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United Nations Conference on Human Environment, 1972

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UNCHE, a key instrument to International environmental law.

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26 principles related to environmental protection

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Cornerstone document of a continually growing body of law

Introduction

The United Nations Conference, 1972 also known as Stockholm Conference. It was first large meeting convened by United Nations focussing on the environmental issues. The meeting was convened as the result of growing environmental concerns about conservation and preservation of nature and of dissatisfaction among various sector of society with regard to the impact of pollution on the quality of life.

"The Stockholm Conference introduced many concepts and principles that, over the years, would become the foundation for the evolution of diplomacy in environmental area"

Preamble of the Conference

The preamble of the Conference reveals an approach to international environmental law that is driven by the need to preserve and to conserve the environment for the benefits of

human beings.

Paragraph 3 of the preamble says; we see around us the growing evidence of the man-made harm in many regions of the earth, harmful to physical, mental and social health of the man, in the man-made environment, particularly in the living and working environment.

Paragraph 7 of the preamble acknowledges that environmental protection is effectively the responsibility of the citizens, communities, enterprises, institutions, organizations and local and national governments.

Historical Background of

the Conference

The United Nations General Assembly convened United Nations Conference on Human Environment at the request of the Swedish Government. Representative from 113 countries and over 400 non-gover-

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mental organization attended the Conference. The roots of Stockholm Conference lie in a proposal from Sweden that United Nations hold a meeting to examine the environmental issues and identify those that required international cooperation to solve.

"The 1972 Conference attended by delegations from 114 countries (It was boycotted by Soviet-bloc countries because of the exclusion of German Democratic Republic (East Germany), which did not hold a seat of United Nations at the time)."

Influence of the Stockholm Conference

Documents created during the conference influenced the international environmental law, one notable example was the final Declaration, which elucidated 109 specific recommendations related to following area.

- Human Settlements
- Natural Resources Management
- Pollution control
- Educational perspectives and
- Social areas like development and international organizations

Principles of the Conference

Twenty Six principles enumerated in the Conference ^{written} as follows

- i) Provision of human rights and condemnation of colonialism.
- ii) Safeguard Natural Resources
- iii) Earth capacity to maintain natural resources to be maintained.
- iv) Safeguard wildlife
- v) Sharing of non-renewable resources
- vi) Controlling of Air Pollution
- vii) Controlling of Oceanic Pollution
- viii) Development of the Infrastructure
- ix) Assisting of the developing countries
- x) Environmental management through expert in the developing countries.

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- vi) Providing money for developing structure
- vii) Environmental policy must not hamper development.
- viii) Integrated development must be promoted
- ix) Education for environment must be promoted
- x) Environmental Research must be promoted
- xi) Planned Human Settlements
- xii) Governments should make effective population policies.
- xiii) Rational ^{planning} development between environment and development
- xiv) States free to exploit resources
- xv) Use of Science and technology for the environmental protection
- xvi) Development of State Natural Resources
- xvii) Compensation to endangered states
- xviii) International Cooperation
- xix) Establishment of national standards
- xx) International organizations must help to maintain environment
- xxi) Weapon of mass destruction should be eliminated

Outcomes of the Conference

There are major outcomes of the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment.

- Outcomes of the Conference**
- Final Declaration consisting of 26 principles.
 - An action plan with 109 recommendations and resolutions.
 - Many governments created environmental ministries in the result of this conference.
 - Laid down the framework for environmental action.
 - Establishment of United Nations environmental program (UNEP) for providing Institutional machinery and Financial Framework as per decision of this conference.
 - Placed the protection of the environment and the biosphere agenda on official platform of the international organizations.

And the last but not the least, establishment of the framework for GreenFund.

Concluding Remarks

The 1972 Stockholm Declaration is very clearly a product of its time. It launched the start of the modern approach to international environmental law by providing a flexible framework of fundamental principles to guide the development in this area, for more than 40 years.

Some of its aspects are unusual and surprising when viewed from contemporary perspective, yet it remains a robust framework, a fact demonstrated by the number of international agreements it has launched, and the inability of future instruments to improve upon its principles to any great extent. Certainly aspects of 1992 Rio Declaration have improved upon the Stockholm Declaration, but it is a evolutionary process. Some outstanding questions about international environmental law remain unsolved but this conference continues to be embraced as the cornerstone document of a continually growing body of law.