



Recommendation 1140 (1991)¹

Global environmental change and the role of science and democracy

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly takes note of the results of the 7th Parliamentary and Scientific Conference (Ottawa, 11-14 June 1990) and of those of other recent international gatherings, such as the 2nd World Climate Conference, whose purpose was the study of phenomena likely to modify the planet's ecosystem and create numerous social and economic problems, as well as of the work being developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
2. An increasingly clear consensus is forming around the view that the damage which man has inflicted on nature has today reached such serious proportions that urgent action is called for on a global level.
3. The continuation of life on earth depends above all on essential changes in the collective conscience. If society is to evolve towards the acceptance of a new conservation ethic, scientists, educators, industrialists, the media and, above all, politicians -who must in the final analysis translate thoughts into action -all have a special part to play.
4. Sustainable development is, in the long run, the only solution to the problem of controlling, or reducing, the effects of such phenomena as the concentration of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, ozone depletion, climatic change, deforestation, rising sea-levels, pollution, in particular by sulphur oxides, acid rain and the extinction of species.
5. The remedies to these phenomena depend to a large extent on dialogue between scientists, political decision-makers and the public. The public's growing disillusionment with science and technology due to the fog surrounding some areas of research is a trend which should therefore be reversed. However, science and technology alone cannot take up the challenge of saving the planet.
6. For this reason, all initiatives designed to promote sustainable development should be encouraged. The Assembly welcomes the fact that an organisation like OECD, an authority in economic matters, has accepted the concept of sustainable development and decided to amend the economic growth model used in Western countries for more than forty years. The European Parliament has adopted a similar position in recent resolutions. The Parliamentary Assembly made a more concrete proposal in its [Recommendation 1130](#) (September 1990) on the formulation of a European charter and a European convention on environmental protection and sustainable development.
7. The Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to invite the member states to take account of the following ideas and proposals in the formulation of their overall strategy for combating the effects of global environmental change : Science and technology
 - 7.1. The scientific community must be encouraged to intensify its efforts to move towards a new discipline : the science of the terrestrial system.
 - 7.2. Scientists should pass on a clear message to the general public. Improved popularisation and presentation techniques are therefore required.

1. Assembly debate on 30 January 1991 (23rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 6364](#), report of the Committee on Science and Technology, Rapporteur : Mr Blenk). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 January 1991 (23rd Sitting).



- 7.3. Environmental standards and regulations must not result in technological rigidity and uniformity, but must take account of diversity as an essential element.
- 7.4. Some military technology must be re-applied to peaceful and ecological purposes, for example the observation of the earth from space.
- 7.5. Technical innovation programmes designed to make production more ecological should be incorporated into firms' general health and safety policies. Economics
- 7.6. Efforts should be made to incorporate into national economic accounts the estimated value of natural resources and qualitative ecological conditions.
- 7.7. The "polluter pays" principle with regard to ecological damage arising from industrial or commercial activities must continue to apply until a new growth model based on anticipation and prevention is developed.
- 7.8. Environmental taxes must stay high in order to bring about a real fall in consumption and promote technological change while compensating for this by reductions in other fields
- 7.9. The establishment of internationally tradable emission rights is an approach which must be encouraged and extended.
- 7.10. Multinational firms should be encouraged to apply the same environmental standards and regulations to their activities all over the world.
- 7.11. An evaluation of the compatibility with the environment must be required for all projects likely to have environmental effects. Agriculture, fisheries and forestry
- 7.12. Agricultural and fisheries policies must increasingly take account of the multiple functions of agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and in particular the contributions these sectors can make to the maintenance of a healthy and fertile soil, to the preservation of clean water and air and to the conservation of the world's biodiversity.
- 7.13. More forceful action is necessary to reduce or eliminate the negative consequences of present practices on the global environment.
- 7.14. New initiatives should be taken -including relevant scientific and technological work -for the promotion of sustainable agriculture, fisheries and forestry as part of a living countryside with a satisfactory capability of producing healthy food and other environment-friendly products. International co-operation and political institutions
- 7.15. It is necessary to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions whilst adopting a joint position on this subject in international forums.
- 7.16. An exhaustive inventory of the relevant problems must be drawn up and the different international, national, regional and local responsibilities identified.
- 7.17. Any trade imbalances due to unequal environmental taxation must form the subject of negotiations within GATT.
- 7.18. Strategies for transferring technology to the Third World should be reassessed.
- 7.19. The pattern of energy use in the Third World and loan strategies in the energy field should be readjusted.
- 7.20. The United Nations' role should be re-examined to take account of ecological integrity and human survival. A remodelled Security Council would be the most appropriate institution to deal with this global challenge.
- 7.21. At national level, greater ministerial interaction is required.
- 7.22. The various governmental and parliamentary arrangements for scientific and technological assessment should be extended to all the member countries.
- 7.23. At local level, representative groups must be given the facilities required to improve their understanding of the problems, the proposed solutions and the different means of redress.
- 7.24. The Montreal Protocol to the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer should be applied.

8. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers :
 - 8.1. consider immediately the introduction of a "right to a healthy environment" into the European Convention on Human Rights in the medium term ;
 - 8.2. support efforts towards the signing of an international convention on climate change at the World Conference on the Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992 ;
 - 8.3. reorient the Council of Europe's programme of activities in order to contribute to worldwide endeavours by way of a series of practical proposals, especially in such fields as regional planning, the responsibilities of local government, town planning, transport and education.