories due to rise of sea level as a result of global warming. To ensure international respect for the special relationship between island communities and their environment, including the depletion of marine resources;
8. To promote an international networking of organisations concerned with environmental education, thereby promoting an environmental ethic and culture in the application of science and business;
9. To formulate principles of international law relating to ecocide as an offence against humanity and to its prevention involving punishment; to establish minimum standards of environmental rights and obligations; and to build up a climate conducive to reverence for life and non-violence, to preserve and foster human ecology as a basis of peace and justice in the new world order;
10. To establish a UN Youth Development Fund to promote cross-cultural dialogue and to support youth action for environment and development;
11. To strengthen the important role of women by facilitating advisory and financial assistance for projects serving to define and enhance their contribution to the developing world order;
12. To consider ways and means for the effective implementation of international conventions relating to trade and industrial waste and other environmental issues of global consequence and to empower appropriate agencies to review, monitor, report and take necessary enforcement action;
13. To promote global freedom of access to environmental information, including disclosure of cross-border transactions;
14. To institute an international environmental complaints system, and to create an international forum or court for resolution of environmental disputes and the redress of environmental grievances;

15. To institute an international system of environmental management, assessment and reporting, through which the nature and status of governmental and industrial activities affecting the environment become subject to public accountability, in relation for example to the redirection of flight capital and to national budgeting for environmental needs;
16. To reinforce global awareness of the devastation caused to mankind by natural calamities such as floods, cyclones, tornadoes, tidal bores, etc, and to undertake prompt and effecting measures in preventing them, or in reducing their intensity;
17. To consider ways and means for taking into account local knowledge, indigenous viewpoints and participation of local peoples in the sustainable development programmes, particularly in the light of the principles and objectives of Human Ecology and environmental education, with special attention to strengthening the sense of inter-generational responsibilities;
18. To encourage the systematic recording and documentation of ethical education and cultural values, experiences and perceptions of the people of the world in respect of the environment;
19. To facilitate the necessary funding, including the utilisation of the 'peace dividend' for the realisation of sustainable development programmes through the application of the principles of human ecology and environmental education and to devise a method of environmental book-keeping which would provide financial credit for constructive environmental action;

III The Pre-UNCED Consultative Conference invites UNCED

20. To recognise the value of the Commonwealth/Guyana Iwokrama Rainforest Programme (which underlines the need for the regeneration of tropical forests as crucial to the survival of biodiversity and global ecosystems) as a model for internationally supported initiatives for sustainable tropical forestry (including the ethical use and commercial benefits from rain-forest-derived revenues), which are worthy of promotion, and to acknowledge in relation to such projects the supportive role to be played by non-governmental organisations, particularly the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council; further, to emphasise the importance of reviewing forestry projects in the perspective of the 'requests and recommendations' made in this Taplow Court Declaration. [The Guyana Government has donated about one

million acres of pristine jungle for this project which is based on sound sustainable management and its generosity is applauded.]

- 21.To call upon the Commonwealth of Nations, with its broad spectrum traversing North, South, East and West and a wide variety of cultural, ethical, ecological and economic interpretations, to develop blueprints for action and operational strategies to achieve a more balanced, fair and successful implementation of developmental political decisions by involving jointly, government bodies and non-governmental organisations in policy planning and implementation of solutions for issues of poverty and improved quality of life and for the sustainable use of natural resources, avoiding pollution and waste.

Contributors and Participants of the Pre-UNCED Conference at Taplow Court, Buckinghamshire

Mr Khalid Al Tajir	Merrin Limited, UK
Mrs Daphne Anstey	Associated Countrywomen of the World
His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku	Secretary General of the Commonwealth
Dr Andrew Bennett	Overseas Development Administration, London
Professor David Bennett	National University, Australia
Mr Cl Betton	Burmah-Castrol plc, UK
Mr Trevor Blackburn	Commonwealth Veterinary Association, UK
Mr Karsten Borch	Demerara Timbers, Guyana
Mr Richard Bourne	Economics Division Adviser, Commonwealth Secretariat
Mr Ed Burnstick	Representing Indigenous Peoples of Canada
Miss Freda Burrows	The Green College, UK
Mr Richard Causton	Vice President, Soka Gakkai International
Mr Charles Charvet	Simmons and Simmons, UK
Professor D P Chattopadhyaya	Former Governor of Rajasthan, India
Dr Saadia Chishti	Chair of the Commission for Women's University, Pakistan
Mr Michael Clarkson	Simmons and Simmons, UK
Mr Peter De la Cour	The Green College, UK

Mrs Janet Croucher	Demerara Timbers Ltd, UK
Mrs Zena Daysh	Executive Vice Chairman, The Commonwealth Ecology Council
Mr Stephen Dear	Soka Gakkai International
Mr James Delap	Trinity College, University of Cambridge, UK
Dr John Doornkamp	Reader in Applied Physical Geography, University of Nottingham, UK
The Rt Hon Lord Ennals	Adviser, Pre-UNCED Conference of Indigenous Peoples
Ms Denise Ferrier	Environmental Science Dept, University of Stirling, Scotland
Mr John Fowler	Commonwealth Secretariat UK
Dr Abdul Ghafoor-Ghaznawi	Chief of Environmental Education, UNESCO
Dr Conrad Gorinsky	Foundation for Ethnobiology, UK
Mr Allan Griffith	Australia
Dr David Hall	CHEC, UK
Mrs Elizabeth Harper	Guyana High Commission, London
Mr Tom Holloway	CHEC, London
Dr Morteza Honari	Director, Centre for Human Ecology and Health Advancement, University of Newcastle, Australia
Dr Anwar Hossain	President, CHEC Bangladesh
Mr Anwar Hussain	Bangladesh High Commission, London
Mr Ian Howes	Soka Gakkai International
His Excellency President Desmond Hoyte	President of Guyana
Mr Daisaku Ikeda	President, Soka Gakkai President (Paper presented on behalf of)
Professor Kenneth Iwogo	University of Lagos, Nigeria
His Excellency Mr Rajiv MM Karim	High Commissioner for Bangladesh, London
Dr Yoichi Kawada	Director, Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Japan
Mr Simon Keith	Commonwealth Association of Surveying Land Economy, UK
Mr Ronald Kemp	The Commonwealth Forestry Association

Mr Winston King	Guyana Natural Resources Agency, Guyana
Mr David Kingsley	Kingsley & Kingsley
Mr H Koseki	Soka Gakkai International
Mr Geoffrey Lean	Environmental Editor, The Observer Newspaper, London
Mr David Lister	CAB International, UK
The Hon David MacDonald MP	Chair of the Standing Committee on the Environment, Canada
Mr Kenneth MacLean	Guyana High Commission, London
Professor Kenneth Magnus	Dean, University of West Indies, Jamaica
Dr Flavio Malta	President, CHEC Brazil
Mrs Erica Mann	CHEC Kenya
Ms Lynne Merrin	Merrin Ltd, UK
Mr Tadashi Minai	Soka Gakkai International
Professor R O Misra	Centre for Gandhian Studies and Peace Research, University of Delhi, India
Mr Alex Morris	Soka Gakkai International
Mr Peter Morris	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Professor R Moss	Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury
Dr Betty Mtero	National Director, Association of Women's Clubs, Zimbabwe
Mr C Nascimento	Demerara Timbers Ltd, Guyana
Professor V Z Newcombe	CHEC, UK
Mr John Nowland	Commonwealth Agriculture Bureaux, UK
Dr Letitia Obeng	CHEC, Guyana
Mrs Elaine Ogilvie	Commonwealth Secretariat, London
Mr Rogers W'O Okot-Uma	Commonwealth Secretariat, London
Mr Eshwar Persaud	Guyana High Commission, London
Dr V Persaud	Director, Commonwealth Secretariat, London
His Excellency Mr C Pilgrim	Guyana High Commission, London
Mrs Mary Richard	The Rainforest Foundation, UK
Mr Nigel Roome	Manchester Business School
Professor Balwant Saini	University of Queensland, Australia

Mr Andrew Salisbury	Castme, UK
Dr Phil Sarre	The Open University, UK
Dr David Scienceman	University of Florida, USA
Julie Seppings	Development Projects Officer, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award International Association, London
Ms Marcia Shaw	Soka Gakkai International
Mr Michael Sheppard	Macintyre, UK
Mr David Shirley	David Shirley & Associates, UK
Professor Padmasiri de Silva	Department of Philosophy, National University, Singapore
His Excellency Dr L M Singhvi	High Commissioner for India in London
Ms Sumita Sinha	Soka Gakkai International
Mr Larry Soule	Environmental Consultant, UK
Mr H Takahashi	Soka Gakkai International
Mr Ben Ter Welle	University of Utricht, Netherlands
His Excellency Mr Afamasaga Toleafoa	Ambassador for Western Samoa to Europe
Dr Brian Trenbath	Agricultural Botany Dept, University of Reading, UK
Mr J Turner	Commonwealth Veterinary Association
Professor T K N Unnithan	President, CHEC India
Mr Wouter Veering	Chair, The European Working Group on Amazonia, Netherlands
Mr Robert Waller	CHEC, UK
Dr W R Watson	Industrial Development Unit, Commonwealth Secretariat
Dr Bryan Wilson	Reader in Sociology, All Souls College, Oxford University, UK
The Reverend Canon Kenyon Wright	Scottish Environmental Forum
Dr Eiichi Yamazaki	Soka Gakkai International
Mr Karl Ziegler	Director, Centre for Accountability and Debt Relief, UK