

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPERATIVE

DECLARATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT BY THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The European Community has a dual role in environmental protection. One set of obligations is clearly defined in the Single European Act. But there are wider responsibilities too; as one of the largest and most powerful economic blocs in the world, the Community and its Member States must play a leading role in promoting concerted and effective action at global level, providing a stimulus to other industrialised countries, and assisting developing countries to play their part. The Community's credibility and effectiveness at this wider level depends in large measure on its ability to adopt and effectively implement necessary environmental measures within the territory of its own Member States. The internal and external dimensions of Community environment policy are therefore inextricably linked.

Environmental protection is a shared responsibility. Problems cannot be resolved without concerted action on the part of everyone - Governments, public authorities, private undertakings, individuals and groups. Acceptance at all levels of this shared responsibility must be stimulated and promoted to ensure optimum stewardship of the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Community Dimension

Completion of the Internal Market in 1992 will give a welcome boost to economic growth in the Community but there must be a parallel acceleration of effort to ensure that this growth is sustainable. In particular, the environmental risks inherent in increased demand for transport, energy and infrastructure must be tackled and environmental considerations must be fully and effectively integrated into these and other policy areas. The Community and the Member States must find effective solutions to the environmental problems created by the agricultural sector and be notably supportive of efforts to promote clean technology and non-polluting products. Better arrangements are also needed to protect the seas and coastal regions of Member States from the threat posed by the transport of oil and hazardous substances.

While welcome progress has been made in recent times in the adoption of environmental measures at Community level, much more needs to be done taking due account of the subsidiarity principle, the differing environmental conditions in the regions of the Community and the need for balanced development of the regions. We intend that the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference should give special attention to the need to step up the pace of decision-making on Community environmental legislation and consider the

extension of qualified majority voting to the adoption and review by the Council of this legislation.

We urge the Council speedily to enact Directives relating to emissions from motor vehicles, including lorries, protection of habitats, pollution by nitrates, and disposal of hazardous wastes and municipal waste water. We urge the Commission to bring forward, as a matter of urgency, proposals for Directives on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste, ecological labelling, emissions from diesel engines, carbon dioxide emissions, phosphate pollution, and standards for waste disposal at landfill sites and for incinerators.

Additional Community environmental legislation will only be effective if Member States quickly and fully effectively implement that legislation. We therefore renew our commitment in this respect. To ensure transparency, comparability of effort and full information for the public, we invite the Commission, using information to be provided by the European Environment Agency, systematically to review implementation and to publish regular reports. There should also be periodic reviews to ensure that existing Directives are adapted to scientific and technical progress and to resolve consistent difficulties in implementation; such reviews should not, of course, lead to a lower level of environmental protection in any case.

Standards designed to ensure a high level of environmental protection, as called for in the Single Act, will remain the cornerstone of Community environment policy. But the traditional "command and control" approach must now be supplemented by economic and fiscal measures if environmental considerations are to be fully integrated into other policy areas, if pollution is to be prevented at source, and if the polluter is to pay. We therefore call on the Commission to accelerate its work in this field and to present, by the end of 1990, proposals for a framework within which such measures could be put into effect by the Member States in a manner consistent with the Treaties.

Implementation of Community environmental measures and the protection of the common European heritage can give rise to unequal burdens for individual Member States. In this context, we welcome the recent ENVIREG initiative, under which support from the Structural Funds will be provided for the management of hazardous wastes and the treatment of coastal waste water discharges. We invite the Commission to initiate a review of the overall budgetary resources devoted to Community environment policy, which at present are dispersed through a number of separate funding mechanisms, and to submit a report to the Council as soon as possible.

Global Issues

The Community has a special responsibility - in common with industrialised countries generally - in relation to global environmental problems. Its capacity to provide leadership in this sphere will be enhanced by the cohesion

engendered on completion of the internal market and progress towards political union. The Community must use this position of strength to influence international efforts to solve global problems and to foster sustainable development. We will support efforts to build into international structures the capacity to respond more effectively to regional and global problems and to divert to environmental purposes some of the considerable resources hitherto devoted to armaments. ??

Depletion of the ozone layer is a major cause for concern. The Community has already agreed to press for revision of the Montreal Protocol on substances which deplete the ozone layer so as to speed up considerably the complete elimination of these substances. It is also committed to the principle that additional financial and technical resources should be provided to assist developing countries in implementing the Protocol. We call on all Parties to support these proposals and we call on States which have not already done so urgently to ratify or accede to the Protocol.

Recent scientific assessments show that the greenhouse effect is real, that man-made emissions are substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and that a business-as-usual approach will lead to additional global warming in the decades to come.

We urge all countries to introduce extensive energy efficiency and conservation measures and to adopt as soon as possible targets and strategies for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases. We intend that the Community and its Member States will take all possible steps to promote the early adoption of a Climate Convention and associated protocols.

We call for greater international cooperation to protect the world's forests and in particular to halt the destruction of tropical forests. We believe that the forests can produce a satisfactory income based on sustainable management of their unique resources and that the Community and its Member States should support this process. We therefore welcome the strategy set out in the Resolution on the Development Aspects of Tropical Forests which was adopted by the Council on 29 May 1990.

Destruction of the tropical forests, soil erosion, desertification and other environmental problems of the less-developed countries can be fully addressed only in the context of North-South relationships generally. Nevertheless, the Community together with the Member States can play a major role in assisting these countries in efforts to achieve long-term sustainable development. In this context, we welcome the provisions of the Fourth Lome Convention under which increased assistance is to be given to ACP countries, at their request, in the field of population, environment and sustainable resource development. More generally, the cooperation agreements between the Community and the countries of Asia and Latin America falling outside the Lome framework should increasingly emphasise our shared environmental concerns.

The environmental situation in Central and Eastern Europe presents special challenges. Remedial measures are necessary to clear up problems which have developed through years of neglect and action is needed to ensure that future economic development in these countries is sustainable. Action already taken within the PHARE programme is encouraging but will need to be developed further, both in the context of the expanded G24 programme and in the co-operation agreements between the Community and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

We welcome the decision of the Community Environment Ministers to invite their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe to their meeting in Dublin on 16 June to explore avenues for cooperation on environmental matters and we endorse the conclusions reached at that meeting. We will continue to support the commitment of Community funds for environmental restoration, in co-operation with the countries concerned, and we call on individual Member States and the international community generally to do likewise.

Personal Rights and Responsibilities

We note with satisfaction the adoption of the Regulation to establish the European Environment Agency which will provide for the citizens of Europe, as well as the Community and its Member States, the reliable and objective information on the state of the environment that is so urgently needed. The Agency should take up its important tasks quickly now that we have decided that its seat shall be _____.

An equally important development has been the adoption of the Directive on Freedom of Access to Environmental Information: this will greatly increase the availability of information to the public whose understanding and support is a vital element for effective action to protect the environment. The publication, as required by the Directive, of regular national reports on the State of the Environment will be a welcome advance. We invite the Member States to accompany these reports by national environment action plans, prepared in a form which will attract maximum public interest and support.

We urge Member States to take positive steps to disseminate environmental information widely among their citizens to build up more caring and more responsible attitudes, more understanding of the nature and causes of problems and a better appreciation of the costs and other implications of possible solutions. We call on the Commission to consider whether the scope of the environmental impact assessment system might be extended to permit wider public participation and to bring forward without delay proposals for an environmental labelling system to assist consumers to make an informed choice between available products.

Increased public awareness and concern for environmental issues is a welcome development. In return, we believe that citizens must be reassured that Governments are striving to give full effect to the right of everyone to a clean and healthy environment. We therefore propose that the Community and its

Member States will take the lead in promoting, at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the adoption of a comprehensive code of environmental rights and principles which would have universal application. Such a code would serve as a common set of standards, influencing and guiding the behaviour of the Community of Nations and its peoples towards our shared environment and promoting responsible stewardship in the interests of this and future generations.

In view of the importance we attach to the concept of a People's Europe and the leading role of the Community in environmental matters, we solemnly acknowledge and affirm the principle that each citizen of the Community should have the following basic rights:

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

- An environment conducive to the highest possible level of health, well-being and amenity.
- Clean unpolluted air, essential for life itself.
- Pure and adequate drinking water supplies.
- Rivers, lakes, coastal and marine waters that are unpolluted and suitable for all beneficial and amenity uses.
- Soil that is uncontaminated by toxic or other harmful substances.
- Clean and uncontaminated food for human consumption.
- Urban and rural residential areas with acceptable levels of amenity.
- Preservation of landscapes, other elements of the natural heritage, and of a representative range of flora, fauna and natural habitats.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

- Access to available information on the monitoring of air and water quality and on the state of the environment generally.
- Access to information on environmental control measures and management programmes.
- Access to information about projects and programmes which might have significant effects on the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL PARTICIPATION

- Participation in the land-use planning and environmental impact assessment procedures.
- Participation through non-governmental organisations in decision-making on environmental matters.

While we regard this statement of environmental rights and principles as an interim measure which might ultimately be subsumed in a more comprehensive and universal code, we intend that it should inspire and guide the development of environmental and other legislation by the Community and its Member States in the years immediately ahead.