Resolution 592 (1975)[1]

Economic consequences of "the limits to growth"

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having regard to the report on the economic consequences of "the limits to growth" (Doc. 3598) presented by its Committee on Economic Affairs and Development ;

2. Recognising that the various studies of the Club of Rome have made a considerable contribution to critical analysis of the serious consequences of the current depletion of non-renewable resources and the heavy demands of modern production technology on the environment ;

3. Considering that a more equitable utilisation of the world's limited resources and of labour, and a better distribution of income at world level, can only be achieved through intensified international economic and technological co-operation ;

4. Emphasising that the Council of Europe member states have an important role to play in fostering such co-operation ;

5. Believing that a larger part of the fruits of economic growth should be used to solve social and ecological problems, and to combat wastage of scarce resources ;

6. Recalling its Resolutions 566 (1974), on the energy problem, and 587 (1975), on problems connected with the disposal of solid urban and industrial waste, and its Recommendations 752 (1975), on the environment policy in Europe, and 753 (1975), on the liability for damage caused to the environment ;

7. Stressing the importance of a rapid and full implementation of the proposals formulated in the texts referred to in the preceding paragraph ;

8. Welcoming the recommendation on the polluter-pays principle adopted by the Council of the European Communities in 1974, and the resolution on the implementation of the same principle adopted by the OECD Council on 14 November 1974, and emphasising that the introduction of this principle will be conducive to a reorientation of economic growth from a quantitative to a qualitative approach as well as to a reduction of public expenditure,

9. Urges the governments of the Council of Europe member states :

to seek to assess, through the appropriate international bodies, the present availability and reserves of world food, material and energy resources, and its consequential repercussions on Europe, as well as to co-ordinate and intensify fundamental research, applied research and development in these fields and in the recycling of wastes ;

to organise their economic development in a way compatible with the world's ecological needs and with more emphasis on the most rational use of the world's resources ;

to adopt legislation- in accordance with the recommendations referred to in paragraph 6 above- designed to reduce the negative impact of production technologies on the environment and to encourage a more rational use of scarce natural resources ;

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1. Assembly debate on 24 April 1975 (6th and 7th Sittings) (see Doc. 3598, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 April 1975 (7th Sitting).

to introduce the polluter-pays principle and to enforce its uniform observance, in order to avoid unfair competition through distortions in international trade and investment ;

to implement comprehensive programmes for the recovery and reconversion of urban and industrial wastes, and to intensify research into more efficient ways of collecting and transporting waste ;

to reorganise production technologies along ecologically sound lines, in particular to balance the use of renewable natural materials, such as rubber and cotton, as against synthetic materials which are harmful to the ecosystem ;

to support the present efforts to reach agreement with the raw material producing countries on fair prices for these materials, and to promote their rational use while at the same time supporting those developing countries which export raw materials in their economic and social development ;

to see to it that products and their packaging introduced on the market are environmentally tolerable by making sure that they are biologically decomposable or can be reintroduced into an industrial cycle ;

to give high priority to the development of new sources of energy such as solar and geothermal energy, and to intensify production of solid fuels at the same time as developing nuclear power ;

to define common standards governing the installation of energy production units, in particular nuclear power stations which, like all human activities, are liable to have adverse effects on the environment, with a view to reducing these effects and to ensuring that discrepancies between national standards do not give rise to conflicts when such units are established in frontier regions ;

to transfer more accurately to the users of motor vehicles the "social costs" involved- i.e. those entailed by various forms of pollution, road building, accidents etc.- by increasing the variable element in the total cost of their use through levies on petrol and oil, with a view to achieving an optimal transport structure ;

to harmonise legislation on motor vehicle exhaust gas emissions, in order to avoid unfair international competition resulting from different national regulations.