

NEW PATHWAYS FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

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It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to address this conference on behalf of my country, on this very important subject. I would like to contribute, along with this honourable assembly, to the search for biocentric values, for new paths of international co-operation. These values are necessary in order to provide new channels of hope for the future.

Achieving new patterns of relations and creating a new world order, based on co-operation and independence, in order to achieve world peace and security, cannot be attained without addressing environmental issues. These cover all aspects of human life, natural resources, socioeconomic and political systems, which interact to form the very nature of life. They are related to population balance and demographic distribution within a single country, as well as to the countries of a region. The transboundary effects of environmental problems call for co-ordination and co-operation within the world community, if it is to face all the mounting evidence of threats to human well-being from a variety of sources. Diverse as these threats are, they can all be seen as a general assault upon natural order and human lives everywhere. Major kinds of harm have been identified at national, regional and global levels through the United Nations system, since the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment in 1972 and the creation of the United Nations Environmental Programme at this early stage. I attended this conference, as a member of the Egyptian Embassy diplomatic staff in Stockholm, at the time.

With regard to the environment, two rules of customary law have developed. One prohibits states from polluting and the other obliges them to co-operate in the protection of the environment. The obligation to co-operate, manifests itself, as a duty to act in good faith, in order to achieve an objective of mutual interest to the states directly involved.

In the aftermath of the Rio conference, the question of the environment, or rather sustainable development, has had many dimensions, and one of these is the subject of our meeting in this present assembly, that is, Biopolitics and its relation to the bio-environment and bio-culture. There is global concern over the state of world biodiversity and international co-operation is the tool. During the last few years, every country, regardless of its political system and level of economic development has, in general, shown a remarkable willingness to promote the adoption of new rules to regulate environmental issues.

In this context, the bio-environment has gained more stimulus, as a result of the enforcement of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on December 29, 1993. The coming convocation of the first meeting of the conference of the parties (November/December 1994), will be an opportunity to identify the areas of concern, the priorities and needs, especially of developing countries.

Egypt considers biodiversity one of its national priorities and has included it in its environmental strategy; therefore it ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity on May 8, 1994 and is currently undertaking a national study on the Status of Biological Diversity in Egypt, sponsored by the Egyptian Environment Affairs Agency and, in collaboration with, the United Nations Environmental Programme. The major objectives of the study are:

- to assess national biodiversity status and identify gaps in knowledge
- to identify at country level, the basic needs and levels for effective conservation and the sustained use of national biodiversity
- the preparation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans

Egypt believes that regional and international dimensions support its national efforts. Therefore, it is strengthening co-operation in this field with other African countries and is helping to formulate an African perception of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is also seeking new avenues of co-operation with its Mediterranean partners.

On the international and multilateral level, Egypt has recently participated in the second session of the intergovernmental committee for the Convention on Biological Diversity, convened to prepare for the first meeting of the Conference of the parties, scheduled to take place in the Bahamas in November/December, 1995. The follow-up and implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity is a primary concern in the environmental agenda of Egypt, in its international dimensions. Egypt therefore underlines the importance of the provision of financial, technological and technical assistance, aimed at helping countries like Egypt to implement the provisions of this convention. Furthermore, Egypt supports international efforts aimed at addressing the issue of biological diversity with all its ramifications.

Finally, let me refer to a number of selected conventions which have already been concluded and which relate to the protection of shared natural resources, such as the atmosphere, water courses, oceans, seas, Antarctica, outer space, wildlife, hazardous waste, military activities,

environmental impact assessment preparedness and assistance in the case of accidents on the high seas, as well as the case of nuclear accidents or oil spills, and civil liability for pollution.

In these agreements, we are talking about commitment, compliance, compensation, changing courses of action related to industry, energy consumption, risk assessment, emergency preparedness, early notification and assistance in preserving shared natural resources. This is why diplomats are now engaged in negotiations, at either bilateral, regional, or global level, to agree on terms of reference, codes of conduct, action plans, and rules of law to manage shared natural resources and eco-geographic systems.

These are meant to help to ease tension, solve problems, collaborate in diminishing the adverse impact of different components on the environment and to find ways and means of resolving conflicts and co-ordinating activities to fulfil our three main objectives for dealing with environmental issues:

- to enhance environmental security in the region, through accident prevention and upgrading regional capacities for regional responses to environmental hazards
- to achieve sustainable development in the region and reverse courses of natural resources reduction through capacity building that could foster economic growth in the whole region
- to promote technological and research capabilities through collaborative endeavours leading to environmental impact diminution

Egypt, therefore, deeply appreciates the initiative of the Greek government and the other sponsors of this meeting, who have created the opportunity to hold the International Sakharov Festival.

I wish you all success in this valuable mission, and confirm that the Egyptian Embassy and I will not hesitate to exert every effort to co-operate with you to achieve success in your activities.

Ambassador **Ahmed Nabil El Salawy** joined the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an attache in 1957. He has held posts in many countries, including Austria, Angola, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. He has been Deputy Chief of Protocol in Egypt and Head of the African Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, and has also served as Ambassador of Egypt to Greece. He has been awarded the Merit Decoration of the Arab Republic of Egypt, as well as Swedish and German Decorations.