

CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

(in chronological order)

WORLD CONSERVATION STRATEGY CONFERENCE, HELD
IN OTTAWA, CANADA, DURING 31 MAY TO 5 JUNE
1986

The Ottawa Conference may well be seen as a turning point in the history of conservation. Six years after the launching of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) it succeeded in putting Man back into Nature, pointing to ways of reconciling human needs and social equity with the integrity of the environment and natural resources. The Conference evaluated progress in implementing the Strategy, determined means of incorporating missing elements (such as population, social and economic equity, technology, sectoral strategies, energy, economics...), and outlined future steps to improve and better implement the Strategy.

The Conference attracted more than 500 participants from some 100 countries, including China, Vietnam, the USSR, and Eastern Europe. There were people from every continent, participation from the Third World being very high thanks to grants made available by Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, UNEP, and others.

The following classes of participants were most prominent:

- Development planners and decision-makers;
- Environmental ministers and planners involved in national conservation strategy work;
- Experts and policymakers in population, technology, agriculture, health, industry, and related fields;
- Development agency heads and officials;
- Field personnel in development, conservation, and environmental projects; and
- Writers, journalists, academics, and students.

People attended from many walks of life, who, in other circumstances, might not have had the chance to meet. Some of the diversity is evident in that participants wanting population control as a precondition to sustainable development met with those who put human need-satisfaction as a precondition to population stabilization; senior economists from the World Bank met with their critics; indigenous peoples met with government planners.

From their meeting together came many creative new ideas and initiatives. For example, a global union for the technology of sustainable development was formed at this Conference. Western Europeans were able to make plans to further their own national conservation strategies, learning about the importance of economic, trade, and aid, relations with the Third World, and the place that this might occupy in national conservation strategies. Latin Americans likewise met and decided that a new development planning strategy was needed, based on their own natural and human patrimony, in order to emerge from their debt crisis. The women participants, who were unusually numerous for a conservation or development conference, also formed a caucus and discussed the unique role of women in sustainable development and in the decision-making process.

Both development and environmental organizations sponsored the Conference, including UNDP, FAO, and WHO, as well as UNEP, WWF, UNESCO, and IUCN. There were also a number of Canadian government and nongovernmental sponsors. All agreed to work together on follow-up and implementation.

The WCS was reviewed in terms of its implementation, with more than 30 countries that had engaged in National

Conservation Strategy elaboration reporting on their progress and the obstacles they had encountered. Also, twenty workshops were held on diverse issues related to sustainable development. Each workshop proposed recommendations, action ideas, and appropriate modifications to the World Conservation Strategy—to improve it operationally, make it more complete than hitherto, and render it capable of being used by development-related groups. Some 200 papers were presented, on the basis of which a Library [series] on Sustainable Development will be produced. The level of multidisciplinary and interpersonal interchange was extremely intense and productive.

Follow-up activities to the Ottawa Conference should be rich and include the following:

Revised Version of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS):—The Ecosystem Conservation Group (ECG), consisting of UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, and IUCN, had been created after the launching of the WCS, to collaborate on implementing the Strategy. This group convened a meeting immediately after the Conference, to take advantage of the presence of IUCN President Dr M.S. Swaminathan and UNEP Executive Director Dr M.K. Tolba. They agreed that the WCS should be revised, to include additional issues of population, technology, and sustainable development strategies, for particular sectors such as health, agriculture, and industry; also indigenous peoples, the role of women in sustainable development, the economics of sustainable development, and community-based resource-management systems. The WCS will retain its present format and structure, as well as its basic principles. Revisions will include updating previous material and adding new chapters on issues that have not so far been incorporated.

Library on Sustainable Development:—Based in part on the Ottawa papers, this series will comprise some 15–20 volumes on various aspects of sustainable development. The series will respond to the frequently-expressed need to gather together some of the new thinking on this fundamental aspect of conservation.

Major New Initiatives:—The President of IUCN proposed three major new initiatives to the Ottawa Conference at its opening, which were adopted in the final session on Recommendations. These initiatives are as follows:

1. *Environment Amnesty:* A new politically-neutral organization, with a high degree of professional integrity, will be created to monitor violations of natural heritage. It will operate in a manner similar to that of Amnesty International, exposing major violations as a result of political or personal corruption.
2. *Equitable and Sustainable Development:* An International Code will be elaborated for the equitable and sustainable use of life-support systems.
3. *Peoples' Associations for Sustainable Development:* Aspects of the Code will be implemented through the promotion of grass-roots-level peoples' associations for sustainable development.

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