

A Response to A Dialogue on Foreign Policy

CANADIAN INSTITUTE FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND POLICY

L'INSTITUT CANADIEN DU
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A Response to A Dialogue on Foreign Policy
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A Response to *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy*

Summary

The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) appreciates the opportunity to participate in this dialogue on foreign policy. This dialogue is an important part of Governance for Sustainability, one of CIELAP's current program areas. Our response focuses on some opportunities for Canada to show leadership in promoting sustainable development and provides brief answers to the 12 specific questions posed in the *Dialogue on Foreign Policy*.

Background on CIELAP

Founded in 1970, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) is an independent, not for profit research and education organization whose mission is to provide leadership in the research and development of environmental law and policy that promotes the public interest and sustainability.

Developed through a strategic planning process, CIELAP's current work focuses around four program areas:

- Sustainable Policy Solutions – This program will address policies, trends and solutions in such areas as hazardous waste, green power, food and biotechnology, air and water quality
- Governance for Sustainability – This program will address how to create a more sustainable society by analyzing governance mechanisms both domestically and internationally to ensure environmental protection and sustainability.
- Public Engagement and Outreach – This program builds on initiatives such as our Citizens' Guides, poster maps, website and curricula for teachers to create better informed and more active citizens.
- Youth Leadership Program – CIELAP is a launching pad for many young people who may continue their professional careers in the environmental field. This program will encourage youth and student interns, who have received formative training at CIELAP, to take on the challenge of building a more sustainable society.

Our model for successful change is based on in-depth research, consultation and the circulation of research results to the wider public in an accurate and timely way through publications, conferences, workshops and the media.

A Dialogue on Foreign Policy

CIELAP appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Federal Government's initiative of a dialogue on foreign policy. As the document *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy* indicates the goal is to engage Canadians in a dialogue on our foreign policy priorities in the face of new global realities. CIELAP sees these new global realities in the context of sustainable development. Therefore, CIELAP believes that Canada's foreign policy priorities should be to promote sustainable development. That is the only way to ensure our own security in the long run and to re-establish our place in the world as a middle power that has the confidence to develop an independent foreign policy based on traditional Canadian values of democracy, environmental protection and human rights.

This response is in two parts. First, it focuses on some opportunities for Canada to show leadership in sustainable development through its foreign policy. Second, it provides brief, specific responses to each question posed in *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy*.

Opportunities for Canada to Show Leadership in Sustainable Development Through Its Foreign Policy

Sustainable Development, that grand task set for humanity by the Brundtland Commission in its report *Our Common Future*, is:

....development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, and at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, Canada undertook, along with most other nations in the world, to work toward sustainable development. In Johannesburg, we committed to having a Sustainable Development plan for the country developed by 2005.

WSSD gave us an opportunity to put some initiatives in place. Most importantly, since WSSD, Canada has ratified the Kyoto Protocol. We congratulate Canada on taking this important step when faced with major opposition from some sectors within the Canadian economy, some provinces and the United States. We are also interested the development of the Public Private partnership initiatives signed on to by the Canadian Government in Johannesburg. As well, the focus on poverty reduction in the developing world is crucial if we are to better protect the environment and improve the quality of life of the people who live on this planet. We would also like to congratulate the Government of Canada on the stance it took in refraining from participating in the War on Iraq. War is the biggest destroyer of human security and the environment and can not lead towards sustainable development.

CIELAP in its report *Sustainable Development in Canada: A New Federal Plan*, published in September 2001, proposed that Canada's difficulty with sustainable development arises from two separate problems. The first is a challenge confronting all

of the Northern democratic states with capitalist economies: how do we implement Sustainable Development?

Brundtland articulated the concept of Sustainable Development for the whole world, but for the most part, implementation of Sustainable Development strategies has been limited to the South. Most implementation frameworks, methods and strategies, therefore, have been developed to operate in the context of highly compromised (if not fatally weakened) economies. In the North, where economies are generally quite strong, the concepts and methods of Sustainable Development present governments with more difficulties than solutions, leading to a distinct inability to act.

The second problem is idiosyncratic to the governance of the Canada itself. Where will the leadership come from?

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada work with the federal departments, the provincial governments, the private sector and civil society to develop a sustainable development framework for Canada. This framework could include a framework for promoting sustainable development through the United Nations system and other multi-lateral bodies and programs. This framework should govern all foreign policy and the initiatives that flow from it.

Partnerships for Sustainability

In April 2002, CIELAP co-hosted the first *Partnering for Sustainability* Conference. We convened representatives from the public, private and civil sectors to hear about partnership initiatives that work, and to learn about what makes a good partnership and what are the pitfalls to avoid. We prepared proceedings from the conference and a paper on check marks for a good partnership. This paper was turned into a one page flyer, in English and French, and distributed at the WSSD. We are planning the second *Partnering for Sustainability* conference for September 2003. This time, the focus will be on establishing and implementing new partnerships for sustainability. *Partnering for Sustainability* would be an opportunity for the Government of Canada to carry forward on its commitment to partnerships, made at the WSSD.

At the WSSD, partnerships were identified as a main means of implementing sustainability. Many civil society groups are concerned about the implications of this particularly in relation to public-private partnerships. Civil society groups conclude that the partnership will have more chance of success if civil society or community groups are also involved. CIELAP has prepared a further paper on partnerships providing useful information on how to construct an effective partnership; what signs to watch for; and when to know to call it quits. All sectors of society need to be part of the shift towards sustainable development. Partnerships are one way forward.

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada sponsor and participate in the second Partnering for Sustainability conference to be held in September 2003.

Sustainable Impact Assessment

As well, CIELAP released a paper entitled *Sustainable Impact Assessment of the Earth Summit + 10* on the eve of the World Summit. We have proceeded with further work in this area and are interested in using this methodology to assess the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, among others. We have further contributed to the debate through the preparation of two background papers, one entitled *To Assess What is Wrong: A Framework for NGO-organized, Community-based SIA of Trade Policy* and *Beyond Civil Society: Public Engagement Alternatives for Canadian Trade Policy*. Through public engagement and utilizing a Sustainability Impact Assessment methodology, Canada could show leadership in trying to ensure that Trade Agreements are developed that uphold the principles of sustainability.

Recommendation: That the Government of Canada investigate new ways of public engagement and utilizing a Sustainability Impact Assessment Framework to assess Trade Agreements.

Specific Responses to the Questions posed in *A dialogue on Foreign Policy*

- 1 We have commented on how Canada's foreign policy could better reflect the concerns and priorities of Canadians by adopting a sustainable development framework.
- 2 Regarding the "three pillars" approach, it is our view that this approach is, in the most part, captured within the sustainable development framework. The promotion of prosperity, in the traditional sense of material consumption and physical wealth, however, is not captured within the sustainable development framework. Canadians generally know that we are a favoured nation. Canadians also know that for everyone in the world to live as we do would require three to four globes. We also know that our society is becoming more polarized, with a small minority enjoying a greater percentage of the prosperity within Canada. We believe that Canadians realize that we are living beyond our means and for the sake of future generations we have to change direction.
- 3 Canada should work to strengthen the role of the United Nations and seek to ensure the integration of the work of its various parts to better support the goal of sustainable development.
- 4 Canada should focus on promoting sustainable development. Such a focus could become our distinctive role in promoting global security.
- 5 We will not achieve sustainable development while some are contemplating waging war. We need to develop and promote a culture of peace. Therefore, the military will best serve Canada through peacekeeping missions.

- 6 Sustainable development is the long-term solution to conflict, therefore Canada should promote the concept of sustainable development within Canada and overseas.
- 7 Increasingly, Canadians recognize that increased prosperity does not necessarily equal improved quality of life. Increasingly, Canadians recognize that when we are faced with finite resources, increased prosperity, in the traditional sense of material consumption and physical wealth, for some, implies reduced access to resources for others. Canada is uniquely placed to promote sustainable development instead of ever growing prosperity for those who are already rich. We need to redefine prosperity within the context of sustainable development.
- 8 The benefits of globalization are unclear to the majority of people within Canada and in other countries. The social dislocation and environmental degradation which has often accompanied globalization are costs which are not considered by those benefiting from globalization. Canada should focus on sustainable development and adopt a Sustainability Impact Assessment Framework to assess and govern its involvement in globalization.
- 9 Canada should focus on cultivating sustainable development partnerships, rather than simply economic partnerships, with emerging powers such as China, India, Mexico and Brazil.
- 10 Canadian values such as human rights, democracy, respect for diversity and gender equality are values that Canada should continue to promote at home and abroad. The best way of doing this is by example within a sustainable development foreign policy framework.
- 11 Intercultural dialogue and interfaith understanding are crucial if the world is going to learn to live more sustainably. This should be part of national and international activities.
- 12 Canada can best show an example abroad by consistently showing that sustainable development is a priority in Canada and is becoming part of the Canadian culture and set of values.

CIELAP looks forward to the ongoing opportunity to work with the Government of Canada, as together, Canadians reflect on the type of society we wish to live in and the type of foreign policy we wish to pursue in the world.

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