Draft

THE CSE STATEMENT ON GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY

To be submitted to the forthcoming UN Conference on Environment and Development

The Centre for Science and Environment proposes to submit the statement to UNCED. In case you agree with our proposals, we would be delighted if you could send us your endorsement.

Looking forward to your reply,

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I
Whither Our Common Future?

As it stands today, our common future is sharply divided between two antagonistic parts. We live in an extremely divided and disparate world. Abysmal poverty and hunger coexist with extraordinary wealth and overconsumption; unprecendented knowledge with widespread illiteracy; and, incredible technological and military might with abject powerlessness. At the same time, the growing environmental crisis is forcing the citizens of the world to realise that the world is one.

Humanity never needed a global social contract more than it does today. The forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil, with probably over a hundred world leaders and over a thousand non-governmental groups in attendance, provides us with an historic opportunity to formulate precisely such a global contract. With the the nations of the world jointly facing a global ecological crisis but sharply divided in economic terms and with possibilities for conflict immense, there never was a greater need for humanity to live as one.

Different objectives

Every citizen on earth wants his or her environment used and managed in a sustainable manner. But the divided economic conditions force different environmental management objectives on different nations and communities. While the rich and well fed are more interested in the environment because they want to secure their future, the poor and dispossessed, caught in a daily struggle to survive, are more interested in the environment because they want to secure their present.

Waste vs want

There is an enormous difference in the economies of developing and industrialised countries in environmental terms. The former continue to depend heavily on the exploitation of their natural capital to meet their current consumption needs and generate the investments needed to build up a stock of human-made capital and a knowledge and skills resource base. The industrialised countries, on the other hand, have already gone through a prolonged phase of natural resource exploitation, both within their own countries and outside, to build up a massive base of human-made capital, knowledge and skills. This differential situation today leads to several differences in their economic and ecological conditions and approaches:

1) Environmental problems in developing countries largely result from a greater stress on the natural resource base (for example, overexploitation of groundwater and surface water, land degradation, deforestation etc.) whereas environmental problems in industrialised countries largely result from problems of pollution and disposal of waste.
2) Whereas environmental management in industrialised countries can afford to take a conservationist approach with respect to land, water and forests. In developing countries, given the extreme pressures on the natural resource base for daily survival, on one hand, and economic growth, on the other, only an extremely well thought out, holistic strategy of rational and sustainable resource exploitation will be able to reconcile environmental constraints with development requirements. But tradeoffs can be carefully considered in poor economies and a long-term view adequately incorporated if they can generate more than what they need for current consumption. In other words, they need adequate financial space for sustainable development.

Unfortunately, the global environmental governance system or the new ecological order that is emerging, is unmindful and uncaring of these different priorities. Recent years have seen strenuous efforts by the governments and people of the North to bring about better global management of the world's resources; starting with the Montreal protocol to protect the ozone layer to the proposed conventions on climate change, biodiversity and tropical forests. Simultaneously, international trade, aid and debt are becoming green linked, with the rich in the world demanding that their dollars and yen should be spent in the South only in a way that secures our "common future". Environmental management is, thus, being thrust upon the devel-

oping world using the existing levers of power available with industrialised countries. There is no effort to create new levers of power that would allow all citizens of the world to participate in global environmental management. Today, the reality is that Northern governments and institutions can, using their economic and political power, intervene in, say, Bangladesh's development. But no Bangladeshi can intervene in the development processes of Northern economies even if global warming caused largely by Northern emissions may submerge half the country.

Even worse, the new green twists and turns in international decision making are being made with claims to a new morality of global environmental solidarity. This must be the biggest irony in human history: those who have been the most immoral in environmental terms are now preaching to those who have been largely frugal and sparing. It is obvious that this moralising must stop and be replaced by honest actions.

Northern agenda

The agenda before the Brazil Conference, as yet, is largely Northern and intensely political. It makes no more than a token attempt to deal with the issues of survival and the financial and economic space that the struggling millions of the developing world desperately need. The Northern agenda, firstly, sectoralises environmental issues to separate them from the global economic and cultural processes that lie at their heart — addressing only the symptoms and not the causes. It refuses any serious discussion on the restructuring of international economic relations even to the extent they relate to environmental issues. It further puts the control of environmental resources in the hands of the rich, the very same people and institutions who have been most responsible for global environmental havoc. So the Montreal protocol as well as the proposed climate treaty discuss the sharing of the burden of technological change to repair the global environment but shy away from talking about an equal sharing of the resource, our common atmosphere, amongst all citizens of the world.

Global vs local

There is also an undisguised attempt to divert attention by trying to define what are global environmental issues, and therefore require global negotiations and commitments, and what are local issues and therefore best left to national action. So desertification and soil erosion have become local problems regardless of the fact that they affect millions today while ozone depletion, which is the result of the overconsumption of a few, has become a global issue. The Global Environmental Facility of the World Bank, UNEP and UNDP, set up as a major global initiative to transfer funds to the developing countries in the area of environment, lends only for so-called global issues. This division of issues is intensely political. It denies the local dimensions of the global and the global dimensions of the local. And it distorts the economic and environmental priorities of the developing world.

This partisan system of global governance may well secure the interests of the future generations of the rich across the world, but it will care little whether the present generations of the poor can even be assured a bare survival. Such a world can only be more immoral, inhumane and inhospitable.

Equal partners

If all citizens of the world have to manage the planet Earth as equal partners, then the global environmental agenda itself must be changed. It will have to recognise, firstly, that for developing countries the environmental challenge is how to use the resources of the environment, often at far higher rates of productivity than at the moment, but in a sustainable manner. In the South, for instance, forests are not wilderness areas but habitats for the poorest of its poor.

Secondly, that in the South, environmental degradation is strongly related to the global processes of trade and economic relations. Environmental degradation, for instance, is intrinsically linked to the world market system which is rapidly growing and integrating the use of the world's natural resources. The world market system fixes product prices in a way that increasingly allows the North to capture the ecological costs of production and build it into its pricing structure. Enormous investments have been made by Northern countries in pollution control and all consumers of Northern products across the world now pay the cost of those investments. But the developing world is not being allowed to capture the ecological costs of its production. The terms of trade of its various mineral and biomass products — tea, coffee, cocoa, bananas, pineapples, peanuts and prawns — have been steadily declining even though they are produced at enormous environmental costs. How can developing countries make an investment in their future if even the prospects for today are uncertain?

Developing countries export sustainability while industrialised countries import it at the cost of the

former. This discounts the future of the South and passes on the immediate costs of environmental degradation onto the world's poor living on the margins of their environment.

Southern subsidies

The South has consistently subsidised the gargantuan consumption of the North. A reform of the world economic system is, therefore, vital so that all citizens of the world, including the world's poor, are empowered to take control of their environment while the rich are made to pay the ecological costs of their consumption. Only then will the poorer nations have the economic space to invest in their future. Within their ability, the poor already do their best to conserve their environment and make sustainable use of it. Has anybody ever calculated the labour costs that Nepalese and Indian farmers of the Western Himalaya have incurred in the massive terracing of those mountains to conserve the soils? The multilateral banks would lose their shirts if they tried to underwrite these costs.

Apart from the problem of declining terms of trade, the poor of the world are today enmeshed in the proverbial moneylenders' clutches — "I can't pay but I will pay" — the result of which is that the South today actually transfers about US $ 50 billion to the North every year. All these economic losses have a profound impact on the production systems of the South —there is precious little left to invest in the future.

Global resources

The current environmental negotiations are essentially about the use of natural resources — some of which are truly global commons (like the atmosphere and the ozone layer) while others are largely national resources over which nations have sovereign rights (like forests, biodiversity, and the folk knowledge about the uses of biodiversity). They, therefore, raise issues which are far more fundamental than the old issues of technology transfer and of new and additional sources of funds raised repeatedly in UN forums by developing countries.

These are issues of global equity in the use of global resources and the basic, inalienable and equal rights of all human beings to survival and development. To the extent that the political and economic terms of global environmental governance being proposed are unfair or unequal, it is obvious that developing countries will see an erosion in their sovereignty over their national resources, their rightful and equitable share of the global commons, and their right to determine the use of these resources for their development.

Developing countries have both a keen interest and a serious economic stake in these negotiations. To prevent the impending ecological disaster technological transformations and financial allocations will be required. Considering the state of their economies, many developing countries will find the financial and technological burden of these transformations difficult and in some cases, even impossible.

The current environmental negotiations are essentially seeking to set up a framework for the management of global resource exploitation in which efforts are being made to integrate long-term concerns (that is, environmental concerns) while totally neglecting short-term concerns (that is, immediate economic and ecological concerns). This is no bid to create a free and fair world. At a time when natural resources in developing countries are being consistently 'devalued' within the world market system — through rising debt, on one hand, and declining terms of trade of land and water-based products, on the other — it sounds callous to preach long-term environmental care and concern in isolation of immediate concerns.

Lack of confidence

It does not give the South any confidence when the powerful North disregards all this and tries to play the role of a green messiah. What good would a few billion dollar fund do like the Global Environment Facility when billions of dollars are flowing out of the South and forcing it every day to discount its future? This Northern position must be rejected for what it is — a sham on the very idea of our common future. Give the South a fair deal by reforming the world market system so that it can take into account the ecological costs of producing its commodities and the South will take care of its environment. These costs can be captured only through a series of fiscal and economic instruments as part of a deliberate public policy package. The billion dollar question is: are the rich prepared to pay the real costs of what they consume?

Thirdly, the South needs ecological space to grow, which has already been colonised by the North. The poor are not even using a small fraction of their legitimate share of the global commons like the atmosphere, thus, permitting the North to pollute over the last century at little cost and build up its economy and industrial base extremely cheaply and rapidly. Has anybody calculated the carbon di-

oxide cost of an individual's plane trip from New York to Chicago? Each flight would exceed a Thai or Bangladeshi farmer's legitimate share of annual emissions tens of times?

Fourthly, the South provides all kinds of seeds, herbs and other resources for genetic variability, including traditional knowledge about their uses, which have transformed the world's pharmaceutical and food industry. The North pays nothing to the South in return for these biological resources and knowledge while most technical knowledge emanating from private and corporate sources in the North is protected by patents and has a strong financial value. The North, in fact, is not even satisfied with the strength of the existing patents system. Has the North cared to ask what royalties have the American Indians received for the knowledge they have given the world about rubber, quinine, chocolate, curare, potatoes, tomatoes, avocados, tobacco and corn? What royalties have Ethiopia and the countries of the Congo Basin received for their coffee? On the contrary, the Amazon Indians are today amongst the poorest and most persecuted people. And Ethiopia remains desperate for aid.

Northern responsibility

Since the economic levers of power in the world — aid, trade and debt — lie largely with the North, it is its moral responsibility to provide a lead that gives confidence to the South. The North must indicate its willingness to deal with basic issues that force the South to scrape the earth. And, most importantly, it must stop preaching. Does anybody seriously believe that the earth can support everybody at the consumption level of an European or a North American? Way back in 1908, India's Mahatma Gandhi had asked, "if it took Britain the exploitation of half the globe to be what it is today, how many globes would India need?"

It is the responsibility of Northern environmental groups to impress upon their leaders that they must not approach the North-South environmental dialogue in a spirit of oneupmanship, with a view to win some cheap votes back home. But with a view to build a better future for all humanity in which all can live in ecological and economic security as proud and equal human beings.

Southern vision

Equally, the leaders of the poor have a responsibility to use this occasion to forcefully put forward their own worldview — how do they want to see an interdependent, fair and caring world developed?

The South also has a lesson to learn. While telling the North bluntly that it is the Southern peoples' lifestyles and cultures that have kept the world's ecological fabric intact, it must also renounce the Northern consumptive lifestyle. It must get rid of poverty but it must also stand for the integration, in its modern living, of the ecological prudence of its traditional lifestyles. The South must not go to UNCED to learn but also to teach. Nor must it go to beg. UNCED is a forum where it must go to demand a fair and rightful space in the lap of Mother Earth.

Participatory democracy

It is our firm belief that the key issue behind the growing environmental concern is participatory democracy — a political and economic system in which all citizens of a nation or a globe can effectively participate in its ongoing governance.

It was the environmental movement in the North which first challenged the overarching claims to legitimacy of political systems based on representative democracy. During the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of young men and women protested against their democratically elected governments on the siting of nuclear power stations. These people essentially wanted a deepening of the democratic process. Simply because certain people had been elected by majority, they argued, was not enough to give them the untramelled right to decide how the local environment could be used without the consent of the people who were worst affected by this decision. Citizen participation in environmental decision-making has since become accepted as a basic tenet of the Northern environmental movement — as the ultimate safeguard of people's environmental needs and rights.

In the South too, the environmental movement has repeatedly asserted the rights of the people over their immediate environment — to manage, use and care for. It is this concern that needs to be carried further if we want to see a fairer and greener world.

In the following paragraphs, we present elements of a system of global environmental governance based, not on targets and objectives, but on basic human rights — a form of governance in which natural resource use will be controlled by a system of democratic checks and balances, and in which individuals, communities and nations have been effectively empowered to protect, manage and use their resources in a fair and democratic manner. We hope the people of the world will see in them a vision of a better future.

II
Elements of Global Environmental Democracy

Environmental problems, for the sake of simplicity, can be divided into two categories:

1. Those that are mainly amenable to *community management;* and,
2. Those that are mainly amenable to *global management.*

Within the first category lie problems such as soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, water pollution, air pollution, and protection of nature parks, sanctuaries and areas of biodiversity. Local communities are capable of determining and managing systems of environmental protection and sustainable use that can help to ameliorate such problems. This, however, does not mean that these problems can be left entirely to local communities to solve. National and global support systems have to play a crucial role in making community management effective.

The second category includes the pollution of global commons like the oceans, atmosphere and Antarctica, international trade in toxic wastes and hazardous substances, and compensation for the ecological costs of producing internationally traded commodities. The action framework for solving these problems will have to be evolved at the global level, though national and community action will play an important role in implementing the proposed global solutions.

New concepts of citizenship

Setting up systems of community management, on one hand, and of global management, on the other, means that the existing nation-states must give up some of their sovereignty to the *village republic,* in the first case and a *global republic,* in the second. We must,therefore, promote new concepts of citizenship if we want to manage the emerging environmental problems of the world. We can no longer regard ourselves merely as citizens of a particular nation-state but also as *citizens of a community,* on one hand, and *citizens of a common globe,* on the other.

The need to develop living forms of *community citizenship* and *global citizenship* — mediated, of course, by *national citizenship* — is inevitable. Wherever national bureaucracies have taken over the management role that was earlier discharged by local communities, systems of traditional governance over natural resources have declined, local communities have been alienated, and environmental resources have suffered from a free for all in their use and faced consequent degradation. Simultaneously, at the global level, the world market economy has become more and more integrated in its use of the world's ecological resources. But the world's fragmented political system has failed to promote any organised form of global citizenship in which we care not just for our own nation but for the world as a whole. The result is increasing misuse and overuse of the global commons and erratic and unjust trading patterns, in which world prices are determined by short term market considerations rather than long term ecological costs. What we see is the phenomenon of 'market failure' on a global scale — a market which fails to take into account both the interests of future generations and that of the poverty-stricken people living today.

But in any democratic framework, citizenship is built upon a system of both rights and duties. Only in a dictatorship do citizens only have obligations but no rights. All citizens in a democracy are expected to discharge their obligations, like paying taxes, but they also have corresponding rights which are legally enforceable and keep governments, commercial enterprises and other citizens within a framework of fair play. In most democracies, even laws enacted by a legislature can be challenged and struck down by a court of law as unfair and unconstitutional. *Today, there is a growing and urgent need to define environmental rights for all of us, as global, national and community citizens, in order for us to discharge our global, national and community obligations.*

Towards a global compact

This statement puts forward a set of ideas that can form the basis of a truly global compact for human survival on a fair and equitable basis. It sets out an agenda of rights for all of us as community, national and global citizens — a set of national and global commitments that both Southern and Northern countries must make — so that all of us can move towards a framework of environmental governance that will give 'sustainable and equitable devel-

opment' a real chance to succeed.

The 1972 conference put the subject of environmental management on the world agenda. The 1992 conference, building upon the global experience of the last 20 years, should spell out and create a political consensus for the framework that will help us manage the planet over the next 20 years. Indeed, having recognised that nature puts limits to human actions, consumption and growth, the central question is how are we going to manage the world's limited resources for all humankind in an environmentally-sound, just, equitous and peaceful manner?

That is the challenge before the 1992 conference. And it is only by this yardstick can its success or failure be judged.

1.
Community Environmental Democracy:
The community's right to manage its immediate environment through open and democratic institutions

The 1980s saw a growing worldwide awareness of the ecological crisis, which also brought forth an enormous popular response. NGOs, government agencies and numerous individuals tried to improve their environment and to protect it from further degradation.

Probably the most important lesson learnt during the 1980s is that it is possible to protect the environment and regenerate its productivity as long as people's participation is ensured. Numerous projects across the developing world revealed that environmental regeneration efforts can greatly help to improve the productivity of the local land and water resources and enhance local biomass availability to meet basic human needs. In several of these projects, not only did people improve their local subsistence economy but also their market-oriented cash economy on a sustainable basis. Some projects have shown remarkable cost-benefit returns.

But these projects have also shown that the integrated development of village environmental resources is not a mere technocratic exercise involving soil conservation techniques and choices of fast growing trees and grass species. It demands complex social and legal changes to ensure people's control over their natural resources and the creation of open, democratic and participatory community institutions. Even in several industrialised countries, local authorities are now playing an increasing role in environmental management.

If investments in land, water and forest resources are to bear fruit, it is vital that an all out effort be made to strengthen democracy at the grassroots, especially a form of democracy that is not built upon the principles of representative democracy but upon the principles of participatory democracy. Environmental regeneration programmes demand participatory and democratic institutions at the community level, particularly because the environmental resources that we seek to regenerate like trees, grasslands and local water harvesting systems in the villages of the developing world are all extremely fragile resources. And these resources can only be managed by institutions at the community level in which community members have con-

fidence and which gives them all a fair deal, across income groups and genders.

Of course, the character of democratic village level institutions will vary from one culture to another and, therefore, no uniform formula can be devised. Similarly, not all management of natural resources can take place at the level of a community or a settlement. There will also be a need for multi-settlement intermediate tiers to deal with certain environmental management objectives.

Obviously, all this is an area for massive experimentation but sooner this experimentation can begin, the better it will be for improving environmental management in the rural developing world. In this challenge, of course, countries can learn a lot from their own traditions and practices, especially those that were prevalent for the management of common property resources. A number of urban problems, especially those which deal with local environmental problems and provision of basic services and amenities, also demand community management and control.

A large part of the financial resources that are being made available for environmental management or are likely to become available in the future should go directly to these community institutions. *All nations at the Brazil conference must take a pledge that they will develop a new tier of governance within their countries — a tier of community level governance through open, participatory institutions with inalienable rights over their immediate environment to care for, use and manage.*

The 21st century problem of managing natural resources at high levels of productivity but on an ecologically-friendly basis cannot be solved by 19th century centralised, undemocratic bureaucracies, many of which were created in the developing world during an exploitative colonial period. Sustainability becomes a resource management objective only in a political order in which decisions are taken by those who suffer the consequences of their decisions. Village communities, when given control over their immediate natural resource base, have often shown remarkable resilience and sagacity in managing it on a sustainable basis.

2.
National Environmental Democracy:
The right to a clean and healthy environment

All governments must provide their citizens with a justiciable right to a clean and healthy environment. It is absolutely vital that every citizen in the world should have the right to challenge any decision that affects his or her immediate environment.

In India, a major step was undertaken when environmental litigation was permitted as a matter of fundamental right of all Indian citizens. The most important contribution of the Supreme Court of India during the 1980s was to recognise that all individuals and public spirited groups have the right to file cases of public interest in a court of law, and, secondly, drawing strength from the constitutionally guaranteed Right to Life, to extend it to include a legally guaranteed and justiciable right to a clean and healthy environment. This has greatly strengthened the right of citizens who can now appeal against projects that are likely to threaten them. Given these rights, a number of cases have been filed in India which deal with environmental problems created by mining, urban development, encroachment of green spaces, construction of dams, deforestation and threats to national parks.

3.
Global Environmental Democracy:
A fair world in which all pay the full costs of their consumption

The Global Right to Survival

The Right to Survival — with a certain modicum of dignity — is the most fundamental of all human rights. But, unfortunately, this is one right that a large part of humankind does not enjoy today.

Poverty and its associated evil, unemployment, stalk a large part of humanity and force it into a state of deprivation that constitutes an unpardonable blot on its conscience. There can be no honest and moral discussion of international environmental solidarity as long as the world remains starkly divided between the rich and the poor — between those who enjoy the resources of the earth and can worry about its future and those who have to scrape the soil for less than bare survival today. A large part of the world's poor actually live in the world's most ecologically degraded regions. The threat of impoverishment and consequently the demand for jobs in these regions is at its maximum during periods of natural crises like droughts.

The vast numbers of the unemployed and underemployed in the developing world provide us with an extraordinary opportunity for undertaking a massive global initiative for ecological regeneration and restoration of the natural resource base on which the poor depend for their survival. *Economic security today can become the very basis of ecological security tomorrow.* All over South America, Africa and Asia, village communities must improve their local agroecosystems through afforestation, grassland development, soil conservation, local water harvesting and small scale energy development. Most of these are extremely labour intensive activities. Therefore, if employment can be generated on a worldwide basis in the regeneration of the environment, the two evils of poverty and ecological degradation can be arrested and hopefully banished.

An internationally guaranteed Right to Survival should be accepted and enacted for the world's poor — the poor who today flee as ecological refugees from the barren hills of the Himalayan mountains, the semi-arid to arid regions of India's central highlands, the degraded slopes of the Andes, the drought devastated soils of the Sahel, and the waterlogged and flood affected plains of Bangladesh. Those who stay behind are forced to work the soil for daily survival and have no time, energy or money, to undertake the rebuilding of their devastated ecological capital.

If an internationally guaranteed Right to Survival was backed up with an appropriate programme which guaranteed jobs in ecological regeneration, albeit at a survival wage, people need not flee from their homes when drought or any other adversity strikes. They can stay to build a better future.

Such a programme would not make everybody rich but *it would definitely put a floor to poverty.* Everyone will be ensured a survival wage so that they have the purchasing power to eat. Nobody has to sell off their cattle and other assets in acute distress. Nobody has to go to bed hungry.

What would be the overall impact of such an internationally guaranteed Right to Survival on the rural South ?

One, it would drastically weaken the forces that engender rural oppression by freeing people from the clutches of moneylenders and landlords;

Two, it would create the possibility of millions

of sustainable livelihoods in what are today ecologically devastated lands, and thus increase food security for the world's poorest;

Three, it would improve the lot of poor children by reducing the penurious conditions that force parents to put their children to work; and,

Four, if the greening of the land was indeed successful, it would reduce the work burden on women, create conditions in which the girl child can go to school and engender conditions that can bring about a fall in population growth rates while increasing female literacy.

The proposed global survival programme can also make an enormous contribution to solving some of the so-called global environmental problems. For instance, the programme would lead to the greening of the land in a big way and thereby the fixation of a significant amount of the carbon that has already accumulated in the atmosphere. It would also prepare developing countries and their people to deal with the threat of global warming. Temperature and rainfall variations would be easier to live with in green lands than in barren ones, and there would a longer period available to adjust. Without this improvement, societies living in bare and degraded lands will immediately find themselves in an emergency. Moreover, the proposed programme would help to take pressure off the remaining wildlands and areas of rich genetic diversity. There is an enormous amount of work still to be done in finding ways to reduce the population pressure on areas of rich genetic diversity. The pressure cannot be reduced by putting fences around these areas. Creating employment in the degraded fringe areas would help to transfer the focus of human activity and needs to areas outside those with rich genetic diversity.

Mechanisms to finance a global survival programme

A programme for a global Right to Survival could be financed either through compulsory and assessed state contributions based on the wealth of a country (for example, as proposed by India's former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to set up a Planet Protection Fund with official contributions equal to 0.1 per cent of each country's GNP) or through an international tax which could be levied on individuals in the form of an international income tax or an international consumption tax.

In every civilised country in the 20th century, there is a progressive income tax so that the rich pay to support the poor. Unfortunately, as a community of nations we are still not a civilised group. At the global level, transfer of funds from the rich to support the poor is only in the form of aid and charity, not in the form of a legal obligation which has to be met under threat of punitive action.

We can move towards a global society if we were to tax the rich to support the poor. This tax ought to be levied on all the rich people of the world regardless of whether they come from the North or the South. But, of course, given the economic realities of the world, a large part of this income tax will obviously be collected in the North.

The North could come to an understanding with the South, as a major global bargain, that this tax will be given only to those countries which develop clear community institutions which will manage local natural resources and the money will be transferred through national governments to community institutions.

Based on the Indian experience, we estimate that the amount of money required for this entire task would be around US$ 30-40 billion a year. Compared to the one trillion dollar a year expenditure that is made on the military worldwide, and the peace dividend that is expected from arms reduction in Europe alone, this sum is extremely small. But it will relieve an enormous amount of the remaining tension in the world.

The rich are duty bound to pay this tax not merely as a matter of morality but also as a matter of global ecological solidarity. The rich of the world hardly pay the full ecological costs of their consumption which is externalised and often borne by the poor.

This tax should, therefore, not be seen as a measure of charity but more as a measure of the payments that the rich ought to be making for their existing consumption. Environmental economics teaches us that we all must pay the true cost of our consumption, including the ecological costs. Hardly anybody amongst the world's rich pays the full ecological costs of their consumption. It is vital that this money be returned to the poor in the form of an international tax.

What impact will all this have on the economies of the rich countries? *Most of the revenue from this tax will go back to the Northern countries*, at least in the initial years, to buy food, and over time the revenue thus raised will only lead to a greater demand in the developing world for products from industrialised countries. Therefore, this is not a plan that is going to devastate Northern economies. It will only create a more stable and a more prosperous economic order across the world.

A Global Right to Information

People living in modern democracies are essentially safeguarded from harm by a free flow of information. Knowledge is the basis of the modern global enterprise. Bureaucracies and commercial enterprises are able to pollute rivers, destroy forests and mine the land only as long as they can keep the information about their adverse impacts secret or away from the public eye.

Even in the Western world, many environmentalists still feel that there isn't adequate access to information that threatens the environment or people's health. This was, in fact, a major reason why the environment was consistently neglected and devastated in Eastern Europe under the erstwhile communist regimes. Not surprisingly, ecological groups in all these countries joined the anti-communist revolt.

Stronger pollution control provisions in the West means that numerous polluting and dangerous industries will now try to move to the South. Within the South itself there are serious problems of a dual society. Information rarely reaches those people who end up suffering the impact of pollution. It is absolutely vital that each country in the world enact a right to information, particularly relating to projects and programmes that affect the environment and people's health.

This should also be an international right, enshrined in a legally binding treaty so that any company, government agency or multilateral institution which is acting abroad can be forced to release any information relating to its own activities or of its subsidiaries or associated institutions, which threatens people's health or environment.

Equal Rights to the Atmosphere

The proposed global climate convention must acknowledge equal rights of all individuals on earth to the use of the atmosphere and historical responsibilities for the damage that has been done to date — in other words, the *environmental debt* of the industrialised countries.

In the ongoing negotiations for a convention to reduce emissions and preserve carbon sinks, little effort has been made to allocate national responsibility in a way that correctly accounts for the past, present and future warming effects of national emissions. Different methodologies have been proposed to estimate national responsibilities for greenhouse gas emissions. Apart from the problem of an inadequate and as yet inaccurate data base, these methodologies result in dramatically different results depending on the political inclinations of the researchers involved. While one US study argues that industrialised countries have already used up their entire quota for carbon dioxide emissions, another has tried to put nearly half the blame for global warming on developing countries. Clearly, the interpretation of the science of global warming has become intensely political. The South must develop its own understanding of the problem with its own science, its own arithmetic and its own analysis of its causes and its solutions. This viewpoint must be articulated clearly to world leaders in international fora and to the NGOs.

Once the world scientific community has reached a consensus on the aggregate level of greenhouse gas emissions that can be considered annually permissible on a global basis — whether this is based on an estimate of the natural sinks or not — this global aggregate should be allocated to each individual equitably, each nation's quota thus being equal to the sum of its citizens' quotas.

Entitlements thus created can be traded. Those not using their shares can sell them to those that are exceeding theirs. With an economic incentive attached to preserving carbon reservoirs and limiting emissions and an economic disincentive attached to increasing emissions, everyone will have a vested interest in averting global warming. A country which today earns money by felling forests may choose to earn money by keeping its forests and trading its unused share of emissions.

It is argued that increasing population will give certain nations an advantage under this scheme. To overcome this, national quotas could be frozen according to the world population distribution at the time of agreement. Then those nations which reduce their population in the future will get higher per capita entitlements and those which increase their populations will get lower entitlements per person.

In order to avoid creating a licence to pollute, the international community should impose penalties on nations whose emissions exceed the maximum permissible limits even after extra credits obtained through emissions trading have been taken into account. The revenues thus generated should be used to promote renewable energy, efficient energy production, and global warming amelioration measures, especially in countries likely to be affected by global warming.

Such a scheme should be attractive to all civilised nations because:

a) it sets into operation the polluter pays principle, which is already accepted by most developed countries as a way to tackle pollution problems;
b) it is consistent with the norms of human rights and equality;
c) it is a system built on rights, not on aid or charity or undue and unequal obligations; and,
d) it operates as a market based mechanism giving everyone a vested interest in the atmosphere rather than relying on the efficacy of regulations, punitive sanctions and international law.

The developing world is being accused of recklessness, even environmental blackmail, for its refusal to be pressurised into signing up to global obligations formulated by the North. This smear must be wiped away by the leaders of the South with a forceful presentation of a system of global resource management that starts from a demand for basic equal rights and recognition of responsibility for the creation of the problem. The South should not be again seen as holding out the begging bowl for "new and additional resources" or calling for "technology transfer". The South should be demanding compensatory measures from the North for errant behaviour as a question of its right over global resources.

Appropriate Compensation for Community Biological Knowledge

Most of the centres of origin and diversity for the world's major food crops and pharmaceuticals are located in the developing world. The value of the South's germplasm to the agriculture and pharmaceuticals industries of the North runs into many billions of dollars a year. This massive contribution to the feeding and health of the developed world is rooted in the systematic transfer of genetic materials, often by stealth, from the maize and potatoes that the Spanish brought back from America to the well documented cases of rubber, coffee and bananas.

The West has promoted the idea that biodiversity is the common heritage of humankind and that there should be free access to genetic resources. So far, free access has meant just that — the farmers and tribals of the South have received no reward or compensation for the generations of toil, skill and knowledge that their communities have vested in the protection of natural diversity and the cultivation of selected crops and other products.

Even though there has been discussions in international fora like FAO about the concept of *farmers' rights*, this has yet to be backed up with hard cash or legal protection against the exploitation of their traditional knowledge. Yet, at the same time, industrialised countries are pressing hard in the GATT forum and elsewhere for the greater protection and enforceability of corporate and private intellectual property rights, including patents over genetic materials. Many of these have come from the developing world in the first place.

We have seen that once property rights have been created in favour of companies, the governments of the North plead that there is no way that they can interfere with private sector interests when it comes to issues like a call for technology transfer. Yet there are no such qualms when it comes to demanding free access to the property of the South's farmers and tribals. In the negotiations for a biodiversity convention, these double standards are writ large and the high sounding plea of the common heritage of humankind is a rhetorical device to disguise the continued exploitation of the poorer countries and their farmers.

Talk of a convention focuses on the need to set aside areas of special biodiversity and to ensure continued open access to all who may want to use the materials to be found there. The proponents talk of fair compensation, but only in terms of fees for management of these fenced off areas. No one has yet proposed a proper compensation for the real value of the genetic resources themselves and the traditional knowledge of their uses that is associated with them.

Genetic materials are vital to human welfare and development. With a growing interest in *green products*, the traditional biological knowledge will be increasingly sought after for a variety of purposes — from food to drugs and cosmetics. If there is to be a global system of checks and balances to ensure that biological diversity is maintained, it will be workable only if it respects the rights of sovereign states to develop their resources in accordance with their aspirations for national development. This involves ensuring that a proper value is attached to genetic reesources and to traditional knowledge. This is not only equitable, it is also sound economics. Developing countries must not sign the biodiversity convention unless it reduces the existing asymmetries in access to knowledge and technology.

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Humanity never needed a global social contract more than it does today. The forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil, with probably over a hundred world leaders and over a thousand non-governmental groups in attendance, provides us with an historic opportunity to formulate precisely such a global contract. With the the nations of the world jointly facing a global ecological crisis but sharply divided in economic terms and with possibilities for conflict immense, there never was a greater need for humanity to live as one.

We present in this publication elements of a system of global environmental governance based, not on targets and objectives, but on basic human rights — a form of governance in which natural resource use will be controlled by a system of democratic checks and balances, and in which individuals, communities and nations have been effectively empowered to protect, manage and use their resources in a fair and democratic manner. We hope the people of the world will see in them a vision of a better future.

The Centre for Science and Environment proposes to submit the statement to UNCED. In case you agree with our proposals, we would be delighted if you could send us your endorsement.

Looking forward to your reply,

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