



**“From Stockholm 1972  
to a vision for the future”**  
**Presented to the MGSF, February 10, 2021**



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On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1972, in Stockholm, Sweden

the “United Nations Conference on the Human Environment,” closed and the establishment of UNEP was a fact





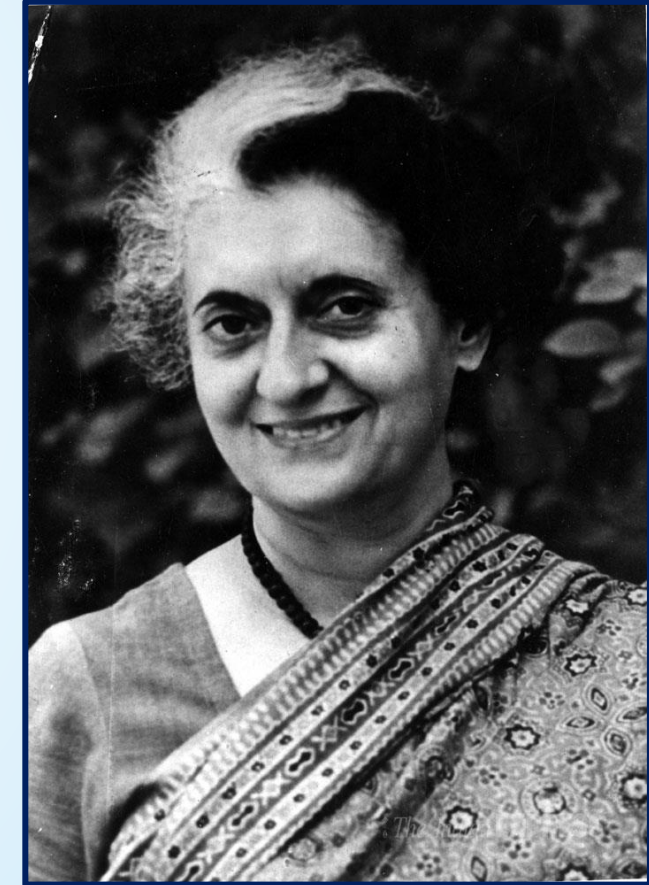
**UNEP headquarter was established in Nairobi, Kenya and began its operations in 1973**

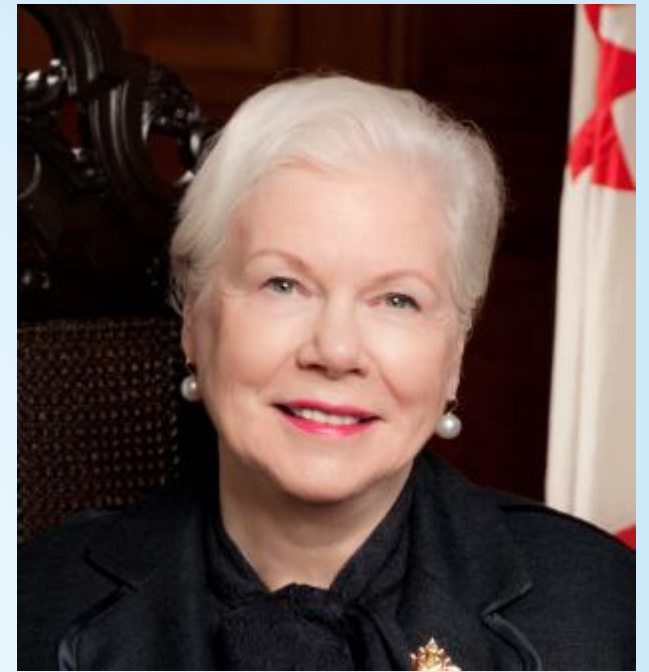




# 50 years will have elapsed by 2022 since the Stockholm 1972 Conference and the birth of UNEP – Stockholm + 50 will celebrate 50 years of environmental work

➔ From the opening session of the Stockholm Conference in 1972, Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India speaking, and a picture of her in 1972 (far right), and UNEP's first Executive Director, the Canadian Maurice Strong (below).







# 1 – Stockholm - outcomes in 1972



UNEP

United Nations Environment Programme



# June 5 to June 16, 1972 – outcomes & participants

- **A Declaration with 26 principles**
- **A 109-paragraph strong action plan**
- **5 resolutions**
- **An estimated 10 000 participated – in all**

- **113 countries (UN 132 members in 72)**
- **More than 250 NGOs**
- **Three civil society forums, one official, two self organised**



# The outcomes - from the Declaration – its 26 principles:

- ▶ Principles 1 and 2 on intergenerational obligations.
- ▶ 3, 5 and 6 which foresaw sustainable development
- ▶ 11, stating that national environmental policies should enhance and not adversely affect the present or future development potential of developing countries.
- ▶ 12 on the concept of “additionality” in development assistance, meaning donors would earmark additional funds for environmental protection measures.
- ▶ 21 that states have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources within their own environmental policies but with the responsibility to ensure activities do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.





# The Stockholm outcomes

## The Action Plan - 6 broad issues

- human settlements,
- natural resource management,
- pollution of international significance,
- educational and social aspects of the environment,
- development and environment,
- international organizations.

## Five resolutions called for:

- A ban on nuclear weapon tests that may lead to radioactive fallout.
- An international databank on environmental data.
- The need to address actions linked to development and environment.
- International organizational changes.
- The creation of an environmental fund.



# What then is the lasting legacy from Stockholm in 1972?

- A global institutional home for environmental law.
- The beginning of environmental governance.
- An institution to connect science with the environment.
- As the Stockholm Conference allowed civil society and NGOs to address the plenary on a regular basis it created a precedence changing all subsequent UN conferences forever allowing greater participation from non-state stakeholders in intergovernmental meetings.
- Environmental diplomacy began.
- Environmental assessment and management began.





➔ 2 – Why did we  
get the Stockholm  
Conference in  
1972?



# A cold war was raging in the world outside of the negotiations

**Demonstrations against the war in Vietnam**



**Demonstrations to save the rainforest**



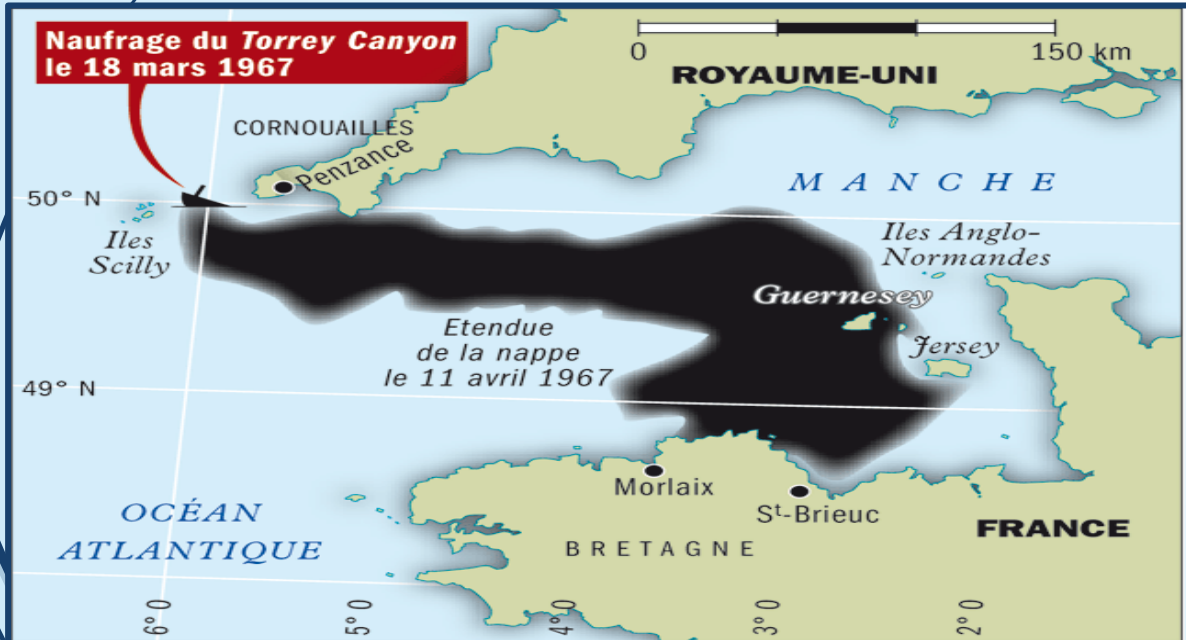


The year is 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio, burns again. It was its 13<sup>th</sup> fire since 1868



1967 - Torrey Canyon – 119 000 tonnes of crude oil spilled

1961 - Minamata –thousands of dead, mercury poison






1945 - 1960	1960 - 1970	1970 - 1990	1990 - 2000	2000 - 2016
<p><b>1952</b> – The great smog in London – 4000 dead;</p> <p><b>1953</b> Drought in India and Pakistan, hunger</p>	<p><b>1961</b> – Minamata, Japan, Mercury poisoning through 40 years.</p> <p><b>1967</b> Torrey Canyon 120 000 tonnes of crude oil in the ocean (British Channel)</p>	<p><b>1972/73</b> Drought, Africa,</p> <p><b>1974</b> Flyborough, UK, explosion, chemical plant</p> <p><b>1976</b> Seveso, Italia, explosion,</p> <p><b>1979</b> Three Miles Island, NY, nuclear, almost</p> <p><b>1984</b> Bophal, India, thousands dead</p> <p><b>1986</b> Chernobyl, Ukraine</p> <p><b>1989</b>, Exxon Valdez, US</p>	<p>Cautious optimism, East-West rapprochement, new axis – East-West-North South, Unanimous decisions in the Security Council</p>	<p><b>2010</b> – Deep Water Horizon, Mex Gulf;</p> <p><b>2007</b> – extreme drought in Africa, hunger</p>
<p><b>1948</b>, IUCN, established in France</p>	<p><b>1961</b> WWF, Switzerland</p> <p><b>1961</b> Amnesty, UK</p>	<p><b>1970</b> – EPA, US</p> <p><b>1971</b> Greenpeace, Canada</p> <p><b>1972</b> – MD/KLD, Norge</p> <p><b>1984</b> Third World Network, Malaysia</p>	<p><b>1994</b> S. Africa Environmental Justice Network Forum</p>	<p>Civil society challenges and is excluded</p> <p>Democracy is threatened</p>
<p><b>1946</b> - The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (1937 – 1948)</p>	<p><b>1954</b> – The convention against oil –spills and dumping. Upgraded several times</p>	<p><b>1971</b>, Ramsar, wetlands</p> <p><b>1972</b> Stockholm, UNEP</p> <p><b>1973</b> CITES</p> <p><b>1987</b> Our Common Future - Brundtland</p>	<p><b>1992</b> UNCED</p> <p><b>1985-87</b> Ozone</p> <p><b>92</b> UNFCCC</p> <p><b>92</b> UNCBD</p> <p><b>94</b> UNCCD</p> <p><b>98</b> Aarhus</p> <p><b>89-01</b> UN BRS</p>	<p><b>2000/01</b> MDG</p> <p><b>2002-</b> UN WSSD</p> <p><b>2005</b> – UNCHR</p> <p><b>2012</b> Rio+20</p> <p><b>2013</b> Minamata</p> <p><b>2014/15</b> - SDG</p>

# Legacy area 1, Environmental law







The Stockholm conference gave an immediate boost to work on environmental conventions:

- Governments also called for a 10-year moratorium on whaling in Stockholm.
- “The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter” (the “London Convention”) agreed later in 1972, one of the first global conventions to protect the marine environment from human activities, in force since 1975’
- Governments agreed on the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) in 1973, another treaty on marine pollution.
- World Heritage Convention of 1972 (UNESCO) linking together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties.
- The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (IUCN, 1963) opened for signatures in 1973, into force in 1975
- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 1971, into force in 1975

# It inspired the development of numerous declarations

- The 1982 UN World Charter for Nature
- The 1992 Rio Declaration, Agenda 21
- The 2000 Malmoe Ministerial Declaration
- The outcome document from the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Johannesburg Plan of Action. 2002
- The Future we Want – the outcome Document from Rio+ 20, 2012
- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development





# The growing understanding for environmental law

- These and other declarations serve as basic normative frameworks for subsequent global environmental gatherings, and they reinforce the normative significance of the concepts common to these instruments
- These declarations and documents represent major milestones in the evolution of international environmental law in what may be called the “modern era” of international environmental law
- By building on each other, and expanding the understanding, the concepts attain a wider significance – the UNFCBD of 1992 - whose principles of conservation are informed by the “intrinsic value” of every form of life regardless of its worth to human beings.
- The Stockholm Declaration tried to include an unambiguous reference to an environmental human right, but it was rejected.



# Summing up the legacy from Stockholm which stretches through Rio in 1992 and on to the 2030 Agenda and beyond

- **A few key elements:**
- *The Prevention of Environmental Harm*
- *The Right to Development in an Environmental Context*
- *Precautionary Action*
- *Procedural Safeguards*
- *Public Participation*
- *The Interface of Trade And Environment*
- *Indigenous Peoples*
- *Women in Development*
- *Environmental Liability and Compensation*





- Legacy area 2
- Science and environment



Convincing all countries, especially the Non-Aligned group, to participate and discuss global environmental issues, science played a crucial role.

- ▶ Four years of preparing the conference in 1972 rested on reports and input from a broad array of experts and scientific institutions in a global effort to generate a comprehensive body of knowledge on the human environment, resulting in more than 20,000 pages of documentation from experts around the world being amassed and distilled into 800 pages of official material for Conference delegates.
- ▶ This process and the Conference itself proved to be a watershed event in the influence of science on international environmental policymaking.









UNGA resolution 2398 calling for the Stockholm conference to be organised said a key purpose for the conference was to:

cultivate and mobilize even greater scientific knowledge to expose and understand the impacts of modern society on humans and their environment and foster public awareness and political engagement to combat the crisis.



As articulated in UNGA 2398, drafted by Sweden's UN delegation, a main motivation for organizing a global conference was



“to provide a framework for comprehensive consideration within the United Nations of the problems of the human environment in order to focus the attention of Governments and public opinion on the importance and urgency of this question and also to identify those aspects of it that can only or best be solved through international co-operation and agreement”



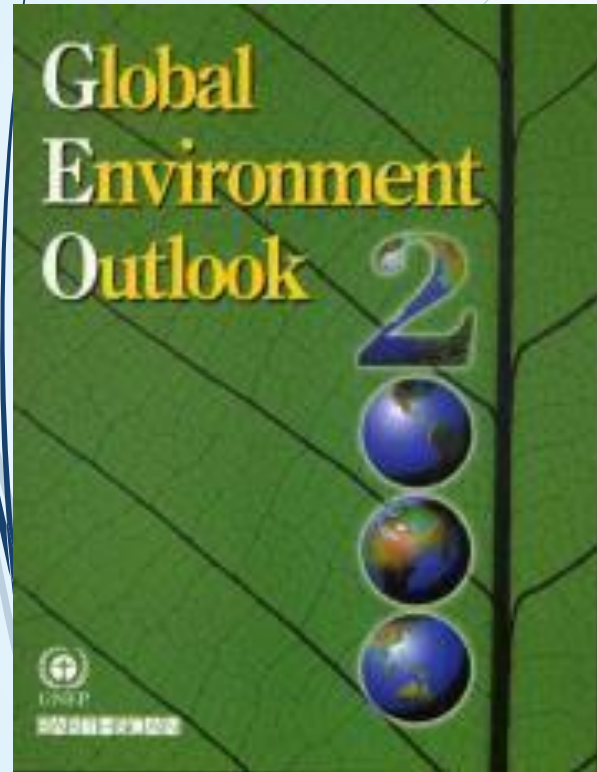


Acid rain devastating forests – a transboundary issue – a test concerning transboundary cooperation – there were few national reports, and to be successful at Stockholm, each country was asked to prepare national scientific reports – now a standard procedure at UNEP and HLPF. 80 national reports were submitted – a first at any conference





# A few of UNEP's science-based reports





# Legacy area 3 – environmental governance and public participation



# The Stockholm conference was the first to allow civil society to address the official plenary on a regular basis

- All subsequent UN conferences would have parallel NGO conferences and allow participation in the official meetings
- This led to the creation of the nine major groups agreed to at UNCED in Rio 1992
- This also led to numerous partnerships between UNEP and non-state stakeholders





# The UN to engage the public at large

- ➔ The UN had begun to seriously work out a strategy to engage and interest the general public in the works of the UN
- ➔ On December 13, the UNGA adopted UN GA Resolution 2567 on Mobilizing Public opinion. The resolution addresses the need to consult with NGOs through a newly established UN entity – Centre for Economic and Social Information, CESI.
- ➔ CESI would come to be working closely with UNEP in engaging the public



# A key legacy: Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration

- ▶ “Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided. “





## Principle 10 and environmental governance

- ▶ Principle 10 sets out three fundamental rights: access to information, access to public participation and access to justice, as key pillars of sound environmental governance.
- ▶ The “access rights” have emerged to be very important in promoting transparent, inclusive and accountable environmental governance.





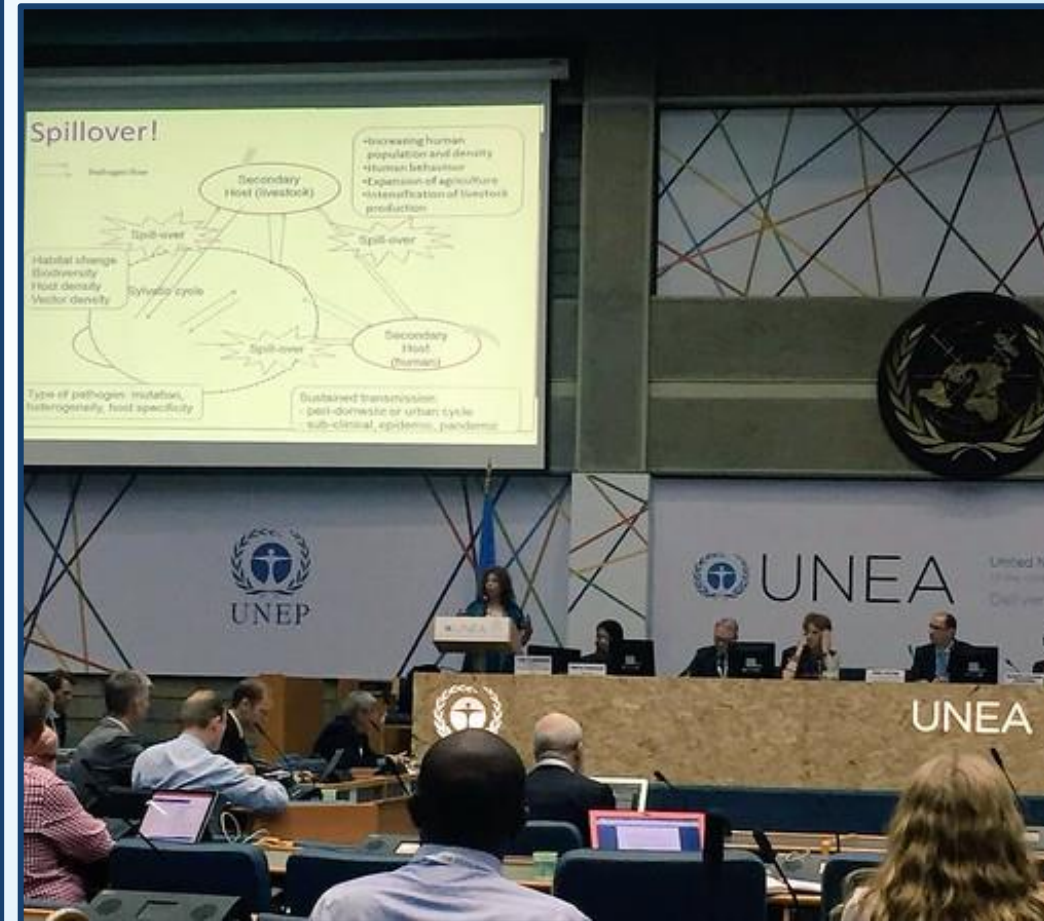
The Legacy – and  
what this has led to





# The UN and environmental work

- ▶ The UN had worked on environmental issues before UNEP – the most ambitious at the time was the Man and Biosphere programme, developed during the 1960s and 70s and administrated by UNESCO in Paris.
- ▶ The UN maritime organisation IMO, based in London had worked on oceans.
- ▶ The World Meteorological Organisation, today with UNEP the home of IPCC, and based in Geneva, had worked on atmospheric issues.
- ▶ But no one had tried to coordinate these issues as cross sectoral issues



# Work on the ozone layer

- ➔ **UNEP picked up research on the ozone layer in the late 1970s, further advanced it, worked to get the issues on the global policy agenda, managed to get funds, and finally develop this into a convention, a protocol and implementation all to save the ozone layer**
- ➔ **Among the first and biggest success is: The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which is a protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer 1985-87**





# Work on climate issues

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- ➔ The climate issue was raised by UNEP already during the preparatory process leading up to 1972. UNEP became the focal institution for the novel and not politically recognised or accepted ideas and research on the atmosphere.
- ➔ As with the Ozone problem, UNEP worked closely with WMO – the World Meteorological Organization, and together established IPCC (1988) – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to research and provide background information to climate issues.
- ➔ This led ultimately to the UN Climate Convention, UNFCCC, signed in 1992 in Rio
- ➔ IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007



## The Chemical conventions are points in case –

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- There are now four of them serving under a joint secretariat in Geneva:
- The Basel Convention – controlling transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal
- The Rotterdam Convention – Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
- The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
- The Minamata Convention on Mercury





# The Brundtland Commission

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- ➔ Following the 1982 Governing Council and the UNEP report covering the state of the planet from 1972 to 1982, the GC and UNEP proposed to the UN GA to set up a commission to which it agreed, and which came to bear the name “The Brundtland Commission”.
- ➔ “Our common Future”, the name of the report produced by this commission, introduced sustainable development, and became a key document in preparing for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, UNCED in 1992



## And the next 50 years?

- ➔ Compose a strong + 50 declaration that can guide us forward
- ➔ Continue developing environmental rights and human rights for the environment
- ➔ Upgrade UNEP to a Specialized Agency with sufficient resources
- ➔ Upgrade UNEP's efforts to contribute to a green and just transition,
- ➔ Strengthen UNEP's research and science base
- ➔ Strengthen and further develop environmental governance and environmental diplomacy





➤ An epilogue with  
a foresight



Inspired by the outcome from Stockholm, UNEP initiated a number of follow-up conferences, One was the Cocoyoc conference in Mexico, 1974. Its declaration has an epilogue

➔ “We recognize the threats to both the "inner limits" of basic human needs and the "outer limits" of the planet's physical resources. But we also believe that a new sense of respect for fundamental human rights and for the preservation of our planet is growing up behind the angry divisions and confrontations of our day. We have faith in the future of mankind on this planet. We believe that ways of life and social systems can be evolved that are more just, less arrogant in their material demands, more respectful of the whole planetary environment. The road forward does not lie through the despair of doom-watching or through the easy optimism of successive technological axes. It lies through a careful and dispassionate assessment of the "outer limits", through co-operative search for ways to achieve the "inner limits" of fundamental human rights, through the building of social structures to express those rights, and through all the patient work of devising techniques and styles of development which enhance and preserve our planetary inheritance







As a historian, I would say we have come a long way in a short period of time; as an environmentalist, we have not come far enough –  
Action now is needed. Stockholm in 1972 was a daring conference, let us make the next one as daring and more forward looking. Thank you for listening

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FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE