of global stewardship. And this, of course, is also a political challenge. This stewardship must come from countries big and small, rich and poor. It would mean that the more industrialized countries re-examine their consumption and production patterns. It would mean that in our effort to eradicate poverty, we look at democratic governance, institution-building and community-based development. It would mean upholding international commitments to provide developing countries with the finance and technology they need. And it would mean placing the advancement of women and the education of girls at the very centre of these efforts. In short, sustainable development requires the equal treatment of the three pillars of sustainability: economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Next year in Johannesburg, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, world leaders will have an opportunity to show that they take the idea of stewardship seriously. But they need not wait until then; indeed, they must not. One immediate test of resolve is the Kyoto Protocol, which aims to reduce greenhouse emissions, but which has yet to enter into force.

The burden of leadership at this juncture falls on the industrialized countries, and in particular the United States, the European Union and Japan. They are responsible for most of the world's past and present carbon emissions. And they are best placed, both economically and technologically, to move ahead with their own reductions and with assistance for the developing world. To abandon this process now would set back the global climate strategy for many years.

At the same time, even as we look to the industrialized countries to take the lead, developing countries themselves can do more. First, they can make sure that environmental issues are fully integrated into mainstream economic and social policy. Second, companies and entrepreneurs in developing countries should explore the new business opportunities that changes in climate policy will make available. Green technologies offer some of the brightest business opportunities of the new century.

Third, developing countries should prepare projects for the "clean development mechanism", a key element of the Kyoto Protocol that will allow industrialized countries to gain emissions credits by making climate-friendly investments in the developing world. Finally, developing countries should consider their own contributions to the global climate strategy. Developing countries will be doing themselves no favours if they, too, pursue a path of industrialization which before long proves unsustainable.

Sustainable development will not happen of its own accord. We need a break with the harmful practices of the past and a break in the political stalemate that prevails on too many environmental issues.

There is some good news to report. I don't want to sound too gloomy. Public awareness has grown. Civil society is engaged. The private sector is beginning to seize the opportunities of green technologies. Partnerships are being formed. The global machinery of policy-making and governance is moving in the right direction. We have the human and material resources to place our economies on more sustainable footing.

But the bottom line is that the challenges of sustainability are overwhelming our responses. In the past, we could afford a long gestation period before undertaking major environmental policy initiatives. Today the time for a well-planned transition to a sustainable system is running out. We may be moving in the right direction, but we are moving too slowly. We are failing in our responsibility to future generations, and even to the present.

**CAMRE**

Abu Dhabi Declaration
– Perspective of Arab Environmental Action* –

The Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment meeting in Abu Dhabi, in a Special Session of their Council (CAMRE) on 9 Dhul’-q’ada 1421H (3 February 2001) and on the occasion of the International Conference and Exhibition – Environment 2001 in Abu Dhabi;

Having: reviewed the report on Perspectives of Environmental Action in the Arab World which was prepared upon an initiative of and support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and with generous support from the United Arab Emirates;

Emphasizing: the growing concern for the environment, both at the Arab and Global levels, clearly reflected in the declarations on environment and development issued by their first meeting in Tunis, 1986 and their meeting in Cairo, 1991 and at the Earth Summit (Rio 1992), as well as the decisions and commitments included in the Rio Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth summit – Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the recommendations and declarations relating to environmental issues adopted by the various international conferences that took place during Earth Summit up to the Conferences held in Malmö and Abuja in the year 2000;

Realizing: that the Arab Region stands at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, during which the world will witness developments of profound impact on various aspects of life, as we know it today. The Region enters this era having realized significant and far-reaching achievements in the development of Arab society during the past century reflected in improvement in human health, education, socio-economic standards and the environment. They recognize, in particular, achievements in institutional building, legislation, environmental education and training, the use of environmentally friendly technologies as well as Arab active involvement and contribution to regional and global environmental agreements and programmes.

This process of accelerated development has had its impact on the environment. This has raised of late, the issue of achieving the optimum linkage between development imperatives, eradicating poverty and protecting the environment. This has revealed several negative aspects have been identified, and in particular the fact that development and raising living standards without concern for the environment resulted in intensive exploitation of natural resources and pollution levels beyond the capacity of nature to promote a healthy and safe environment conducive to achieving development fulfilling the aspirations of the Arab people. This calls for the adoption of more effective approaches in development based on the rational use of natural resources, renewable and non-renewable, as well as their protection from pollution.

Realizing: that achieving sustainable development, faces two main challenges. First, the continuing increase in population which represents a real threat in the long-run if maintained at current rates together with the imbalance in population density between urban, rural and "badia" areas at the national and regional levels. Second, the limitation of many natural resources in Arab countries and the deterioration of the quality.

Noting: that while we have today reasonable expertise regarding current environmental problems, whether in understanding or dealing with them, yet the number of environmental experts is still smaller in numbers and shorter in experience than needed and our environmental institutions are still young with limited experience, currently facing difficult and complex challenges.

Recognizing: that most of the current urgent environmental issues are the same as those of the last century, while increased in intensity and varied in priority from one place to another. The last century witnessed negative impacts on the environment resulting from accelerated industrial development and expansion of urbanization that have led to deterioration of infrastructures in most Arab countries, increases in air pollution levels, land degra-
dation, pollution of marine and coastal areas, deterioration of fisheries and loss of biodiversity. Today, all these negative impacts are pronounced and more acute than half a century ago.

Recalling: that the last few years have witnessed great interest among Arab countries in environmental problems and a realization that, if allowed to continue, they will represent a real threat to the future of the Arab Region.

Convinced: that this calls for greater concern and action, both on the part of governments and on the part of individuals, if the negative impacts of human actions on human health, natural resources and national economies are to be mitigated and protected plans on two time frames. First, the short term would deal with the most urgent problems, and which have a real chance of success. This would reinforce the efforts already being made by different governments and institutions and generate more resources to deal effectively with the harder problems, at greater distances and with more sustainable basis. The second, the long term, requires more resources to allow for in-depth studies aiming at the identification of solutions and the provision of conditions that are conducive to the effective implementation of such solutions.

Declare

First: There is an urgent need for alleviation of poverty and improvement of living standards and economic conditions of the Arab citizen through programmes of sustainable development one of whose cornerstones is the environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources.

Second: The priority environmental problems facing the Arab world at the beginning of the twenty first century are:

1. Severe shortage of water resources and deterioration of their quality.
2. Irrational consumption of natural resources.
3. Increasing urbanization and its consequent problems.
4. Deterioration of marine and coastal areas and wetlands.

Third: Achieving our objectives calls for a new strategy based, first, on identification of areas of strength and weaknesses, as revealed by past experience, and second on deeper understanding of global developments in the various fields of environmental action.

The Arab Ministers emphasize that such a strategy must be built on the following principles:

1. Working simultaneously on two time frames: Since environmental problems vary in causes and their present and future consequences, it is neither possible nor useful to address them all at once. This calls for the formulation of environmental rehabilitation and protection plans on two time frames.

2. Starting with the elimination of the major problems facing the Arab world at the beginning of the twenty first century. It is clear that such situations constitute a heavy burden on society, thus confirming the danger of rolling over environmental problems, or either from place to place, or from time to time.

3. Experience of other countries has shown that such policies can only lead to greater costs that could be avoided by dealing with environmental problems at an early stage.

4. Applying modern environmental accounting methods that provide decision makers, with clear comparisons between the cost of investing in the environment and the magnitude of the damage resulting from failure to include the environmental dimension in the feasibility studies of development projects.

5. Adopting the "Cleaner Production" strategy in its comprehensive sense, starting from the rational use of natural resources, avoiding hazardous substances, maximizing the efficiency of design and production processes and minimizing the generation and release of wastes and production and use to levels that are within the carrying capacity of the environment.

6. Cleaner Production also includes the effective use of water and the effective management of waste as well as consideration of changing the consumption patterns that have created the demand for a particular product or service.

7. Taking adequate measures that ensure improving the effective use of recycling and recycling technologies related to improving the environment. There are today many initiatives seeking to achieve, implement and promising results in dealing with chronic environmental problems related to providing the natural resources necessary for development projects, and in particular renewable resources, the reduction of levels of pollutants, whether in production or use, improving the effective use of recycling wastes or disposing of them in safer ways. The Arab Region is called upon to keep up these efforts with a view to making the environment an integral component in our education system, in an effort to bring up a generation that is aware of its responsibilities towards the environment, whose environmental awareness is based on sound understanding of environmental issues, which respects the limits of nature and which makes no effort in protecting the environment in whatever career they choose in life.

8. Indignation of water desalination projects, and production of reverse osmosis membranes, applying at the same time techniques of water resource management and demand.

Fourth: To be guided in the implementation of environmental programmes by projects for the coming two decades by options identified in the "Perspectives of Arab Environmental Projects" as a working manual for achieving the objectives of this Declaration.

Fifth: Stress the need for undertaking effective measures to support the environmental administrations in Arab countries and their supporting activities and to seek the necessary funding for carrying out their duties. In this context the Ministers:

a) Welcome the interest shown by the Arab leaders in environmental issues and look forward to the inclusion of preparatory measures for the Rio+10 Summit in the agenda of the next summit to be held in Amman, Jordan. They also look forward to the environment becoming a fixed items on the agenda of future summits.

b) Welcome further the endorsement by the 7th Islamic Summit (16 Shaban 1421 H, 12-16 November 2000) of the Jeddah Declaration issued by the International Forum on the Environment from an Islamic Perspective (25-28 Rajab 1421 H, 22-25 October 2000) and the call for adopting the recommendations of the Forum as a basis for complementing the regional and global environmental programmes so as to reflect an Islamic perspective of the environment.

c) Stress the necessity of securing permanent sources of funding for addressing current and future environmental problems. This requires the establishment of an Arab financial mechanism to fund environmental investments at the national and regional levels in addition to cooperation and partnership with industrialized countries and regional and international financing institutions, realizing that returning investments in the
environment far exceed the return on other investments.

d) Emphasize the importance of sound preparation for the Rio+10 Summit. Such preparation should include the drafting of a comprehensive report that reflects the expectations of the region, reviews what has been achieved in the past 10 years in the area of the environment, outlines the main objectives and assesses the human and financial resources required. In this better standards of life in larger freedom as well as to employ international mecha-

Recalling all its previous resolutions

Recalling also that the Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the General Assembly, and welcoming Assembly resolution 55/106,

Recalling also that the Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986 confirmed that the right to development is an inalienable hu-

Taking note of the three studies pre-

Welcome the commitment made by heads of State and Government in the United Nations Millennium Declaration to make the right to development a reality for everyone and their resolve to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to devel-

The Commission on Human Rights, Guided by the Charter of the United Nations, expressing in particular the de-

Underlining that meeting the objec-

Underlining also the fact that realiza-

Recalling the need for coordination and cooperation throughout the United Na-

Welcomes the holding of two ses-

Expresses its appreciation of the re-

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