

OPENING ADDRESS FOR SCOPE/UNEP SYMPOSIUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

by
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It is a great pleasure for me to open formally the SCOPE/UNEP Symposium on Environmental Sciences in Developing Countries and to welcome all participants to the UNEP headquarters here in Nairobi. The Executive Director, Mr. Maurice Strong, would have liked very much to have been here himself to welcome you but was unable to do so owing to other commitments. He is planning, however, to return to Nairobi and join you before the end of the Symposium. He asked me, in the meantime, to convey to you his greetings and best wishes for a successful meeting.

Most of you have, of course, been here for the past week, meeting in small groups and preparing the groundwork for the main part of the Symposium which is to start today; many of you, especially the 30 or so experts from developing countries who have prepared an excellent set of background papers, have been hard at work for some time before the meeting, and I should like to express our sincere thanks to you, indeed to all of you, for the time and effort you have spent in preparing for and attending this meeting which we consider to be among the most important on our calendar for 1974.

I am particularly pleased to be here with you today as development and environment and their many ramifications are of special significance to us. Being from a developing country myself, I am very much aware that the kind of environmental problems that are being faced in both the rural and urban areas of most of these countries are, in large measure, a reflection of poor economic and social conditions and can be overcome by the process of development itself.

This is, however, not the whole story. Unless certain safeguards and precautions are taken, the process of development can, as you are certainly all aware, lead to a second category of environmental problems which assumes increasing importance as development accelerates. It was with these considerations in mind that the first session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Program adopted as a major policy objective of the Program:

to encourage and support an integrated approach to the planning and management of development, including that of natural resources, so as to

take account of environmental consequences, to achieve maximum social, economic, and environmental benefits.

To help us meet this objective, in both the short- and long-term, we need the advice and assistance of governments, organizations, and individuals who share our concern and have knowledge and expertise in some aspect or other of the environment.

This meeting is an excellent example of our cooperation with, and the assistance we are receiving from, one of the most qualified non-governmental organizations. We are confident that SCOPE, the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment of ICSU, the International Council of Scientific Unions, representing as it does a pool of the world's scientific community dealing with the various aspects of environment, will make a very significant contribution to our activities through its participation in the formulation and implementation of our programs and projects and through the provision of advice on the availability of scientific expertise — to name but a few of the ways and means of its potential assistance and cooperation.

UNEP has already had a very special and fruitful relationship with SCOPE, and I hope, indeed I am sure, that this will develop even further in the future.

I feel that it would be very appropriate for me at this stage to offer my personal congratulations, and those of UNEP, to Professor V. Kovda on his recent election as President of SCOPE. It is indeed an encouraging sign for the future of SCOPE that it has at its helm a man of so many talents and of such eminence in the scientific community. May I offer him my best wishes for success and satisfaction in his post.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to two other eminent members of the SCOPE Bureau, Professor M. Kassas, the Vice-President, and Dr. T. Malone, Secretary-General, both of whom have continuously provided us in UNEP with staunch support. Both participated in the consultative group of distinguished scientists from around the world who met in Aspen (Colorado) in August 1973, and provided us with invaluable advice and recommendations for the development of our program.

I believe you all know of SCOPE's initiative in convening the Canberra meeting at which a Working Party of Natural Scientists from the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America identified the main environmental problems of those regions. That meeting, held in 1971, provided an important contribution to the Stockholm Conference and to our own program.

The present meeting is concerned to a large extent with an elaboration of the broad themes considered at Canberra. However, it is not only that; it is also a step in the attempt to coordinate or "marry" the views of social scientists with those of natural scientists on the relationship between environment and development.

As many of you know, a panel of experts, largely composed of social scientists, met in Founex, Switzerland in June 1971, to discuss from their particular points of view the implications of development for the environment. The two meetings, however (Canberra and Founex), represented two

rather different approaches to the problem of focusing on the sectorial natural science studies in one case and the interacting social, political, and economic aspects in the other. It was therefore considered that the two approaches or concepts should be brought together with the ultimate aim of developing a proper methodology for integrated approaches to development that would take all these aspects into account. To this end it has been arranged that in the second meetings of each of the two groups there will be an active participation and input by members of the other group. To facilitate these arrangements for the convergence of the two approaches, there is and has been participation by representatives of each group in the respective Steering Committees of the two symposia. As a further step towards our goal, it is with great pleasure that we note the successful endeavor of SCOPE to have several social scientists attending the present meeting, including at least four members of the Steering Committee for the Symposium on Patterns of Resources Use, Environment, and Development Strategies to be held later this year in cooperation with UNCTAD as a follow up of the Founex meeting. It is planned that a number of natural scientists will participate in the Social Scientists' Resources Use Symposium.

In addition to this joint participation, two basic papers are being presented by the UNEP Secretariat to both symposia: the first on eco-development and the second on alternative patterns of development. It is hoped that they will help to establish a forum for an exchange of views on how best to plan for development while keeping the quality of life unimpaired. Looking further into the future, it is planned that joint meetings of natural and social scientists will be held to consider the problems of one major eco-region as a test case, with the hope that such an experiment will prove successful and will be repeated, culminating in the joint preparation of papers presenting a common approach to the whole problem of environment and development. This present meeting, then, is the first step in this strategy.

May I be allowed here to express our earnest hope that the Symposium will provide clear guidance and set priorities for establishing or strengthening appropriate national machinery and research programs associated with the rational use of natural resources and with the environmental aspects of development. In particular we hope that your recommendations will provide guidance in the application of existing knowledge to the very pressing environmental problems that are associated with inadequate economic and social development and are already a fact of life in the developing world of today.