

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Heseltine declares himself an enthusiastic supporter of the recently launched World Conservation Strategy. *Mr Maude also adds his support below.*

He gives his reasoning in the attached minute, which covers the main documents. He wants his officials to consult other Departments so that the whole range of Government policies can be reviewed to see whether "any short or long term shift in emphasis would be appropriate". He comments that he would be grateful for your support.

I find this a surprising submission. The overall aims are worthy, and many of us may feel personally committed to them. But Mr. Heseltine seems to be proposing just the kind of interminable internal Government study against which you and he have set your faces.

I am sure that it is quite important for Mr. Heseltine to become publicly identified with an environmental initiative. But I am really sceptical about the prospects of worthwhile results from the kind of review he has in mind. I can see it running on for months, and producing tiny bits of tinkering with departmental programmes within existing cash limits, and possibly some pressure for a bit more aid money to go to the United Nations' environment programme.

Now that Mr. Heseltine has proposed some work on the subject, it would be difficult to turn it down without the risk of unhelpful criticism as a result of leaks. But you might think it worth insisting that the review should have a short time scale, leading to a brief report to Ministers in the autumn - say, report back to Ministers by 1 October?

26 June 1980

*MAJ*  
*I agree with the objective. But we just cannot embark on such a review at present. We have other things to do and are trying to concentrate on the latter stuff. We can take consultation into account in each new decision.*



Prime Minister

You will have seen references in the Press to the launching of the World Conservation Strategy. This has been produced by the International Union for Nature Conservation with assistance from UNEP and has been endorsed by FAO and UNESCO. I am enclosing a copy of the Strategy. *- with Duty Clerk. - in wallet attached to file.*

The Strategy sets out the case for conservation of the world's living resources, and seeks to suggest what Governments, voluntary organisations, and the public at large, should be doing to that end.

I was expecting a document couched in the usual emotive terms, with the emphasis on preservation at all costs, and offering the general run of dramatic and highly impractical solutions. On the contrary, the Strategy effectively equates conservation with sustainable development. The need for both developed and developing countries to conserve living resources so as to avoid irreparable damage to the life support systems on which we all depend, is carefully and reasonably stated in terms of enlightened self-interest and Governments are offered what seems to me a wholly practical way of examining their policies to see where they might need to be shifted if inevitable social and economic decline is to be avoided.

I cannot believe that any of us would wish to dispute the central message of the Strategy. Frankly, I am not optimistic



that Governments and world opinion will respond to it in any way remotely comparable with the scale and urgency of the problem. But I do think we ought to satisfy ourselves that as a nation we are playing a responsible part and to use such influence as we have to encourage others to do the same.

Of one thing we can be sure, and that is that any influence which we may be able to bring to bear will depend upon our being seen as a Government to be taking the matter very seriously and conducting our affairs accordingly.

Our record is certainly not one of which we need to be ashamed. There are many areas in which we already give due weight to the resource problem - and some in which we probably lead the world. Nevertheless, I think we need to review the whole range of our policies in the way suggested in the Strategy to see whether any short or long-term shift in emphasis would be appropriate. Clearly, the communication of policies within and between departments is such that no one department can sensibly do this in isolation from others and I shall be asking my officials to consult their opposite numbers in other departments on recommendations which might be submitted to us for consideration. I suggest that these discussions should focus on the implications of the Strategy for our domestic policies; the international aspects (where some parts of the Strategy may present problems for the UK) will need to be followed up in various bodies within the United Nations system.



I attach for simplicity a summary of the main objectives of the Strategy (taken from the larger document). I would be grateful for your support.

I am copying this to Cabinet colleagues, to Norman Fowler and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

M H

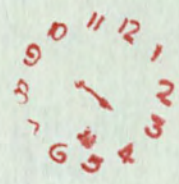
25 June 1980

Most of the decisions  
would fall to the DOE through planning,  
and through their own research budget.

ms



26 JUN 1980



WORLD CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Executive  
Summary

## Executive Summary



*The World Conservation Strategy is intended to stimulate a more focussed approach to the management of living resources and to provide policy guidance on how this can be carried out by three main groups:*

- government policy makers and their advisers;
- conservationists and others directly concerned with living resources;
- development practitioners, including development agencies, industry and commerce, and trade unions.

1. *The aim of the World Conservation Strategy is to achieve the three main objectives of living resource conservation:*

- a. **to maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems** (such as soil regeneration and protection, the recycling of nutrients, and the cleansing of waters), on which human survival and development depend;
- b. **to preserve genetic diversity** (the range of genetic material found in the world's organisms), on which depend the functioning of many of the above processes and life-support systems, the breeding programmes necessary for the protection and improvement of cultivated plants, domesticated animals and microorganisms, as well as much scientific and medical advance, technical innovation, and the security of the many industries that use living resources;
- c. **to ensure the sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems** (notably fish and other wildlife, forests and grazing lands), which support millions of rural communities as well as major industries.

2. *These objectives must be achieved as a matter of urgency because:*

- a. **the planet's capacity to support people is being irreversibly reduced in both developing and developed countries:**
  - thousands of millions of tonnes of soil are lost every year as a result of deforestation and poor land management;
  - at least 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> of prime farmland disappear every year under buildings and roads in developed countries alone;
- b. **hundreds of millions of rural people in developing countries, including 500 million malnourished and 800 million destitute, are compelled to destroy the resources necessary to free them from starvation and poverty:**
  - in widening swaths around their villages the rural poor strip the land of trees and shrubs for fuel so that now many communities do not have enough wood to cook food or keep warm;
  - the rural poor are also obliged to burn every year 400 million tonnes of dung and crop residues badly needed to regenerate soils;
- c. **the energy, financial and other costs of providing goods and services are growing:**
  - throughout the world, but especially in developing countries, siltation cuts the lifetimes of reservoirs supplying water and hydroelectricity, often by as much as half;
  - floods devastate settlements and crops (in India the annual cost of floods ranges from \$140 million to \$750 million);
- d. **the resource base of major industries is shrinking:**
  - tropical forests are contracting so rapidly that by the end of this century the remaining area of unlogged productive forest will have been halved;
  - the coastal support systems of many fisheries are being destroyed or polluted (in the USA the annual cost of the resulting losses is estimated at \$86 million).

3. *The main obstacles to achieving conservation are:*

- a. **the belief that living resource conservation is a limited sector**, rather than a process that cuts across and must be considered by all sectors;
- b. **the consequent failure to integrate conservation with development;**
- c. **a development process that is often inflexible and needlessly destructive**, due to inadequacies in environmental planning, a lack of rational use allocation and undue

emphasis on narrow short term interests rather than broader longer term ones;

d. **the lack of a capacity to conserve**, due to inadequate legislation and lack of enforcement; poor organization (notably government agencies with insufficient mandates and a lack of coordination); lack of trained personnel; and a lack of basic information on priorities, on the productive and regenerative capacities of living resources, and on the trade-offs between one management option and another;

e. **the lack of support for conservation**, due to a lack of awareness (other than at the most superficial level) of the benefits of conservation and of the responsibility to conserve among those who use or have an impact on living resources, including in many cases governments;

f. **the failure to deliver conservation-based development where it is most needed**, notably the rural areas of developing countries.

4. *The World Conservation Strategy therefore:*

- a. **defines living resource conservation and explains its objectives**, its contribution to human survival and development and the main impediments to its achievement (sections 1-4);
- b. **determines the priority requirements for achieving each of the objectives** (sections 5-7);
- c. **proposes national and subnational strategies** to meet the priority requirements, describing a framework and principles for those strategies (section 8);
- d. **recommends anticipatory environmental policies, a cross-sectoral conservation policy and a broader system of national accounting** in order to integrate conservation with development at the policy making level (section 9);
- e. **proposes an integrated method of evaluating land and water resources, supplemented by environmental assessments**, as a means of improving environmental planning; and **outlines a procedure for the rational allocation of land and water uses** (section 10);
- f. **recommends reviews of legislation** concerning living resources; **suggests general principles for organization within government**; and in particular **proposes ways of improving the organizational capacities for soil conservation and for the conservation of marine living resources** (section 11);
- g. **suggests ways of increasing the number of trained personnel**; and **proposes more management-oriented research and research-oriented management**, so that the most urgently needed basic information is generated more quickly (section 12);
- h. **recommends greater public participation** in planning and decision making concerning living resource use; and **proposes environmental education programmes and campaigns** to build support for conservation (section 13);
- i. **suggests ways of helping rural communities to conserve** their living resources, as the essential basis of the development they need (section 14).

5. *In addition, the Strategy recommends international action to promote, support and (where necessary) coordinate national action, emphasizing in particular the need for:*

- a. **stronger more comprehensive international conservation law, and increased development assistance for living resource conservation** (section 15);
- b. **international programmes** to promote the action necessary to conserve **tropical forests and drylands** (section 16), to protect areas essential for the preservation of **genetic resources** (section 17), and to conserve the global "commons"—**the open ocean, the atmosphere, and Antarctica** (section 18);
- c. **regional strategies** to advance the conservation of **shared living resources** particularly with respect to **international river basins and seas** (section 19).

6. The World Conservation Strategy ends by summarizing **the main requirements for sustainable development**, indicating conservation priorities for the Third Development Decade (section 20).

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