

Introduction

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

In his opening address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary-General, commented on the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro earlier this year.

The Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June marked an important milestone in awakening the world to the need for a development process that does not jeopardise future generations.

The Rio Conference achieved consensus in more than one area: first, it secured a set of agreements between governments which marks a significant advance in international cooperation on development and environment issues. Second, it marshalled political commitment to these arrangements at the highest level and placed the issue of sustainable development at the heart of the international agenda. Third, it opened new paths for communication and cooperation between official and non-official organisations working towards developmental and environmental goals. Fourth, it led to an enormous increase in public awareness of the issues that were tackled in the process – an awareness that ought to facilitate the adoption of policies and the allocation of additional resources to fulfil the task.

A comprehensive and far-reaching programme for sustainable development is Agenda 21 which constitutes the centrepiece of international cooperation and coordination activities within the United Nations system for many years to come. Its role in galvanising international cooperation will be crucial. Building on the spirit of Rio, the implementation of Agenda 21 must be seen as an investment in our future. I call on the donor community to ensure a flow of new resources which will serve the common interests of the whole world.