



Constitution of the Conference

1. The question of convening an international conference on the environment was raised by the Economic and Social Council at its forty-fifth session. In a resolution on the subject (1346 (XLV)), the Council underlined, *inter alia*, the urgent need for intensified action at the national and the international level, to limit and, where possible, to eliminate the impairment of the human environment. It emphasized that due attention to problems of the human environment was essential for sound economic and social development; and recommended that the General Assembly, at its twenty-third session, consider the desirability of convening a United Nations conference on problems of the human environment.

2. Endorsing the Council's recommendations, the General Assembly at its twenty-third session decided (resolution 2398 (XXIII)) to convene a United Nations conference on the human environment in 1972. It requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development, to submit to the Assembly at its twenty-fourth session, through the Economic and Social Council at its forty-seventh session, a report covering the main problems which the Conference should consider and the preparatory process, which should be engaged. It further recommended that the Secretary-General, in preparing the report, consult with States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies and of the International Atomic Energy Agency and appropriate organizations of the United Nations system, and draw on contributions from appropriate intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

3 In his report to the Economic and Social Council" at its forty-seventh session (E/4667), the Secretary General recommended that the Conference be conceived as an important means of



stimulating and providing guidelines for action by national Governments and international organizations in their attempts to achieve concrete and valid solutions to the problems of the human environment. He further recommended that the Conference should not be involved in narrow technical discussions, but should address itself to broad topics of general human concern. He also emphasized the great importance which he placed on the need to establish a conference organization at as early a stage as possible.

4 The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1448 (XLVII), recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of a resolution by which it would endorse in general the proposals contained in the Secretary General's report (E/4667) and take the necessary steps to prepare a conference on the human environment.

5. The General Assembly at its twenty-fourth session affirmed, in resolution 2581,(XIV) that "it should be the main -purpose of the Conference to serve as a practical means to encourage, and to provide guidelines for, action by Governments and international organizations designed to protect and improve the human environment and to remedy and prevent its impairment, by means Of international cooperation, bearing in mind the particular importance of enabling the developing countries to forestall the occurrence of such problems". The Assembly endorsed in general the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary General regarding the purposes and objectives of the Conference. It further entrusted the Secretary General with over-all responsibility for organizing and preparing for the Conference and requested him to set up immediately a small conference secretariat and to appoint, at the appropriate time, a Secretary General of the Conference. It accepted the invitation of the Government of Sweden to hold the Conference in Sweden in June 1972. The General Assembly also established a Preparatory Committee consisting of representatives nominated



by the Governments of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, France, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, Sweden, Togo, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Arab Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Yugoslavia and Zambia-to advise the Secretary-General.

6. The Preparatory Committee held four sessions .2 During its first session, held in New York from 10 to 20 March 1970, the Committee defined the programme content and selection of topics of the Conference and established recommendations for action. It also considered the organizational structure of the Conference and reviewed the documentation requirements. At its second session, held at Geneva from 8 to 19 February 1971, the Committee prepared a provisional agenda for the Conference, discussed the possible form and content of a declaration on the human environment, and recommended the establishment of an intergovernmental working group on the declaration. It also carried out a

1. Now designated Egypt.

2 For the reports of the sessions, see A/CONF.48/PC.6, A/CONF.48/PC.9 and Corr.1, A/CONF.48/PC.13 and Corr.1, and A/CONF.48/PC.17.

preliminary examination of the question of marine pollution, monitoring or surveillance, pollutant release limits, conservation, soils, training, information exchange and gene pools, and recommended the establishment of intergovernmental working groups to deal respectively with marine pollution, monitoring, conservation and soils. It considered further the organization and structure of the Conference. At its third session, held in New York from 13 to 24 September 1971, the Preparatory Committee reviewed the progress of the substantive work of the Conference and discussed the draft declaration. The Committee held a fourth



session in New York from 6 to 17 March 1972, at which it dealt primarily with the international organizational implications of recommendations for action, including the financial implications, and it the draft Declaration on the Human Environment.

7. The documentation for the Conference was based on a great volume of contributions from Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and individual experts. A total of 86 Governments submitted national reports outlining their environmental experience and concerns. The specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies submitted basic papers drawing on their knowledge and experience in there various areas of responsibility. A wide variety of other governmental and non-governmental sources-organizations and individuals-provided still more basic material on subjects relevant to their fields of competence and interest. All of this material was reviewed by the Conference secretariat with the assistance of United Nations agencies, consultants and experts from Governments, under the general guidance of the Preparatory Committee.

8. In complying with the intent of Economic and Social Council resolution 1536 (XLIX) and of General Assembly resolution 2657 (XXV), which reaffirmed, in particular, that environmental policies should be considered in the context of economic and social developments, taking into account the special needs of tie developing countries, particular stress was laid on the needs and on the active participation of those countries in the preparatory process for the Conference. Thus, with the major exception of the Symposium on Problems of Environment held by the Economic Commission for Europe at Prague from 2 to 15 May 1971, nearly all the regional seminars and special meetings convened prior to the Conference were focused on the interrelationship between development and the environment.



9. The Panel of Experts on Development and Environment, which met at Founex, Switzerland, from 4 to 12 June 1971, provided an opportunity to consider the protection and improvement of the environment in the context of the urgent need of the developing countries for development. The report of the Panel made it clear that environmental considerations should be an integral part of the development process. The report of the Founex meeting became the focus of discussion at a series of regional seminars on development and environment convened by the Economic Commission for Africa (Addis Ababa, 23 to 28 August 1971); the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (Bangkok, 17 to 22 August 1971); the Economic Commission for Latin America (Mexico City, 6 to 11 September 1971); and the Economic and Social Office in Beirut (Beirut, 27 September to 2 October 1971). Other meetings of special interest to developing countries included a meeting of world scientists organized at Canberra from 24 August to 3 September 1971, at the request, and with the cooperation, of the Conference secretariat, to bring together members of the Special Committee on Environmental Problems of the International Council of Scientific Unions, members of the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development and a number of specially invited scientists from the developing countries.

10. At its twenty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution (2849 (XXVI)) in which it affirmed that development plans should be compatible with a sound ecology and that adequate environmental conditions could best be ensured by the promotion of development, at both the national and the international level. The General Assembly also stressed, inter alia, that the action plan and action proposals to be submitted to the Conference should respect fully the sovereign rights of each country; recognize that environmental policies should avoid adverse effects on the development; possibilities of



developing countries, including the international trade position of those countries, international development assistance and the transfer of technology; and promote programmes designed to assist the developing countries, including the provision of additional technical assistance and financial resources. The General Assembly further urged States possessing nuclear weapons to put all end to the testing of those weapons in all spheres and stressed the necessity of prohibiting the production and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and of ensuring the early destruction of such weapons. The General Assembly also called for increases in the volume and softening of the terms of the economic assistance provided by international financial institutions to enable developing countries to plan and implement projects, which might be justifiable on environmental terms.

It further requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Conference on a scheme of voluntary contributions, which would provide additional financing by the developed to the developing countries for environmental purposes, beyond the resources already contemplated in the International Development Strategy.

11. In another resolution adopted at its twenty-sixth session (2850 (XXVI)), the General Assembly approved the provisional agenda and the draft rules of procedure for the Conference and recommended the rules for adoption by the Conference. It requested the Secretary General to invite the States Members of the United Nations or members of specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency to participate in the Conference. It further request the Secretary General to circulate in advance of the Conference a draft declaration on the human environment; a draft action plan constituting a blueprint for international co-operation to protect and enhance the present and future quality of the environment for human life and well-being; such other draft proposals as might be ready for consideration by the Conference; and draft proposals for



organizational and financing arrangements needed to pursue effectively the work of the United Nations system of organizations in the environmental field. It also requested the Conference to consider the drafts submitted to it and to take such appropriate action as it desired, and requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to report on the results of the Conference to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session and to transmit his report to the Economic and Social Council. The General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to make the necessary arrangements for the work that would have to be undertaken after the Conference pending consideration of the recommendations of the Conference by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session.