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Global Legislators Organization
for a Balanced Environment

World Summit for Sustainable Development
International Eminent Persons Meeting on

Inter-linkages

Strategies for bridging problems and solutions to work
towards sustainable development

Keynote Speech

Maurice Strong

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I am pleased to have the opportunity of addressing this important and timely Conference. **I congratulate the United Nations University, the Foreign and Environment Ministries of Japan and GLOBE** for convening this Conference which promises to make a valuable contribution to preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg just one year from now. I particularly commend the organizers for focussing on the theme of inter-linkages, which underscores the intrinsically systemic nature of the issues that will be addressed at Johannesburg.

Human activities have their ultimate environmental, social and economic impacts through a complex system of inter-acting processes that transcend the traditional boundaries of disciplines, institutions and nations and in which cause and effect are often separated by dimensions of space and of time which the mechanisms through which we understand and manage them are not geared to deal with adequately. This is way I have long, with only limited success, advocated and tried to practice a systemic, or ecological, approach to such issues. In the interest of time I will not elaborate further here as a number of other participants are even better qualified to do so. My own approach is outlined in an article I wrote for Foreign Affairs magazine in 1973, a copy of which is available for those who may be interested.

In the preparations for the Earth Summit we attempted to demonstrate the **inter**-linkages between the many issues it addressed, particularly in Agenda 21. Professor Norman Myers, one of the most effective pioneers in defining the inter-linkages amongst these issues made a major contribution to this work. While I am sure he shares my own disappointment that despite this, the Earth Summit fell short of our expectations in **reflecting** these inter-linkages in its final results. The very good paper prepared for this meeting and the working groups that are focussed on these inter-linkages, provide this conference with a unique opportunity to help ensure that **at** Johannesburg world leaders will affirm their recognition of the practical and policy linkages between the issues they are addressing and to take decisions that will lead to a major strengthening and reorientation of the institutions and processes through which they manage these issues. This indeed is the single most important way in which Johannesburg can provide new impetus

and direction to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Conventions agreed at Rio.

I believe that my own remarks might best be focussed on some of the key issues on which significant progress needs to be made in Johannesburg, if it is to impart the new momentum that is needed to ensure the transition to sustainable development called for at the Earth Summit. I should point out that I have no United Nations role in preparations for this Summit. These are the direct responsibility of Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Nitin Desai, who was my Deputy and Senior colleague in the UNCED Secretariat, under the guidance of an internal committee Chaired by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette. This underscores the direct interest and high priority accorded to the World Summit for Sustainable Development by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

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I am immensely encouraged, to, by the fact that the UN Commission of Sustainable Development, which has overall responsibility for Johannesburg, will have the benefit of the leadership of one of the most universally respected and broadly experienced leaders of the environment and sustainable development movement, the Honorable Emil Salim, whom I have had the privilege of knowing as friend and colleague for many years.

With this stellar team, we can all have full confidence that preparations for Johannesburg are in the very best of hands. But we also know that factors that go well beyond their control could profoundly effect the prospects for its outcome.

My own freedom from official responsibility for the Conference emboldens me to be frank about the problems it faces and at the same time highly ambitious as to my aspirations as to what it should seek to achieve. I offer these thoughts in my capacity as Chairman of the Earth Council, which itself was created as a direct result of the Earth Summit for the purpose of facilitating follow up and implementation of its results.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development comes at a time when the movement toward a more secure and sustainable future for the world community for which Stockholm established the foundations and the Earth

Summit the framework and political impetus, is at a very critical, perhaps decisive stage. As national legislation in industrialized countries and an increasing number of developing countries has more and more impacted on economic interests while international agreements, notably the Convention on Climate Change, have raised the prospect of even greater impacts, resistance to such measures by those who believe they will be disadvantaged by them, has become more vigorous. This resistance has become even stronger and more effective as a result of the repudiation by the United States of the Kyoto Protocol accompanied by a major retreat on the part of the new US Administration from multilateral cooperation on these issues and a significant reduction in the priority accorded to them domestically. Paradoxically this coincides with the emergence of even stronger scientific evidence of the degree to which human activities driven by economic interests are contributing to the risks of climate change, deterioration of biodiversity, air and water pollution and the social impacts of globalization. These and related issues are producing extensive controversy and deepening divisions both within and amongst nations, and making the traditional differences between North and South a good deal more complex, exacerbating the difficulties of resolving them.

Deepening differences in respect of sustainable development are also affected by the recession in the general climate for international cooperation and multilateralism, particularly as a result of the position of the new United States Administration on such other major issues as the missile defense system, arms control and biological warfare. There have also been some positive developments, particularly as to China's admission to the World Trade Organization, even though the prospects for that organization are also at this point somewhat clouded.

On the whole, conditions are not auspicious for the achievement in the little more than a year before Johannesburg of major new breakthroughs in the movement towards sustainable development. Thus a primary objective for Johannesburg must be to secure and build on existing agreements and generate new momentum towards the realization of the hopes and aspirations inspired by Stockholm and Rio and renewed progress towards implementation of the agreements they produced.

It is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss. For despite progress on many fronts, the overall condition of the Earth's environment has continued to deteriorate while the forces driving it - population growth and wasteful

patterns of production and consumption - persist. For 2002 to provide the new impetus needed to move decisively on these issues which will determine decisively the fate of our civilization, it must be focused on the future. But we must also examine and learn from the lessons of the past.

It is not enough to admit that implementation and follow-up of the Earth Summit agreements has been disappointing. In the more industrialized countries there has been a recession of political will for environmental action and support for development. At the same time developing countries are experiencing an unprecedented increase in environmental awareness and concern as their own environmental problems become more visible and acute. But their capacity to deal with these problems is severely constrained by lack of resources and diminishing international assistance. As the latest World Resources Report points out "the current rate of decline in the long-term productive capacity of ecosystems could have devastating implications for humans and the welfare of all species". It is an ominous paradox that while evidence of continued environmental deterioration becomes more compelling, the will to deal with it has receded.

There are some bright spots. There has been real progress in the development of new technologies and techniques to abate pollution and reduce the energy and material content of a unit of production – what the World Business Council for Sustainable Development calls "Eco-efficiency". The role of civil society has assumed more and more importance in driving the processes of change - and in resisting them. The phenomena commonly referred to as "globalization" has become the focal point of the backlash we are currently witnessing against the technological changes which have made this the wealthiest civilization ever while deepening the disparities between winners and losers in the great globalization game.

It would, of course, be unrealistic to think that civil society can somehow replace governments or intergovernmental organizations. But it would be equally unrealistic to underestimate its growing influence on the political process and the formal systems of government. For the most part I am confident that civil society will be a responsible, "loyal" opposition. But this will depend on how governments and international organizations respond to the challenges they raise. There must be better ways of hearing and heeding their voices and engaging them more effectively and

systematically in the deliberative processes by which policies are framed and decisions taken which affect the lives and prospects of people everywhere.

In preparing and organizing the Johannesburg Summit innovative new arrangements to ensure this must be put forward to give practical effect to the groundbreaking experiences of Stockholm and Rio. Johannesburg must be a decisive turning point in making the change of course to a sustainable future, building on what we have learned from our deficiencies and from our progress since then. In 2002 the world community will not be satisfied with more generalized promises, vaguely worded resolutions and declarations. What is needed are concrete measures and firm commitments to the institutional arrangements and the funding required to implement them. Otherwise the 30/10 Anniversary is likely to highlight the failures and lack of progress and the ominous implications of this for the human future.

In the almost three decades since Stockholm and the decade since Rio we have learned a great deal about the causes and consequences of the environmental and social impacts of uncontrolled economic growth. We have also increased immensely our capacity for managing these impacts effectively and developed an impressive array of new tools with which to do so. The lack of more progress in dealing with these issues is now primarily due to insufficient motivation. This takes the form of deficiencies in the system of incentives, subsidies, fiscal measures and regulations to which governments motivate economic behavior which do not provide sufficient incentives for sustainability and indeed to a very significant extent continue to incent unsustainable behavior. Also there is increasing recognition of the moral and ethical basis for our behavior and the need to articulate a basic moral and ethical code to underpin our commitment to sustainable development. The proposal initially made, but not agreed, at Rio of an Earth Charter to articulate such principles was taken up after Rio through a drafting and consultative process that has produced a "Peoples" Earth Charter, now being embraced by millions of people around the world. The intention is to present this for consideration and hopefully endorsement by governments at the Johannesburg Summit.

In identifying issues for the Johannesburg agenda a balance must be struck between what may realistically be achievable under current political conditions and the larger, more fundamental goals articulated in the Rio agreements and related international instruments. At the minimum these should be re-affirmed in Johannesburg and every effort made to extend them based on evidence and experience since then and to deepen the commitment

of governments to their implementation. This will not be easy, but if the international community must settle for something less than dramatic new breakthroughs in Johannesburg every possible effort should be made to ensure that what is agreed there represents real, if only modest, progress towards realization of the fundamental objective of ensuring a secure and sustainable future for the human community. Accordingly it is important that in recognizing the risks of only modest progress at Johannesburg, and even the possibility of failure, some new initiatives be presented which would in themselves represent significant progress towards meeting larger goals which will take longer to achieve.

It is in this sense that I point up a few examples of the kind of measures which could make the Johannesburg Summit a successful milestone on the pathway to a sustainable future.

- 1) It will, of course, be important for the WSSD to affirm in the strongest terms possible the decisions and commitments they made at the Earth Summit and in other related international fora since then. Every effort should be made to obtain a strengthening of these commitments to the maximum extent possible and to resist any retreat from or weakening of them, which would be a major set back to the prospects for future progress.
- 2) Seek agreement on the establishment of an “Earth Support Fund” committing governments to providing new funds at a minimum level of 2% of GNP, separate from and additional to current levels of Official Development Assistance. This fund would support developing countries in their transition to a sustainable development pathway with a particular focus on maintaining the biological resources and ecosystems on which the livelihoods of the poor depend and enabling developing countries to participate fully in internationally agreed measures to address critical global risks. This could be administered primarily through an expanded and more broadly mandated Global Environment Facility, building on its unique tripartite partnership with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Environment Program.
- 3) Insert 2- Call for the establishment of an “Earth Fund” as a mechanism for mobilizing and deploying private funds for investment in environment and sustainable development projects and programs which produce an economic return. It would be designed to attract funds from

institutions such as investment funds, insurance companies, savings organization, pension funds and individuals. In some cases returns over time could prove to be exceptional, but this should not be the expectation. Special provision should be made to facilitate participation by small, individual investors and the cooperation of banks and other financial institutions could be sought for this purpose. Also, small investors could participate through the issuance of stamps by retail organizations and others, which could be redeemed for units in the Earth Fund.

The Earth Fund would also have a “soft” window which would enable it to make investments on less than commercial terms in projects or programs addressing exceptionally important needs from the environmental and sustainable development point of view, which did not necessarily meet normal commercial investment criteria. Counterpart Earth Fund’s could be set up at a national basis and separate funds for special purposes could be established within the overall framework of the Earth Fund to utilize funding sources that would only be available for such purposes that are otherwise fully consistent with the objectives and investment criteria of the Earth Fund.

It is envisaged that the Earth Fund would be supported by a major and continuing campaign of public education and publicity, much of which could be provided on a pro bono basis by the public relations and advertising industry, the media and sponsorships.

Addendum –The Fund would have a world class board of directors and the highest standards of professional management, to include experienced professionals in the environment and sustainable development field.

Addendum – It would invest in common shares, debt securities, partnerships and joint ventures.

- 4) Seek agreement on establishment of a Consultative Group on Clean Energy modeled on the successful experience of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Energy is at the core of the prospects for a successful transition to a sustainable development pathway. It is an issue that is at least as important as the emerging risks of large scale starvation in the developing world which gave rise to the creation of CGIAR in 1971.

There is an urgent need to mobilize and coordinate an accelerated program of research and development designed to produce alternatives to fossil fuels and new technologies to improve their efficiency and reduce their environmental impacts in the meantime. Equally important is the need for special efforts to mobilize and make available to developing countries the finances they require to meet the incremental costs of employing the best available technologies in their own energy development.

In many, if not most, cases these incremental costs could produce a reasonable economic return though often at a lower level or over a longer period of time than would attract commercial investment. Thus the provision of guarantees, perhaps accompanied by interest subsidies, would enable developing countries to employ the best available technologies on an affordable basis while providing the world community with reductions in the green house gas emissions than would otherwise be produced by such projects at a cost less than the same reductions could be effected in more industrialized countries. It would thus be applying the same principle as incorporated in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) provided for in the Kyoto Protocol. Although the purposes of the Consultative Group on Clean Energy would be a good deal broader than those of the CDM it could be administered within the same institutional framework, preferably by an expanded GEF, or at the minimum should be very closely harmonized and coordinated with it.

- 5) Agreement to undertake a review of the system of fiscal and other incentives, regulations and policies through which governments motivate the behavior of individuals and corporations to remove “perverse” incentives and provide positive incentives to environmentally and socially sound and sustainable behavior;
- 6) Initiation of a thorough examination of the economic factors that bear on the relationship between developing and more developed countries in the environment and sustainable development area, with a particular focus on the environmental services which developing countries provide to the world community, as for example in acting as stewards of the major proportion of the earth’s biological resources;

- 7) Agreement **in principle** to upgrade the status of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to that of a specialized agency and make it the centerpiece of a “UN Environment Group”(UNEG) modeled on the UN Development Group and designed to ensure cooperative decision making and coordinated action on environment and sustainable development issues within the UN. The UNEG would include the secretariats of relevant treaty/convention secretariats and, perhaps, on an ex-officio or observer basis, the GEF. To ensure more effective interaction and mutually reinforcing linkages between the environment and development components of UN programs, the UN Environment Group and the UN Development Group would work closely together and hold regular joint meetings.
- 8) Agreement to be sought to establish a strategic partnership and structural relationship between UNEP, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC) which would create a basis for close cooperation amongst these organizations, to perhaps include the Law of the Sea Secretariat. This would facilitate close cooperation in respect of the two major international commissions of oceans and atmosphere with the principal international environmental development organizations.
- 9) The secretariats of the climate change, ozone, biodiversity, desertification and other sustainable development-related conventions to be brought under a single framework for administrative and policy coordination purposes. Although each reports separately to the parties to the instrument which it services, there is a good deal of overlap and complementarity amongst both their mandates and their activities which would significantly benefit from this enhancement of their cooperation which would also facilitate greater coordination with other related UN programmes and activities. While it would be desirable to have these secretariats located in a common venue, this would not be politically feasible to achieve in the near future. However even with their separate locations advanced telecommunications technologies would enable them to communicate and work closely together. Agreement in principle should also be sought that secretariats of future international treaties and conventions be located so as to enable them to share common facilities and services.

- 10) The Global Environment Facility (GEF) to be given an expanded mandate as the principle custodian and administrator of special funds established pursuant to or in support of international agreements and conventions pertaining to sustainable development in addition to those it is already mandated to support. This would include a key role for the GEF in implementation of the financial provisions provided for in the Kyoto Protocol agreed at the latest meeting in Bonn of the parties to the Climate Change Convention. Also, as indicated above, the GEF would be the logical entity to provide the secretariat for the proposed Consultative Group on Clean Energy. In order to be able to perform these broader functions and to improve its own effectiveness it would be necessary to provide for a higher degree of operational autonomy for the GEF while preserving its unique tri-partite character.
- 11) Establishment of a “World Collaborative for Sustainable Development” (WCSD) bringing together the principal constituencies of key actors in respect of sustainable development. It will be a consultative, not a decision-making body, with a level and quality of participation that would make it a primary source of guidance and influence on policy and decision-making. It would not be a United Nations body as such but the UN, **would recognize its role and** mandate the participation of UN bodies in it. The Commission on Sustainable Development would be responsible for organizing inter-governmental participation in the Collaborative: The World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Economic Forum could assist in organizing the business component, the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and the recently formed Inter-Academy Center of National Academies of Science could assist in organizing the scientific participation and a consortium representing the principle NGO constituencies, could assist in organizing the participation of this important and diverse community. Within the UN, the Secretariat of **DESA** serving the Commission on Sustainable Development would take the lead in establishing it and ensuring its linkages with UN programming, policy and decision making processes. The WCSD would be the principal mechanism for convening coalitions of key actors in respect of specific sustainable development issues. An important role that the WCSD could play is to identify and take the initiative in promoting a system of voluntary measures to supplement and drive governmental measures where these are widely seen as inadequate or unduly delayed. These voluntary initiatives would

not replace the need for ultimate governmental action but could provide models and examples, which could demonstrate the value and viability of such measures and add to the prospects and pressures for governmental action.

- 12) Agreement to effect the major strengthening of the mechanisms which link local action and citizen behavior to the global processes which shape and determine the human future, such as the National Councils for Sustainable Development and other non-governmental and citizen-based movements, ensuring that their voices are heard and their interests addressed in the official fora. The proposed WCSD could be an important instrument for this.
- 13) In light of the fact that the WSSD is being held in Johannesburg and that Africa is now being accorded higher priority by the world community for special support in dealing with the immense social and economic costs of dealing with the spread of HIV/AIDS and a more concerted and effective attack on widespread poverty, the African nations could be encouraged to prepare and present at Johannesburg their own sustainable development initiative. If they decide to do this, and it would clearly have to be their decision, it would be done within the framework of the New African Initiative agreed at the recent (and final) meeting of the Organization for African Unity. This program, a merger of the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Program and the Omega Plan, includes an important commitment to the environment and sustainable development and if African governments decided to proceed with a special sustainable development initiative it would put “flesh on the bones”, of this commitment by presenting a plan in considerable detail, including costing, to which the participating countries of the region would be committed. It could focus primarily on those elements that had an important regional dimension and participating countries should be encouraged to include their own complimentary national sustainable development initiatives. The time remaining to do this is short and it may be that the countries of Southern Africa could take the lead in undertaking a Southern Africa Sustainable Development Initiative (SASDI) which could be the first step in an all-Africa initiative that would follow.
- 14) Other developing country regions could be encouraged to develop their own sustainable development initiatives and this could receive a

strong blessing and encouragement at Johannesburg, although it would be too much to expect in the time available that they could be presented there in any degree of significant detail. In fact in all regions, including Africa, many of the elements for such an Initiative already exist and the primary task would be to bring them together within a coherent and coordinated framework to facilitate both funding and implementation.

African countries as well as those of other regions might require special technical support in preparing these Initiatives, and it is likely that such support would be available.

- 15) Agreement **in principle** to establish a major deliberative body of the United Nations, at the same level as the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, to provide oversight and systemic coordination of the organizations and activities which affect the environment and the global commons – oceans, atmosphere and outer space. A reconstituted Trustee Council would be of suitable vehicle for this purpose. Although it would require a change in the Charter of the United Nations, which would be difficult to achieve, this should not discourage an effort to put it on the future agenda as a desirable longer term goal.
- 16) Seek agreement to undertake a negotiating process on a convention to establish an International Civil Law Regime, which would give parties in one country recourse against parties in another country for environment-related damages.
- 17) Endorsement of the Earth Charter and **commending** it to member governments, people and organizations everywhere for their acceptance as a moral and ethical guide to their conduct towards the Earth and each other in **giving** effect to their commitment to sustainable development.

Prospects

Although this does not include all the issues that will be on the agenda for Johannesburg it represents an ambitious program, one that may seem under current conditions to be politically unrealistic. Most of these proposals must be elaborated in greater detail, and agreement on them will require extensive and difficult negotiations. Certainly it cannot be achieved in one single event. What could be and must be made achievable at this milestone Johannesburg conference is a clear agreement by governments to a program

and a process which places or keeps on the continuing international agenda such basic components as these that would make the fundamental change of course called for at Rio credible and realizable.

Prospects for Johannesburg will be very much affected by the degree to which the alternative measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions which the US Administration has said that it intends to undertake are acceptable to the parties who have joined in the agreement reached at Bonn on the Kyoto Protocol and are seen to be broadly in harmony with it. They will also be very much affected by the results of the UN International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Monterrey, Mexico, March 18th- 22nd, 2002.

Like other historical movements that have shaped the nature and the direction of our societies, what seems unrealistic today becomes inevitable tomorrow. We cannot accept that what is imperative to our crucial survival and well being is unrealistic. We must make it inevitable. Nothing short of this will suffice to secure our common future.

I am persuaded that the future of our civilization will be determined by what we do or fail to do in the first three decades of this Millennium. 2002 may be the last real opportunity we have to launch this change of course. The cost of delay would be immense in both economic and human terms; the cost of failure could be terminal. What a tragic irony it would be if through our own carelessness, apathy and misguided priorities we forfeit the opportunity to bring about a new golden age in which all the people of the Earth can share and continue on the unsustainable pathway that can only bring about the demise of human civilization as we know it. It is in this context that we must see - and prepare for - the challenge of Johannesburg, and that this Conference can make such a valuable contribution to it.

