

IISD Conference, Ottawa, October 18-19, 2007-10-23
Remarks by Charles Caccia
Concluding session - October 19, 2007

Reflecting from somewhere in the growing vineyards of environmentally sustainable development, it seems to me appropriate to say that 20 years after the Bruntland Report the concept of environmentally sustainable development is taking root! The generation before mine, and perhaps mine, can take credit for that – but the journey is still likely to be a long one! The adoption of environmentally sustainable development – as many speakers said yesterday and today – will take time! To get there will be your task, the next generation, and the next and the next. Important is not to lose heart, because 20 or 40 years are just a drop in history's bucket.

We can start planning for 2012, a follow-up to Stockholm, Rio, Johannesburg. And we need not to be discouraged by some pathetic noises emitted by the worshippers of absurd “aspirational” targets and timetables. They will not be around for too long, as the next elections in Australia and USA will prove.

The achievement of environmentally sustainable development requires the application of a basic concept Jim MacNeill has been preaching for decades: “anticipate and prevent”, which is by far preferable and less costly to society than “react and cure”. We have the task of ensuring that “anticipate and prevent” becomes the credo of governments, because “anticipate and prevent” leads to environmentally sustainable development.

This morning the Alcan representative spoke of sustainable development as a driver for innovation – yes, and more than that! Environmentally sustainable development is a pre-condition for long-term survival on this non-returnable, non-refillable, non-reusable, severely battered planet, the only one we have!

In conclusion, *merci* David, for organizing this fine conference!